



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT

Tuesday, 10 November 2015

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TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2015



The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

Mr Speaker (Hon. Peter Wellington, Nicklin) read prayers and took the chair.

For the sitting week, Mr Speaker acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land upon which this parliament is assembled.

PRESENTATION OF APPROPRIATION BILLS



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that on 6 November 2015 I presented to His Excellency the Governor the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2015 and the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015 for royal assent and that His Excellency was pleased, in my presence, to subscribe his assent thereto in the name and on behalf of Her Majesty.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Messenger admitted to the House and presented to the Speaker a message from His Excellency the Governor.



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, His Excellency the Governor informs the Legislative Assembly that bills entitled a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay an amount from the Consolidated Fund for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service for the financial year starting 1 July 2014; a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the Consolidated Fund for particular departments for the financial year starting 1 July 2014 and to amend the Financial Accountability Act 2009 for a particular purpose; a bill for an act to amend the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 for a particular purpose; a bill for an act to establish Building Queensland and to amend this act, the Industrial Relations Regulation 2011 and the Public Service Act 2008 for particular purposes; a bill for an act to establish Jobs Queensland to give advice to the state on skills needs, workforce development and planning, and the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland; and a bill for an act to amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 and the Public Health Act 2005 for particular purposes, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for royal assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty on 6 November 2015. The Governor now transmits the bills to the Legislative Assembly to be numbered and forwarded to the proper officer for enrolment in the manner required by law. I table the message for the information of members.

Tabled paper: Message, dated 10 November 2015, from His Excellency the Governor advising of assent to certain bills on 6 November 2015 [[1565](#)].

PRIVILEGE

Alleged Contempt of Parliament by a Minister




Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (9.34 am): I rise on a matter of privilege. I draw to the attention of the House a serious matter arising out of estimates proceedings on Tuesday, 25 August in relation to the late delivery of question on notice replies from the member for Ashgrove, Kate Jones, Minister for Tourism, Major Events and Small Business. In drawing this to your attention, I note that two months later, on 28 October, when questioned about the same matter, the minister contradicted her previous testimony. The honourable member for Ashgrove has had ample time to clarify her contradictory statements and has failed to do so.


Mr Speaker, I shall be writing to you about this matter and asking you to give consideration to having the member for Ashgrove referred to the Ethics Committee for a contempt of the parliament, specifically, a contempt of standing order 266.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

Gallipoli Landing, Commemorative Display

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise that 2015 marks the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli. To mark the anniversary and to commemorate Remembrance Day 2015, the Queensland Parliamentary Library has produced a commemorative display showcasing images of Gallipoli, historical accounts, poems, cartoons and newspaper reports of the day, along with other treasures from the 19th century O'Donovan collection. Thirty-nine former members of the Queensland parliament served in World War I and their story forms the nucleus of the display. Members can view the display in the O'Donovan Library today and tomorrow between 10.30 am and 7 pm.

Remembrance Day Observance

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise that a Remembrance Day observance will be conducted tomorrow in the forecourt at the front of Parliament House, commencing at 10.54 sharp. All honourable members, parliamentary staff and visitors to the parliamentary precinct are invited to attend the service.

PETITIONS

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

Sugarwood Grove Garden Villas, Public Transport

Dr Rowan, from 105 petitioners, requesting the House to take whatever action is practicable to cause the 444 bus route to include Sugarwood Grove Garden Villas at Moggill [[1566](#)].

Anstead, Roadside Memorial

Dr Rowan, from 1,430 petitioners, requesting the House to remove the roadside memorial adjacent to the bridge on Kholo Creek-Mt Crosby Road, Anstead [[1567](#)].

Taxi Services

Hon. Hinchliffe, from 61 petitioners, requesting the House to take legislative action to ensure that Uber is required to compete on a level playing field with the established taxi industry [[1568](#)].

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

Safe Night Out Strategy

Mr Langbroek, from 2,366 petitioners, requesting the House to retain the Safe Night Out Strategy in its current form and reject Labor's 'Lockout Laws' proposal [[1569](#), [1570](#)].

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

Law and Order

Mr Langbroek, from 800 petitioners, requesting the House to maintain the present stance on criminal organisations that was established by the former LNP government [[1571](#)].

Cleveland-Redland Bay Road, Upgrade

Dr Robinson, from 43 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the upgrade and duplication of Cleveland-Redland Bay Road, Thornlands between South Street and Beveridge Road as a matter of urgency [[1572](#)].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

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

30 October 2015—

[1528](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply (Hon Bailey) pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Gladstone Power Station Agreement Regulation 2004

[1529](#) QSuper—2015 Annual Report

[1530](#) Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee: Report No. 6, 55th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 3 June and 15 September 2015

[1531](#) Health and Ambulance Services Committee: Report No. 7, 55th Parliament—Annual Report 2014-15

[1532](#) Health and Ambulance Services Committee: Report No. 8, 55th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 26 March 2015 and 15 September 2015

- [1533](#) Overseas Travel Report: Report on an international business mission to Peru and the United States of America by the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines (Dr Lynham), 22 September—1 October 2015
- [1534](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (Hon Pitt) pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Motor Accident Insurance Regulation 2004
- [1535](#) Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal: Review of the Allowances System 2015, Determination 9/2015, 30 October 2015
- [1536](#) Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 10, 55th Parliament—Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
- [1537](#) Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 11, 55th Parliament—Portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 6 May 2015 and 14 July 2015
- [1538](#) Queensland State Archives—Annual Report 2014-15
- [1539](#) Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee—Annual Report 2014-15
- [1540](#) Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee—Annual Report 2014-15
- [1541](#) Board of Examiners—Annual Report 2014-15
- [1542](#) Dumaresq-Barwon Border Rivers Commission—Annual Report 2014-15
- [1543](#) Commissioner for Mine Safety and Health: Queensland Mines Inspectorate—Annual Performance Report 2014-15
- [1544](#) Queensland's Category 2 Water Authorities—Summary of Annual Reports and Financial Statements 2014-15
- [1545](#) Queensland's River Improvement Trusts—Summary of Annual Reports and Financial Statements 2014-15
- [1546](#) President of the Industrial Court of Queensland (in respect of the Industrial Court of Queensland, Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and the Queensland Industrial Registry)—Annual Report 2014-15
- 2 November 2015—
- [1547](#) Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Report No. 10, 55th Parliament—Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015
- [1548](#) Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Report No. 11, 55th Parliament—Annual Report 2014-2015
- [1549](#) Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Report No. 12, 55th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 4 June 2015 and 14 July 2015
- [1550](#) Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 15, 55th Parliament—Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2015
- [1551](#) Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 13, 55th Parliament—Counter-Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015
- 3 November 2015—
- [1552](#) Response from the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing (Mr Byrne) to a paper petition (2476-15) presented by the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 119(3) and an ePetition (2405-15) sponsored by the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 119(4), from 7,118 and 2,396 petitioners respectively, requesting the House to support legislation or regulation that introduces the proposed net-free fishing zones to Queensland waters
- [1553](#) Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 8, 55th Parliament—Annual Report 2014-15
- 4 November 2015—
- [1554](#) Report: Release of Images to the Queensland Police Service during the financial period 2014-15
- [1555](#) Overseas Travel Report: Report on Trade Mission to China and Japan by the Premier and Minister for the Arts (Hon. Palaszczuk) 27 September-4 October 2015
- 5 November 2015—
- [1556](#) Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 12, 55th Parliament—Annual Report 2014-15
- [1557](#) Inspector-General of Emergency Management: Report 1: 2015-16, Review of Seqwater and SunWater Warnings Communications
- [1558](#) Agriculture and Environment Committee: Information Paper No. 2—Inquiry into barrier fences in Queensland
- 6 November 2015—
- [1559](#) Agriculture and Environment Committee: Report No. 9, 55th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 5 May 2015-14 July 2015
- [1560](#) Agriculture and Environment Committee: Report No. 10, 55th Parliament—Annual Report 2014-15
- [1561](#) Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 9, 55th Parliament—Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2015
- 9 November 2015—
- [1562](#) Electoral Commission of Queensland—Annual Report 2014-15
- [1563](#) Electoral Commission of Queensland: Evaluation Report and Statistical Return—Queensland State General Election 2015, Saturday 31 January 2015
- [1564](#) Finance and Administration Committee Report No. 16, 55th Parliament—Inquiry into the introduction of four year terms for the Queensland Parliament, including consideration of Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Industrial Relations Act 1999—

[1573](#) Industrial Relations Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2015, No. 149

[1574](#) Industrial Relations Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2015, No. 149, explanatory notes

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

[1575](#) Nature Conservation Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2015, No. 150

[1576](#) Nature Conservation Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2015, No. 150, explanatory notes

Forestry Act 1959—

[1577](#) Forestry (State Forests) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2015, No. 151

[1578](#) Forestry (State Forests) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2015, No. 151, explanatory notes

Food Production (Safety) Act 2000—

[1579](#) Food Production (Safety) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015, No. 152

[1580](#) Food Production (Safety) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015, No. 152, explanatory notes

Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014—

[1581](#) Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2015, No. 153

[1582](#) Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2015, No. 153, explanatory notes

Health Act 1937, Mental Health Act 2000, Public Health Act 2005, Public Health (Infection Control for Personal Appearance Services) Act 2003, Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998—

[1583](#) Health Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2015, No. 154

[1584](#) Health Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2015, No. 154, explanatory notes

MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games (Ms Jones)—

[1585](#) Response from the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games (Ms Jones) to an ePetition (2429-15) sponsored by the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 119(4) from 10,891 petitioners, requesting the House to immediately cease the Commonwealth Government-funded Safe Schools Coalition program

MEMBERS' PAPERS

The following members' papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Member for Cairns (Mr Pyne)—


[1586](#) Non-conforming petition regarding a Cairns CBD parkland and flying fox roosting area

Member for Surfers Paradise (Mr Langbroek)

[1587](#), [1588](#) Non-conforming petitions regarding Labor's Lockout Laws

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS


Palmer, Ms T

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.38 am): Like every Queenslander and everyone in this House, I have been left shocked, outraged and heartbroken at the death of 12-year-old schoolgirl Tiahleigh Palmer. For a little girl to vanish and then be found dead days later is extremely distressing, to say the least. The images of classmates, family and friends gathering to remember Tiahleigh on Sunday evening serve as a reminder of the very emotional impact this has had on those who knew her and the wider community.

I would like today to reassure Queenslanders and Tiahleigh's family and friends that we have police working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, around the clock, to bring the person or the people responsible to justice. No effort is being spared. Today I have written to the principal commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission seeking a whole-of-government systems review of arrangements in place for responding to missing or absconding children in out-of-home care. In addition, the Minister for Child Safety has requested her director-general urgently bring together the key stakeholders and peak agencies to discuss any concerns or suggestions they may also have.

As I said yesterday, there is not a person throughout our state who is not touched by what has happened to this little girl aged just 12 years—a little girl who was dropped off to school but never made it to school and never made it home.

Northern Queensland Economic Summit


 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.40 am): My government is committed to developing the Northern Queensland region as an investment destination of choice. Last week in Cairns I, along with my cabinet colleagues and local MPs, had the pleasure of welcoming around 280 international and Australian delegates to the first ever Northern Queensland Economic Summit.

Delegates at the summit heard about my government's commitment to the Northern Queensland region through addresses from key government ministers. The summit also showcased a program of presentations highlighting the benefits of previous investments in Northern Queensland as well as future investment opportunities in key sectors including infrastructure, tourism, resources, agriculture and research and innovation.

The summit generated huge interest from international investors, with over 75 delegates representing international organisations, including international banks and investment houses and corporations, as well as consular and business organisations from countries including China, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Indonesia, Canada and numerous European Union countries. The summit provided an invaluable opportunity for our international investors to establish contacts with Australian businesses and key state and local government officials as well as local economic development agencies. As part of the summit program on 6 November, investors inspected potential investment sites in Northern Queensland, including the Cairns Airport, James Cook University, the FinFish aquaculture venture in Cairns, as well as the port of Townsville and the Townsville priority development area.

My government recognises that Northern Queensland is crucial to the strength and diversity of our state. Now is an exciting time for the region, particularly with the developing Northern Australia policy agenda being driven by the Commonwealth government. The Northern Queensland Economic Summit was our chance to let the world investment market know that Northern Queensland is not only a top tourism destination but also a strong and unique long-term investment opportunity.

Queensland Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry, Final Report

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.42 am): On 30 October Commissioner Michael Byrne QC presented me with the Queensland Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry's final report. It is fair to say that Mr Byrne's report reads like a catalogue of horrors.

In the area of child exploitation, we have the best police in the world. These are officers and detectives who do a thorough, exhaustive and international class job under the most difficult, often horrific, circumstances. These are police officers who every day go to work in a determined effort to hunt down the worst of the worst—those offenders who target and harm our children.

These are police officers who are passionate about their job, passionate about protecting Queensland kids and resolute in their dogged investigations into the worst type of criminal offenders. These are police officers who have had major successes across Queensland—indeed, across the globe—in tracking down child sex offenders.

I want to be clear that these officers, particularly those at the coalface in Task Force Argos, have the absolute support of me as Premier and of my government.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, I do not need your interjections.

Ms PALASZCZUK: But, at the same time, the facts are clear. This is a dark criminal area that requires more support and more resources. That is the clear finding of Mr Byrne's commission of inquiry and that is what they will get from my government.

My government has taken immediate action to address the critical finding of the commission that more resources are needed on the front line to investigate child exploitation by providing \$3.2 million in new funding to boost resources. The \$3.2 million has been sourced from savings from the commission, which came in more than 50 per cent under its budget of \$6 million.

Exploitation of our children cannot be tolerated. We must take every immediate step possible to protect our children. My government will take immediate action to implement a range of recommendations made by the commission, including establishing a new police task force, to be called Taskforce Orion.

Headed by a detective inspector, it will tackle child exploitation activities and deliver a tactical operational response to these types of offences. Taskforce Orion will work alongside the existing Taskforce Argos. An extra six staff will be employed for the duration of Taskforce Orion to provide improved forensic capability, to improve victim identification capacity and to provide additional intelligence and technical support. Taskforce Orion and existing police officers will also be provided with greater ICT capability through a mobile app which can be used to proactively target offenders in the field utilising the latest in GPS technology.

The Queensland Police Service will work with the Crime and Corruption Commission to develop improved capability in support of joint operations and investigations involving child exploitation material shared across peer-to-peer networks. The focus will not just be on policing. The government will also look at better ways to educate children and parents. We will work with Triple P International and the University of Queensland to ensure that seminars and programs cross-promote the extensive resources currently available.

Additionally, my government will look to partner with the Commonwealth Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner. The commissioner is currently responsible for Australia-wide initiatives and strategies, including education resources for classrooms, parents, schools, online programs and complaints and reporting resources. A meeting has been scheduled for mid-November.

The government will also investigate the feasibility of establishing in Brisbane a pilot of a one-stop-shop approach to better investigate and respond to child sexual offending and child abuse. Over the coming months, these initiatives will ensure there is an increased focus on protecting the most vulnerable members of our society—our children. In light of the horrific stories told in Mr Byrne's report in relation to our children, we must do all that we can to keep them safe.

Alcohol Fuelled Violence



Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.46 am): We live in a society where each Monday morning young men and women are wheeled into operating theatres to repair the damage resulting from weekend alcohol fuelled violence. We live in a society where police resources are tied up dealing with assaults, sexual offences and other crimes that can be directly linked to the overconsumption of alcohol. We live in a society where it has become commonplace, but in no circumstances acceptable, for drunken behaviour to be expected. We live in a society where it is time to say enough.

Each year 30,000 Queenslanders are admitted to hospital after alcohol related incidents. One in six Queenslanders has been a victim of alcohol fuelled violence. Two-thirds of Queenslanders consider the city or centre of their town unsafe on a Saturday night. Each week operating theatres throughout our major hospitals are clogged with young Queenslanders needing major surgery for injuries suffered in alcohol related incidents.

Labor went to the 2015 state election with a policy designed to tackle the issue of alcohol fuelled violence. This week my government will deliver on that commitment by introducing into this parliament new legislation to deal with this issue. Measures that will be implemented by this legislation include: a winding back of the hours during which venues can serve alcohol; a ban on the sale of high-content alcoholic drinks after midnight; and changes to the current statewide lockout policy. This policy is based on both considerable research and considerable consultation over the last eight months and the experience of other jurisdictions in combatting alcohol fuelled violence. The government has consulted with a wide range of stakeholders while developing this legislation and we have listened to the feedback we have received.

Northern Queensland Economic Summit; Trade and Investment Ministers Meeting



Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (9.48 am): Along with the Premier and the entire Queensland cabinet, I was pleased to attend the Northern Queensland Economic Summit held in Cairns last week. As the Premier has already informed the House, it was a great success, attracting more than 200 investors who heard about the best investment opportunities across Tropical Queensland. At the summit I also had the opportunity to meet one on one with potential investors to discuss opportunities in the north.

I was also pleased to be able to travel to Darwin last Friday to attend a meeting of the Commonwealth, state and territory trade and investment ministers. At this meeting I highlighted to the Australian government the importance of North Queensland to the Northern Australia development agenda given its population centres and its existing infrastructure and supply chains. After all, the North Queensland population makes up almost 75 per cent of the Northern Australia population, with access to key sea ports and international airports.

At this meeting I also raised the importance of Commonwealth investment in telecommunications infrastructure for the north but also for outback and bush communities, particularly in terms of access to high speed and reliable internet. This is a key part of enabling small and medium enterprise to take advantage of emerging markets in Asia, and it is why our draft State Infrastructure Plan highlights the importance of working with providers and the Australian government to improve digital infrastructure, particularly in regional Queensland.

At that meeting, ministers also signed an investment compact agreeing to work together to promote Australia as an investment destination. To that end, I can advise the House that I will be travelling to Indonesia next week to take part in Indonesia Australia Business Week, organised by the Commonwealth with support from Queensland and other states, as well as Singapore and India. Trade means jobs, and the Palaszczuk government will continue to support Queensland businesses to grow and export to the world. Our state boasts great products, bright ideas, talented people and a trusted operating environment—

Mr Cripps interjected.


Ms TRAD: Well, maybe not all of the bright people are in this chamber, Mr Speaker. You can see that from the member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Hinchinbrook, stop your frivolous interjections.

Ms TRAD: I will repeat for the benefit of the House: our state boasts great products, bright ideas, talented people and a trusted operating environment, and we are committed to showcasing this to deliver more jobs for Queenslanders.

Northern Queensland Economic Summit


 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (9.50 am): Last week I had the invaluable opportunity to spruik Queensland to a roomful of potential investors. The Northern Queensland Economic Summit brought almost 250 people to the Cairns Convention Centre, giving my cabinet colleagues and me a captive audience to pitch the north of our state—and I can assure honourable members on both sides of the House that we gave it our all.

I and my colleague the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland were able to double up by taking a group of potential investors to Townsville. We joined Mayor Jenny Hill and representatives of the port of Townsville and Townsville Enterprise to showcase the infrastructure and opportunity Townsville offers. The benefits of this summit were no more obvious to me than over lunch in Townsville. I was able to speak one on one with a group looking at a major agricultural venture near Richmond. It was great to impress on them the potential of this region and the positive impact of the Flinders water tenders that I had just announced.

While at the summit, I met with 11 stakeholders and project proponents—from Japanese miners to Chinese agricultural producers. As I told the audience, the best place to invest in Northern Australia, especially for resources, is Northern Queensland. Northern Queensland has all the comparative advantages for investment in mineral and energy resources: one, there are plenty of resources there; two, we are good at getting them out of the ground; three, we are very efficient at moving them from mine to market; and, four, there is a strong demand in the world market for our resources.

Northern Queensland's attractions for miners go on. It has significant energy and water supply to meet forecast demand beyond 2030. It has a highly skilled, safety oriented, educated workforce in a stable industrial relations environment. As I told the summit, if you want certainty, if you want action, if you want growth, come to North Queensland. Potential investors can choose Northern Queensland knowing that the Palaszczuk government can be relied upon for clear direction, ready access to decision-makers and transparent decision-making. By its results this summit will prove to be a great success.

Northern Queensland Economic Summit

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing) (9.53 am): Last week the Palaszczuk government hosted the state's first Northern Queensland Economic Summit in Cairns. With almost 300 people in attendance and more than 70 international investors, the event has opened the doors to an array of opportunities, and I am pleased to say opportunities in the agribusiness space were a topic of great interest. My role was to make the case for investment in our northern agriculture sector, and it goes without saying that many of the investors present were very interested in hearing about what we have to offer as a state.

With so many opportunities, established supply chains and a range of government initiatives that capitalise on our competitive strengths, there was plenty for us to talk about, and they were most keen to hear. By 2050 world food demand is expected to rise by 77 per cent in monetary terms, and much of that demand is expected to come from Asia and the Indo-Pacific where demand is expected to double. These markets have a growing demand for premium and value added products, and North Queensland is well positioned to capitalise on its competitive strengths to exploit this future demand.


From the opportunities in the beef sector through to our fresh produce and aquaculture sector, the message I conveyed to investors was clear: in Queensland our agricultural products are clean, green, safe and supported, and we are ready to work with you to develop those export opportunities. During the welcome dinner those investors got a taste for those fine products firsthand. During the networking functions I was also approached by a number of international investors who were very keen to touch base in the coming weeks to talk further about opportunities in the agriculture space.

All in all, it was a very successful event. It has certainly created a buzz in agricultural circles in the north. I look forward to seeing tangible outcomes for our local producers in the months and years ahead.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Hinchinbrook. I urge you to stop your interjections.

Overseas Visit

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (9.55 am): He is not very happy this morning. Maybe I can make you a little bit happier, honourable member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr SPEAKER: Please do not bait the member for Hinchinbrook, Minister.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Ms JONES: Oh, come on. I am just sharing the joy.

Mr SPEAKER: No. We have had enough. Through the chair, please, Minister.

Ms JONES: I am just so happy to be here, Mr Speaker. Next week I will lead a tourism mission to China to capitalise on the significant growth opportunities for Queensland. As we heard very strongly in Cairns at the Northern Queensland Economic Summit, China is our most valuable and fastest growing international market, with Chinese travellers spending \$834 million in Queensland last year—up 43 per cent in the year to June 2015. Today's *Courier-Mail* reports that for the first time the number of Chinese visitors has surpassed New Zealand visitors to Queensland. In Queensland we have seen 359,000 Chinese visitors—an increase of 19 per cent over the last 12 months.

We know that increasing aviation access is key to bolstering growth from China. The primary focus of the tourism delegation is to maximise aviation and investment opportunities for Queensland.


Ms Palaszczuk: More flights, Minister.

Ms JONES: That is exactly right, Premier. We will be meeting with key airline partners, including China Southern, and investors to secure more direct flights and more tourism investment from China.

In Guangzhou we will meet with the White Horse Group, which is investing \$600 million in the development of a luxury resort on Lindeman Island. In Shanghai, the delegation will meet with the China Capital Investment Group to discuss their development plans for Daydream Island. I will be travelling to Yunnan Province to inspect the Wanda resort and theme park to explore new investment opportunities for Queensland. The Wanda Group has already shown confidence in the Queensland market with its \$1 billion Jewel development on the Gold Coast.

During my meetings I will also highlight Queensland's strengths in tourism and hospitality training to ensure our industry has the skills to meet growing demand. We are determined to grow the \$23 billion tourism industry in Queensland because it means more jobs for Queenslanders. Following the Premier's recent visit to China and the very successful Northern Queensland Economic Summit last week, this mission will help strengthen our tourism partnerships and increase Queensland's share of this growing Chinese market.

Smoking Reforms

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.58 am): All members will be aware of the terrible damage that smoking causes to Queenslanders. Each year 3,700 Queenslanders will die as a result of smoking. That is over 10 people each and every day. Smoking is responsible for over 36,000 hospitalisations in Queensland each year. Smoking is also a burden on our state's economy and businesses. Each year in Queensland an estimated \$6.1 billion in lost productivity, health costs and premature death can be attributed to smoking.


Later today I will be introducing legislation into the House that will see further restrictions placed on smoking. Under this legislation Queensland will have the toughest antismoking laws in the country. Under this legislation local councils will be given the power to ban smoking in public spaces not covered by statewide bans. The legislation will also ban smoking at or near children's organised sporting events and skate parks; ban smoking in and around approved early childhood education and care services, including kindergartens and places offering after-hours care; ban smoking at all residential aged-care facilities outside of designated areas; increase the smoke-free buffer at all government, commercial and non-residential building entrances from four to five metres; ban smoking at pedestrian precincts around prescribed state government buildings, such as 1 William Street; ban smoking at specified national parks or parts of national parks and at public swimming pools; ban smoking at all outdoor pedestrian malls and public transport waiting points; and ban the sale of tobacco products from pop-up retail outlets, such as at music festivals.

A wide range of consultation has occurred with local councils, childcare organisations and many other Queenslanders interested in this topic. The legislation is strongly supported by the Australian Medical Association of Queensland and the Cancer Council Queensland. Cancer Council Queensland chief executive, Professor Jeff Dunn AO, said—

This Bill responds to community appeals for smoke-free places and acknowledges the evidence that most smokers want to quit, but need to be nudged. It raises the global benchmark in tobacco control and sets a new standard for public health and wellbeing.

Australian Medical Association Queensland president, Dr Chris Zappala, said, 'These proposed laws will make Queensland the nation's leader in antismoking legislation.' I sincerely thank the Cancer Council Queensland and the AMA Queensland for their support for the government's proposed legislation and thank them for the work they do for Queenslanders. The Palaszczuk government is implementing reform and introducing legislation which will improve the health of all Queenslanders.

Alcohol Fuelled Violence


 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (10.00 am): The Palaszczuk government has made a commitment to tackling violence in our communities. Whether it is domestic and family violence in our homes or whether it is violence on our streets, we oppose all violence in our communities. This government took a comprehensive plan to tackle alcohol fuelled violence to the election, and we will deliver on it. Our plan is based on the advice of experts in the field and the evidenced experiences of other jurisdictions. This policy has got the balance right. It allows our clubs and venues to continue to trade and for Queensland to have a vibrant night-life at the same time as making our communities safer. I consulted for eight months with a wide range of stakeholders. I always said that I was more happy to explain the rationale behind the government's policy than to have to sit down with parents to explain why their child has died as a result of alcohol fuelled violence.

This week I will introduce a comprehensive package that will see the implementation of statewide last drinks at 2 am. This is an improvement on our election commitment based on consultation and research. For every hour that alcohol is served post midnight, the risk of assault increases. Safe-night precincts will have the opportunity to apply for a lockout at 1 am, with last drinks at 3 am. All venues within the precinct would be subject to that lockout of 1 am. This approach provides choice to local precincts. The service of high-alcohol rapid consumption drinks from midnight will be prohibited, the definition of which will be contained in regulations and will be developed with stakeholders. Licensed

premises can apply for up to 12 special event licences per year, allowing them to extend their hours for alcohol service for one-off events such as sporting events and New Year's Eve. This policy ensures from the date of this statement that no trading hours for the sale of takeaway liquor beyond 10 pm will be granted. Any decisions about the implementation of mandatory ID scanners will be deferred until September 2016 subject to further consultation and agreement with stakeholders.

A review will be conducted after two years from 1 July 2016, which is the planned commencement date of these provisions. Our plan is a comprehensive package to tackle alcohol fuelled violence and reduce harm in our communities.


Northern Queensland Economic Summit

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algerst—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation) (10.03 am): It gives me great pleasure to update the House on the Palaszczuk government's Northern Queensland Economic Summit, which was held last week in Cairns. As Minister for Science and Innovation, the summit was an opportunity for me to talk to investors about the current and future potential of North Queensland as a key innovation, entrepreneurial and research hub in the Asia-Pacific. Leading businesses and global investors can have a great deal of confidence that North Queensland will be at the centre of new opportunities in the knowledge economy. We have world-leading talent and a highly regarded university system where cutting-edge research is finding new vaccines and treatments for diseases of the tropics including dengue fever, malaria and rheumatic fever.

Our expertise is not confined to life sciences: we can also play a crucial role in terms of emerging industries and technologies. Our businesses and researchers are at the forefront of using the power of platforms, sensors, robotics, autonomous vehicles, big data and analytics to increase productivity. We have our rich biodiversity. Just one hectare of the Daintree is home to more flowering tree species than in all of temperate North America. Together with the knowledge of many thousands of generations, this is a unique basis to explore new treatments and growth in emerging markets such as nutraceuticals. North Queensland also offers tremendous benefits as an innovation hub and a key gateway into rapidly expanding global markets. We share time zones with key Asian markets and have long-established collaborative R and D partnerships with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Chinese ministry of science and technology and the Indian ministry of biotechnology.

Business can have confidence in a government that is determined to drive growth in the knowledge economy. The Palaszczuk government will strongly back entrepreneurs, businesses, investors and researchers who are determined to realise opportunities through our \$180 million Advance Queensland initiative, which is creating the knowledge based jobs of the future. Research and education are vitally important to North Queensland's future, but supporting the evolving innovation culture is also a key to success. That is why my department will shortly be rolling out a range of programs to support new start-ups in North Queensland and to help them to thrive in global markets. The future looks very bright indeed for the region and all of Queensland.

Northern Queensland Economic Summit

 **Hon. CJ O'ROURKE** (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland) (10.05 am): Last week I joined the Premier and all my cabinet colleagues at the first Northern Queensland Economic Summit. What a fantastic event this was for North Queensland, with more than 250 delegates from across Australia and around the world there for the three-day summit. More than 75 international organisations attended from countries across Asia, Europe and the United Kingdom, with delegates including local and international investors, major banks and financiers, corporations, project proponents and mayors.

We have never seen such a huge representation of delegates convene on North Queensland to talk about investment opportunities and investment-ready projects. This is another example of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to developing North Queensland and something that I am incredibly proud to be a part of as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland.


At the summit I had the opportunity to meet with a range of delegates from across Australia and overseas. It was exciting to hear from both investors and businesses. The range of investment ideas was incredible—from agriculture and aquaculture to biotech and virtual farming. I was delighted to talk to a biofuels business that cultivates yeast culture from biofuels by-products. The business currently operates out of New South Wales but is wanting to expand. I am pleased to inform the House that after

attending the summit this business feels confident that, with the strong government commitment to biofuels and important connections to industry established, in the words of the business owners they are 'ready to buy their maroon jerseys and make the switch across the border'.

On the final day of the summit, as the Minister for State Development has stated, we led a delegation on a tour around Townsville to showcase what our great city has to offer. From Castle Hill to Southbank, the port, the CBD and waterfront area, I was proud to showcase our sights to our international visitors. We heard presentations from Townsville Enterprise, the port of Townsville and Townsville City Council reiterating that Townsville is a great place to do business.

I would like to thank my ministerial colleagues for attending the summit and providing attendees with insights into their portfolios. I will continue working hard to make sure all my colleagues continue to be aware of the economic opportunities in this region.

Port of Townsville

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (10.08 am): Earlier this year I was very pleased to join the members for Mundingburra, Thuringowa and Townsville at the port of Townsville to announce the upgrade of berth 4 after the Palaszczuk government kept the port in public hands. Today I am encouraging experienced local contractors to review the tender for supply and construction of the berth 4 redevelopment. The tender was released to the public yesterday and will be open to submissions for 6½ weeks, closing at 2 pm on Thursday, 24 December this year.

Works will take place on the berth 4 wharf and backing land and will include marine and land piling, suspended concrete slabs, wharf deck and pile demolition, services installation and pavement construction to facilitate greater container capacity. The release of the tender is an important milestone in the project, which could help deliver a 20 per cent increase on total tonnage at the port. This hefty project is an investment to improve efficiencies, create North Queensland jobs and capacity at the port of Townsville as well as grow the North Queensland economy. It is part of a program of works including the stage 4 Townsville ring-road currently under construction so that Townsville can deliver frequent and direct services to international markets. We expect around 100 North Queensland jobs will be created during the construction phase and the full upgrade to take around 18 months to complete. The upgrade and redevelopment of berth 4 will facilitate access for larger Panamax size vessels, create a landside cargo handling area and improve intermodal transfer of cargo to both road and rail.

This project follows the \$40 million in private sector investment by the port's two major stevedoring companies, Northern Stevedoring Services and Townsville Bulk Storage & Handling, into warehousing, cargo storage areas and harbour cranes. Works on the berth 4 redevelopment project will kick off early next year, with the new upgraded facility expected to commence operations late in 2017. The tender document is now available on the Queensland government e-tender website. I encourage all interested parties to review the documents and consider getting involved.

The port of Townsville is a vital and strategic trading port for North Queensland and is Northern Australia's largest general cargo and container port. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new chair, Renita Garard, on her appointment. Renita was born in Townsville, she is a dual Olympian and she brings a wealth of commercial and leadership experience to the position.

I am very pleased to also advise the House that the port of Townsville will establish a sister port relationship with Indonesia Port Corporation II, with a memorandum of understanding to be signed this week in Canberra at the Indonesia-Australia business summit. This agreement will strengthen our economic and commercial bonds with Indonesia and leverage trade and port operations opportunities and development. The port itself continues to go from strength to strength and is a great example of a government owned business kicking goals for Queenslanders locally and abroad.

Mr Cripps interjected.


Mr BAILEY: The member for Hinchinbrook may not like this, but perhaps that is a sad—

Ms Trad: He doesn't like anything today.

Mr BAILEY: He does not like anything today. The member for Hinchinbrook is having a bit of a grumpy day.

It is a sad indictment that those opposite were planning to sell off the port of Townsville to the private sector.

Great Barrier Reef, Water Quality

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (10.12 am): The Queensland government was elected with a mandate to respond to reef related threats and is committed to programs that encourage more effective reef protection. This includes re-enlivening legislation that aims to reduce the loss of fertilisers, pesticides and sediment from cane and grazing properties in key reef catchments. The previous LNP government decided not to enforce the legislated minimum standards that are in place to help protect the reef from damaging run-off. They abolished the reef protection team, which worked to ensure the minimum standards were observed. They abolished Labor's tree-clearing laws, delivering a massive increase in deforestation.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Hinchinbrook. You will have a chance to put some questions or speak shortly. I call the minister.

Dr MILES: Recently, I released the reef report card for 2014. In that reef report card we saw the consequences of the previous LNP government's decisions. Progress on reducing pollutants entering reef catchments flatlined under the previous government. The reef report card makes it abundantly clear that we must do more if we are to have any chance of meeting the water quality targets embedded in the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan presented to UNESCO and agreed to by the Commonwealth and Queensland governments. First of all, we must see far more growers and graziers adopting improved farming practices.


The Palaszczuk government is committed to working with industry to achieve greater participation in voluntary industry led best management practice programs, which provide the best way for farmers to improve their profitability and productivity while delivering better environmental outcomes. As the previous LNP government demonstrated, relying on the voluntary uptake of BMP alone is not enough to deliver the outcomes we need. Industry leaders have told me they are sick of their efforts being undermined by those that will not even adopt the minimum standards. The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is developing a targeted compliance program, committing \$1 million in funding to bolster on-the-ground presence and activity. The basic standards require farmers to undertake soil tests, to avoid using more than the optimum amount of nitrogen and phosphorous fertiliser and soil conditioners based on the soil tests, to keep records of fertiliser and pesticide use and to follow label instructions when using pesticides. This program will build on and complement the department's existing programs supporting BMP and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' extension program. Our main focus will be support and education, but targeted enforcement action will be taken where necessary.

The department will continue to work closely with key industry bodies such as AgForce and Canegrowers in the development of the compliance workforce training packages, the approved forms to be completed by farmers to evidence compliance and the selection of priority regional areas for departmental focus.

Opposition members interjected.


Dr MILES: Members opposite do not like it, but the reef report card results are a real wake-up call for everyone involved in reef water quality protection programs. I am confident that the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce, which will issue an interim report by the end of the year, will provide a road map to help us turn these results around. In the meantime we will not be repeating the mistakes of those opposite. We will keep working with agricultural industries on the reef coast to get the basics right for water quality improvement.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.16 am): I wish to advise the House that the Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships will be absent from the House today and tomorrow due to illness. As you are aware, Mr Speaker, the member for Toowoomba North has formally agreed to be paired for this absence.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND CORRUPTION COMMITTEE

Report


 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (10.16 am): As acting chair of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, I table the committee's 2014-15 annual report.

Tabled paper: Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee: Report No. 96—Annual Report 2014-15 [[1589](#)].

The report outlines the work and the activities of the committee during 2014-15, which includes the work of both the 54th and 55th parliaments. As acting chair of the committee, I thank the current and former members of the committee and the secretariat for their work during the reporting year. I commend the report to the House.

NOTICE OF MOTION


Select Committee on Rural Debt and Drought

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.17 am): I give notice that I shall move—

1. That this House establishes the Select Committee on Rural Debt and Drought to examine Queensland farm businesses' rural debt issues which have been exacerbated by drought and propose policy responses.
2. The committee is to consider:
 - (a) the nature and extent of financial problems faced by agriculture associated enterprises, local government and supporting communities;
 - (b) identify causes of problems and contribution of established policy;
 - (c) the extent of such problems and effect on regional stability;
 - (d) what strategies might be adopted and initiatives undertaken to rectify such problems;
 - (e) the impacts that such strategies and initiatives might have;
 - (f) policy options available to coordinate effective remediation;
 - (g) the nature and desirability of select actions; and
 - (h) adequacy of existing financial systems to fund policy solutions.
3. The committee is to comprise:
 - i) the member for Mount Isa (Chair)
 - ii) one member appointed by the Leader of the House
 - iii) one member appointed by the Leader of the Opposition.
4. Notwithstanding standing orders, the appointment of members by the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition shall be by writing to the Clerk, who shall table immediately the letters of nomination.
5. Every member of the committee has a vote in every question before the committee and the chair of the committee has a vote and a casting vote.
6. The committee is an authorised committee and has the power to call for persons, papers and things.
7. The committee shall report within 60 days of this order.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS


Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.18 am): There is nothing more important for the government than to keep its citizens safe, and I have been shocked to see the politicisation of the royal commission into organised crime by Michael Byrne QC by a number of those opposite. This is a classic case of overreach that is obviously being used as some sort of justification for the government's predetermination to repeal and replace the criminal gang laws that we brought in when we were in government. The claims and wild accusations of those opposite and the public statements of the commissioner himself and the ministers are not borne out by the facts that are contained within. The facts and findings of the royal commission were not explored through public hearings but were rather conducted during in camera hearings, in contrast to what was originally intended. Let us have a look at what happened that led us to bringing in those laws which were then subject to examination by the royal commission.

Under the previous Labor government before we came in, Gold Coasters could no longer feel safe in their homes, on the streets or in restaurants. If you were a reputable businessman in a number of different industries—locksmiths, massage, tow trucks or tattoos—there was a good chance that you had been extorted. Tattoo parlours were being firebombed; people were being shot on the street; in Hooker Boulevard, Mermaid Beach, there was a body found, and former ministers Paul Lucas and Neil Roberts said there was no problem at the Gold Coast. They refused to admit that there was a problem. Things came to a head in September 2013 when there was a public brawl followed by a siege, and we took the very firm position that we had to do something. People wanted action. Unlike this government, we were prepared to take action, make a decision and do something, so that is what we did. We asked police what they needed, and we gave them \$14 million, 1,100 extra police and \$7 million to the Crime and Corruption Commission.

It was not as those opposite have portrayed it, reflecting poorly on the police in other parts of the police administration, that we took away from child protection units or fraud units. But we did not hear anything from the police minister about that! There was silence from the police minister. Who defended the actions of police over those two years since that incident in September 2013? It took Acting Commissioner Ross Barnett to come out and say it was really intrapolice sparring over resources, but resources were actually increased: Task Force Maxima, 89; Task Force Argos, 100; and the Child Protection Investigation Unit, 632—yet today the Premier makes much of the fact that she has added another six to Argos. It just goes to show that there is nothing this government will not stoop to politicise. As a parliamentarian I find them irresponsible; as a Queenslander I find them reckless; as a parent I find it abhorrent.

Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (10.21 am): What I find abhorrent is the way that the LNP have personalised this issue and attacked the commissioner. They are the ones who are politicising this commission of inquiry. If those opposite want to talk about being parents and having concerns, why don't they pick up this report, have a read about child exploitation and stop carrying on about what the Newman government did in relation to outlaw motorcycle gangs. We have acknowledged that this is an issue in this state. Outlaw motorcycle gangs are part of organised crime, but the problem with the Newman government is that they were so blinkered in everything they did that all they did was focus on this area. They made a virtue of the fact that they were targeting this, despite Campbell Newman's own comment at the start of his first term—his only term—that bikies' colours are the same as football jerseys. That is how serious it was at the beginning!

We take crime involving outlaw motorcycle gangs seriously, and that is why we have a task force to look at legislation to tackle this sort of crime. We are doing it properly, which is something those on the other side did not do. Within one week they whipped up a piece of legislation; they introduced it and passed it in a matter of hours—that is how much consideration went into their effort to tackle this. The difference between the LNP and the Labor government is that we recognise—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I call the Attorney-General.

Mrs D'ATH: We recognise that organised crime in this state is more than just outlaw motorcycle gangs. Michael Byrne QC, a highly respected legal professional in this state, has put together—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Kawana, you will have an opportunity to put a question or to speak shortly.

Mrs D'ATH: Michael Byrne QC, a highly respected legal professional in this state, has put together a comprehensive report which states that crime committed by outlaw motorcycle gangs since 2013, when the VLAD laws were brought in, until June of this year made up 0.52 per cent. Now we have child exploitation and financial crime on the Gold Coast. There are boilers rooms on the Gold Coast, and I would think that the member for Surfers Paradise would be concerned about that. We have these sorts of crimes happening right now, things like illicit drugs, and we have the responsibility to ensure that we have the policies and the resources to address all organised crime in this state, not just outlaw motorcycle gangs. We owe it to our kids as parents and members of this parliament to step up and support these recommendations.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, if you want to say something you will have the opportunity to speak or to put a question. That is not an invitation.


Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. There has been a longstanding tradition in this place to be able to respond to an attack. The Attorney-General spent three minutes attacking our side of government—

Mr SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Resume your seat!

Mr SEENEY: It is absurd for you to suggest that I cannot respond.

Mr SPEAKER: That is a reflection on the chair. You are warned under standing order 252.

Alcohol Fuelled Violence

 **Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (10.25 am): From one policy disaster, organised crime, to another. I awoke on Sunday morning, as did most Queenslanders, to get a surprise when I read the front page of the *Sunday Mail*. The surprise was the government's policy on alcohol fuelled violence. We never heard it before; it was not the 10-point policy plan that they took to the election; it was not the policy that the member for Stafford staked his life upon; and it was not the policy, as I quickly found out after talking to stakeholders, that had allegedly been consulted widely upon because they were as surprised as anybody else in Queensland when suddenly, out of the blue, 2 am came out of somebody's pocket—

Mr Stevens: Pick a number!

Mr WALKER: Pick a number indeed, as the Leader of Opposition Business says. The first point that has to be made about this important debate is that nobody in this debate has a mortgage on concern for the safety of people who are enjoying a good night out in our entertainment precincts. It was for that very reason, the safety of people consuming alcohol and enjoying themselves in these entertainment precincts, we set up an inquiry during our term of government which was proper consultation. Thirteen thousand Queenslanders took part in that consultation and a policy was developed which included Safe Night Out precincts, extra policing, Safe Night Out precinct committees to supervise those precincts and compulsory ID scanning. That is a policy which is too hard for the government to deal with, because they have run a mile and it has been put on the backburner. That was a policy that did adequately look at the safety of people, which is the most important thing, and also gave proper consideration to the vibrant night-life that we need to have in a tourist destination like Queensland. That is the balance that needed to be struck, and it was struck. The government went to the election with this policy, and I table it.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Tackling alcohol-fuelled violence' [1590].


This is a 10-point plan for tackling alcohol fuelled violence. They have started at the beginning, because point No. 1 is no longer the government's policy. Point No. 1 was the 1 am lockout and the 3 am closure, the member for Stafford's favourite, and he has been done over. It is no longer the government's policy; they pulled 2 am out of their back pocket. When they table their package of material I will be interested to see whether policy No. 6 gets a run. It is a good one. It will have police sitting beside you in the bar breathalysing you before you go just to be sure that you have not overimbibed. There is no trust, no waiting to see if you do something wrong. Point No. 6 will empower police to breathalyse intoxicated or disorderly patrons, so the coppers will be there ready to take a breath test from you. Even their local government candidate says—

I fear locking the doors on our pubs and clubs will be a handbrake on Brisbane realising its potential ...

What consultation have they done?

(Time expired)

Alcohol Fuelled Violence

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (10.30 am): Those opposite and those on this side of the House know how important this issue is to me. For 12 years I have been consulted on this issue. For over 20 years I have been operating. In the last 10 years I have seen a rapid rise in the number of injuries caused by alcohol fuelled violence coming through our hospitals.

The shadow Attorney-General mentioned 2 am. Eight months of solid consultation by the Attorney-General and the community proved that a stronger option must be used. We know that for every hour of reduction of service there is a reduction in admissions to our emergency departments of at least 17 per cent. Providing the option of 2 am actually strengthens the proposal. All of the community groups, the hospitals and the AMA supported us providing this extra strength to our initiative.

Those opposite had a go. I feel that their hearts were in it, to try to do something about it, but they were missing the big picture. The big initiative is the reduction in opening hours, which all of the evidence supports. They could bring all the support because they are the easy things for the government to do. The hard thing for a government to do is to work on the evidence and do what is hard but what is good for the safety of our children.

Last night I walked in to my house and opened the mail, which included the *Medical Journal of Australia* November edition. The front cover promoted the lead article with the line 'Sobering: Liquor regulation decreases serious injury'. I table that journal for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: The Medical Journal of Australia, dated 2 November 2015, Volume 203, No. 9 [1591].

We propose a modest reduction that will produce a big effect. That effect is to bring our kids home safely. The evidence is there. The evidence is strong. There is evidence of a reduction in violence as well as evidence from Newcastle. By making our night-time communities safer, our night-time economies improve. There will be more jobs, more establishments, more small bars and more late-night entertainment venues. This is what makes a difference. I am happy to discuss all of these initiatives with any individual on the other side of the House or with the whole group. I will talk to the whole group about this initiative—no doubt at all.

Eighteen months ago on a Tuesday there was an all-day operating list. On the Monday we saw the people; on the Tuesday we operated. Just 18 months ago I would be operating on people at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. I call for bipartisanship. The AMA does. I think the safety of our kids is beyond politics on this very serious issue.

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance



Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.33 am): When this parliament last sat, a fortnight ago, this government had no plan. In the intervening fortnight it still had no plan. Indeed, this government's lack of a plan is holding Queensland back. Over the past week to two weeks, more and more data and more and more economic reports have indicated the result of this government being elected without a plan. Indeed, even the plans they are developing continue to fall apart before they have even been published. It was a classic last week—

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister for Education, I would urge you to desist from your interjections or you will be warned under standing order 253A.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Indeed, the interjecting minister went off to the forum in North Queensland promising to bring a new era of economic development in Queensland with a newly minted Queensland Tourism Investment Guide. Do honourable members notice anything missing? Half the Gold Coast is missing from that! Those opposite do not know about a lot of the plans they are developing, but the ones they do know about have to be pulped before they are even put out. That is the extent of the incompetence of this government.

What did the Minister for Tourism say when asked about it? She said that she was upset. Indeed, there are a lot of upset ministers over there. The ministers who are not upset are clueless. Some of the ministers are even multi-tasking: they are upset and clueless together! That is what we are seeing from those members on the other side of the parliament. Right at the very top, we have a Premier who does not even know that she has an economic policy unit that is working on a plan for the Queensland government. Minister after minister stood in this place and ruled it out. Only two weeks later they stood up in this place and adopted at least one of the policies. That was with regard to charging tolls on heavy vehicles in this state. So one day things are ruled out but the next day they are in. There is part of a policy one day, but the next day it is out or has been bungled. We see old material and old photos. How can people actually think this government is a professional outfit?

Some weeks ago the member for Stafford came into this place and rushed through legislation, bypassing the parliamentary committee, to reinstate appellate rights with regard to major resource development. Now he is campaigning against his own policy. We have ministers introducing legislation to parliament—

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: Question time will conclude at 11.36 am.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Ministers

Mr SPRINGBORG (10.36 am): My question without notice is to the Premier. In her first month in office the Deputy Premier ruled out the Bus and Train tunnel, otherwise known as the BaT tunnel, saying, 'It's off the agenda.' Last week the tourism minister released the Queensland Tourism Investment Guide, which states on page 11 that the BaT tunnel is being actively considered. That is in the pulped and the non-pulped version. Which minister does the Premier stand by?

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is very well known and on the public record that we on this side of politics support the development of public transport infrastructure in this state, in stark contrast to those opposite. It was only with the appointment of the new Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, that the Commonwealth came to the party in relation to signing off on stage 2 of Gold Coast Light Rail.

We know that Cross River Rail is important for the development of public transport infrastructure in the south-east corner. We know that those opposite were putting forward the BaT tunnel, but it is the Cross River Rail tunnel which is significant and which is important to the development of public transport infrastructure in this state.

I draw the attention of the House to a letter I have received from the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, about public transport infrastructure in this state. He said—

Concerning infrastructure investment, I am pleased to see that positive urban rail projects are amongst your state's priority infrastructure investments and welcome the opportunity to announce with you on 11 October the Commonwealth's contribution to the Gold Coast Light Rail project.

But wait, there's more—

I look forward to considering these and other projects in next year's budget along with Infrastructure Australia's assessment and 15-year plan.

Clearly, at the Commonwealth level both the LNP and Labor are focused on public transport infrastructure in this state. What do we see from those opposite? Absolutely nothing. Where did they stand on the extension of public transport light rail on the Gold Coast? We know where the member for Southport stood, because he was there wanting to get the selfie with me and the Prime Minister. We do not know where the other shadow ministers—

Mr SPRINGBORG: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. My question to the Premier was specifically about which minister was right in relation to the government's policy on the BaT tunnel. The Deputy Premier ruled it out while the tourism minister ruled it in. Which minister is right with regard to the Bus and Train tunnel?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. Premier, I would ask you to make sure your answer is relevant to the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is very clear that we have put forward our case to Infrastructure Australia of Cross River Rail and my question is this for those opposite: where do they stand? Where do they stand—

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, I would urge you not to debate the opposition.

Before I call the Leader of the Opposition for his next question, I urge the member for Albert to be careful with your frivolous interjections or you will be warned under standing order 253A.

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Infrastructure Projects

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question without notice is to the Minister for Tourism, and I ask: given the minister has already been forced to pulp the first copy of the ad hoc rushed tourism strategy, will the minister now be making a further correction given that the Bus and Train tunnel and not Cross River Rail was ruled out in the government's first month in office?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for his question, and it just shows where the opposition is at. Let us tackle the big issues here. I want to be very clear about this. Nothing got pulped, and that was recorded in the media last week. There were 100 produced for the forum and we have been working to ensure that it is updated and reflects the latest information. What I am interested in as the Minister for Tourism in this state is growing tourism and tourism jobs. If the Leader of the Opposition

was standing there with a letter from QTIC saying that we had a bad Minister for Tourism in Queensland, we would be taking him seriously. But what did it say on 19 October 2015? It wrote to the Premier and said—

I trust the last few months of 2015 will end a great year for you and your government. Congratulations on the achievements so far. Among other significant developments it seems that the extension to the light rail on the Gold Coast and a new stadium in the north have moved from pipedreams to realities or probabilities within recent months. I can only say when you are on a roll keep going.

It further said—

Finally I would like to add that your tourism minister, Kate Jones, is doing an outstanding job and is well on track to make a longstanding mark and a contribution.

The reason—

Honourable members interjected.

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

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! One moment. Pause the clock. What is your point of order, member for Mermaid Beach?

Mr STEVENS: With regard to standing order 118, the minister is not answering in any way directly to the question that was asked. Please bring her back to relevance in her answer.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister, I would urge you to make sure your answer is relevant to the question. I call the minister.

Ms JONES: I started by answering the question very clearly by correcting the imputation in his question, which he knows is wrong because it has been on the public record. Secondly, I will absolutely put my record against their record when it comes to tourism in this state. What was the first thing that I did? When those opposite went to cut tourism by half—halve the budget—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the minister.

Ms JONES: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. It was not self-praise; it was praise from QTIC, the peak industry body for tourism. That is who. The first—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister for Education, you certainly are able to provoke the opposition. I call the minister. Do you have anything further you would like to add?

Ms JONES: Yes, I do, because this is very serious for me.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Ms JONES: When it comes to tourism in this state—

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, Minister. Member for Chatsworth, I would urge you to cease your frivolous interjections. I call the minister for her answer.

Ms JONES: Mr Speaker, when it comes to tourism, I will pit my record against the LNP any day of the week, and I know that because the No. 1 issue when I became the minister was securing funding for the future. Those opposite went to the last election saying one thing to the public and cutting the Tourism budget in half in this state. No money was secured for the next four years which—

Mrs STUCKEY: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, please. I know you are passionate about it—

Ms JONES: I am—very.

Mr SPEAKER:—but you are not able to debate the question.

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

Mr SPEAKER: Resume your seat. I now call the member for Barron River.

Mrs STUCKEY: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Sorry, what was your point of order?

Mrs STUCKEY: I did call.

Mr SPEAKER: Sorry.

Mrs STUCKEY: I find the minister's words offensive and I ask her to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Did they reflect on you personally?

Mrs STUCKEY: Yes, they did in my time as minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, the protocol is that if a member finds comments personally offensive they are withdrawn. Will you please withdraw unconditionally?

Ms JONES: I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you.

Northern Queensland Economic Summit

Mr CRAWFORD: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier outline to the House what opportunities have already arisen out of the North Queensland Economic Summit held last week?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Barron River very much for that question and also thank the member for Barron River and the member for Cairns for their attendance at the North Queensland Economic Summit held last week. As I said earlier in my ministerial statement, this was the very first of its kind ever held in Queensland, and what an outstanding success! There were over 270 people from across-the-board—Australian companies and international companies. I might just share with the House some of the top business companies that were in attendance: Iwasaki group, the Wonder Group, JFE Steel from Japan, the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation and General Electric. In terms of banks, attendees included the Bank of China, the China Construction Bank, China Development Bank, Mitsui Banking Corporation and the Bank of Tokyo just to name a few. What they made very clear to me is if they did not think there were opportunities to invest in Northern Queensland they would not have attended. They came to Cairns—they came to Northern Queensland—because they share our vision for job creation in the north of our state. I am very proud of the level of engagement that we saw from all of my ministers in attendance. My whole cabinet was there on the first night because we wanted to show the investors in Queensland that we are taking this extremely seriously and we want to work with them and we want to get to know them because we know of the opportunities that will come into the future.

I can also report that I have had some further conversations with the Consul of China, and I know that the Minister for Tourism is going to China very shortly to talk about further tourism opportunities. We know that there are opportunities for direct flights to Shanghai which are in the pipeline, but the Chinese Consul also said to me that he can see further opportunities in more direct flights into China. Today the Minister for Tourism talked about how more Chinese visitors are coming to Queensland—over 390,000 visitors from memory—and we want to grow that market.

Mr Stevens interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You should be happy, member for Mermaid Beach, because they also want to come to the Gold Coast. One of the local small business owners who was exhibiting at the North Queensland Economic Summit was snapped up straightaway and she is now showing her samples at the Shanghai food and hospitality show this week. The other exciting news is that Fullshare International has also confirmed that it will commence construction on the Laguna Whitsundays project at the beginning of next year—a great outcome for the north.

Department of Education and Training, Information Technology

Mr MANDER: My question is to the Minister for Education. Since the discovery of the failure of the OneSchool student protection module in the department of education, can the minister advise if there have been any other incidents which have affected the security and integrity of the department's IT systems?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I can advise that a statement has been issued by the Queensland Government Chief Information Officer in relation to a security threat to departmental and TAFE websites. A statement has been issued by the Chief Information Officer and the QPS in relation to this. We are taking it very seriously and Department of Education and Training employees have been working very closely with police and the government's Chief Information Officer in this regard.

Public Safety

Mr KELLY: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier address any recent initiatives designed to keep Queenslanders safe at night?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Greenslopes very much for his question. We know how important it is to keep people safe in our community. I reassure not just members of this House but the Queensland public that my government is determined not just to tackle issues of domestic and family violence but we will also tackle the issues of alcohol fuelled violence. Over the last eight months the Attorney-General and the Minister for State Development, given his previous role of being a surgeon, have been out there consulting with stakeholders.

The legislation that we will introduce into the parliament this week gets the balance right. We would like to see bipartisan support in this House, because tackling this issue is like tackling domestic violence. We want to see the number of hospital admissions reduced in this state. It is unacceptable to have the number of hospital admissions that we see in our state. It is unacceptable for surgeons to be working throughout the night on Sunday and Monday putting people's faces back together. It is also unacceptable for parents to be at home waiting to know if their children are going to come home safely.

I have been encouraged by the level of support that we have seen out there in the community. The AMA has come out in support. Clubs Queensland has come out in support. The universities have come out in support. This balance is right. The 2 am is a very clear signal that 2 am is the time for last drinks across the state. But for entertainment precincts, a 1 am lockout and a 3 am can apply.

What is this about? It is about people's safety. As a government, I cannot be any clearer to the people of Queensland. We went to the election saying that we were going to tackle this issue and we have tackled this issue head-on.

I urge members opposite to listen to Dr Lynham's presentation very carefully. I also urge members to listen to the new member for Moggill, because he used to be the head of the AMA in this state. He understands the effect that alcohol has on violence. This is a measure on which we can stand united. We can pass this legislation together and we can show very clearly to the people of Queensland that we are making safety a paramount issue in this state.

TAFE Queensland, Information Technology

Mr LANGBROEK: My question without notice is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills. I refer to the Minister for Education's answer to the previous question without notice from the opposition and I ask: will the minister confirm that TAFE Queensland has experienced an IT security breach with TAFE Queensland students' personal details being hacked?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. I can confirm, as did the Minister for Education, that there has been an IT security breach that relates to TAFE Queensland and Department of Education and Training data. There is some information that can be released. I can state that the Queensland Government Chief Information Officer, as the Minister for Education has stated, has released a statement saying that they are confident that no financial data such as credit card information or bank details have been accessed. We are also confident that the information available that had been hacked is very low-level information in the majority of cases in that this information is information that would otherwise be found on our public websites, such as the white pages and so forth. So it is low-level information in that regard and it is information that is held in a way that is not very usable if anyone were to access this data.

As the Queensland Government Chief Information Officer has stated, for security reasons the government will not be providing specific details of the information illegally accessed. This is the appropriate course to take. I am sure that those on the other side are not immune to this. I say to those on the other side to be very careful, because when they were in government there had been breaches in relation to government IT systems.

This is not unique to Queensland; it is a national issue. There has been a release by the Queensland Police Service that states that the illegal activity follows a number of recent cyber attacks on other agencies across the country. I also table the media statement released by the Queensland Government Chief Information Officer.

I am sure those on the other side are dying to play politics on this issue, but the reality is that no government department is immune to hacking. Only yesterday, we saw reports in relation to submarines information. The fact is that the Department of Education and Training and TAFE have been working hand in hand to ensure the security of this data and to make sure that the matter is investigated to

ensure that information is secure going forward. This is a whole-of-government initiative. We need to make sure that all of our agency data is secure as best as possible and, where any of these incidents are identified, that proper action is taken.

Tabled paper: Media statement, dated 10 November 2015, by Queensland Government Chief Information Officer, Mr Andrew Mills, regarding security breach of TAFE Queensland and Department of Education and Training websites [1592].

Tabled paper: Media release, undated, by Queensland Police Service, titled 'QPS investigates IT security breach' [1593].

Public Transport, Tertiary Students

Mr PEGG: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier please update the House on how the Palaszczuk government is delivering on its election commitments and making it easier for tertiary students to use public transport and are there any alternative policies?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Stretton for his question, but I could barely see him above the glare of the member for Maryborough's jacket today.

I am very happy to update the House on what the Palaszczuk Labor government has done in relation to making travel for students in this state a lot easier. As the member for Stretton would know, because the member for Stretton has a lot of university students who live in his electorate, when the previous government and the previous transport minister introduced the failed Tertiary Transport Concession Card there was quite a large outcry from tertiary students in Queensland. This was a level of administrative burden for universities and students that we had not seen in Queensland before. For a government that touted itself as being responsible for reducing red tape, it seemed that it was red-tape reduction for everyone bar students. It was red-tape reduction for everyone bar those Queenslanders who are trying to get a higher education, who are trying to set themselves up for a new career in life and who are working part time in a lot of jobs.

At the last election we promised that we would abolish the TTCC. I made sure that we would do it knowing that we have a system in place that would make sure that we were providing concessional public transport fares for those people who are eligible. I have to report to the House that we have managed to do that. We have managed to do it in a smart way, not a vindictive way like the former Newman LNP government did.

We have spent a lot of time talking today about failed policies. This is quite an example of a failed policy. The former transport minister and the member for Indooroopilly came into this House and said that Queensland tertiary students were roting the public transport system in the vicinity of \$8 million a year—getting on public transport and not paying the right fare. So he instigated the TTCC. It cost Queenslanders \$1.7 million to administer and it reaped \$1.7 million—not the magic \$8 million that the former transport minister said they would reap from introducing the TTCC.

I am very pleased to inform the House that we have worked cooperatively with all of the higher education institutions and all of the further education institutions in Queensland to do data matching to make sure that we are providing concessional rates to students. We are doing it in a smart way, not a vindictive way, not in a punishing way like the former government did.

I have had an overwhelming number of people contact me via social media. A lot of them are ripping up their TTCC. Some are even framing theirs, because it took so long for them to get it from the former transport minister's department. This is the Palaszczuk government delivering—

(Time expired)

Government Contractors, Overpayment

Dr McVEIGH: My question without notice is to the Minister for Science and Innovation. With reference to contractors overpaid \$12 million by the department, can the minister advise when the first overpayment was identified and how many overpayments were made after that initial discovery?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. I am informed that Queensland Shared Services staff have been working hard to contact vendors regarding the double payments since the issue was discovered on 5 November. So it was a double payment. I can inform the House that, to date, \$8.6 million of the duplicate payments have been recovered. Preliminary inquiries indicate that, in an attempt to ensure that vendor payments had been properly processed, an inadvertent duplication had occurred. While it is a regrettable situation, this kind of duplicate payment is not a unique occurrence. In fact, in 2013 under the former government a similar duplicated payment occurred. I can assure the House that this was not an IT failure, but merely a case of a conscientious individual.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms ENOCH: I repeat that although this is a regrettable situation this is not a unique occurrence. In fact, in 2013 under the former government a similar duplicated payment occurred.

Ms Trad: Did they tell the House?

Ms ENOCH: Thank you for the interjection. Let me just say that in this case this was merely a case of a conscientious individual attempting to ensure vendors were appropriately paid on time. Let me assure the House that a thorough root-cause investigation has commenced. Although it appears that it is an individual who has conscientiously attempted to ensure that vendors were paid, if the investigation does—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Gaven, I would urge you to cease your interjections.

Ms ENOCH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. However, should the investigation reveal flaws in structures or protocols which led to the duplicate payments then the department will work with QSS to investigate all options to implement safeguards to help prevent future such incidents.

Mr SPEAKER: Before I proceed to calling the member for Thuringowa, I am informed that the member for Barron River was also participating in frivolous interjections.

Alcohol Fuelled Violence

Mr HARPER: My question is to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Would the minister update parliament on the measures that the Queensland government is taking to address the issue of alcohol fuelled violence, in particular the impact this issue has on paramedics in Queensland?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Thuringowa for his question. He brings more than two decades of service as a paramedic into this parliament, along with the member for Barron River who served as a paramedic for many years. They know firsthand what happens at the front line and the work that paramedics have to do across the length and breadth of our state because of alcohol. I know they are passionate about their service as paramedics and they bring that to this parliament. I know they have a very keen interest in supporting measures that protect front-line emergency workers and front-line health workers from the pressure that comes from incidents in the community that are caused by alcohol.

I attended the COAG health minister's council on Friday and I was very pleased to strongly support the registration of paramedics as part of the Australian health practitioner regulation scheme, a strong initiative of the Victorian Labor government and the Queensland Labor government and that will progress. But it is the front-line emergency workers in Queensland—our police, our paramedics and often our firefighters—who deal with the consequences of alcohol fuelled activity. In the last financial year, 170 paramedics were the subject of deliberate physical attack in the workplace. Not all of those were due to alcohol, but there is no doubt that alcohol plays a part in many of those incidences. It is difficult enough to be a paramedic without having to be assaulted in your workplace. Paramedics are the quiet heroes of our emergency services; they often do very difficult and dangerous work for all of us. I know there are members on the other side of the House who have experience due to alcohol fuelled violence. They have worked as clinicians. The member for Gaven, of course, worked in the Ambulance Service; I do not believe necessarily as a paramedic, but I know he knows the impact on front-line paramedics. I know that he will support any initiative that will reduce alcohol fuelled violence, as will the member for Moggill and the other clinicians on the other side. I know they will support any measure that will reduce violence in our community, including violence that affects paramedics and front-line emergency services.

There are two substances in our community that overwhelmingly cause the most number of admissions to hospitals, one is tobacco and the other is alcohol. They are the two significant substances that cause, ultimately, avoidable admissions to hospital because of their impact on our community. We need to take the pressure off our emergency departments, we need to take the pressure off our emergency services. By sensibly restricting the sale of alcohol we can make sure our workplaces are safe for emergency services and our hospitals will be safe. Of course there are other substances that cause admissions, but the two overwhelming ones are tobacco and alcohol.

Government Contractors, Overpayment

Mr MOLHOEK: My question is to the Minister for Science and Innovation and I ask: with reference to the contractors overpayment of \$12 million by the department, can the minister advise when she was first advised that the overpayments had been identified?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. The 5th of November was when the issue had occurred and I was informed of that straightaway.

Alcohol Fuelled Violence

Mr STEWART: My question is to the Attorney-General. Will the minister update the House on the effects of alcohol fuelled violence on our community and what is this government's approach to dealing with alcohol fuelled violence?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for Townsville for his question. The Palaszczuk government's policy in relation to tackling alcohol fuelled violence has always been an evidence based policy. We have looked at what has occurred interstate and overseas and we have developed a policy that we know will work. The fact is that the evidence interstate is unequivocal. If we look at Newcastle we cannot ignore the facts. Firstly, let us bust this myth about the impact on businesses, clubs and venues as a consequence of the lockout. What we know in Newcastle in 2008 was that there were 13 hotels registered; come July 2015 there were 23—a 77 per cent increase. There were five registered clubs in 2008; there were five in July 2015. On-premises: there were 41 venues in 2008 and in July 2015 there were 98—a 140 per cent increase. What we know is that in March 2008 there were 64 licensed venues in Newcastle when the lockout started and in July 2015 there were 134 venues. That is a 110 per cent increase in business as a consequence of the lockouts.

But what else do we know? We also know that there was a 37 per cent reduction in the number of assaults—up to 4,000 assaults prevented since 2008. We know that there were 26 per cent fewer night-time emergency department presentations. In Kings Cross there was a 20.8 per cent reduction in sexual assaults and a 43 per cent reduction in assaults causing grievous bodily harm.

Mr Bleijie: What about the suburbs?

Mrs D'ATH: I take the interjection about what about the suburbs. That is why Queensland is taking the initiative to make it statewide: so that we do not push the problem out into our suburbs. Let us look at what others are saying. The AMA has come out and said that they welcome the state government's plan for last drink laws and call for bipartisan support to curb the damage. The AMA is calling for bipartisan support. The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education said, 'I applaud the Palaszczuk government's announcement ...' The Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol said that the package of measures announced today by the Palaszczuk government will include statewide trading restrictions which will save lives. Let us take Clubs Queensland: 'I am pleased to see a positive outcome that balances the needs of community clubs and the people of Queensland. Hopefully the proposed legislation will have the full support of the parliament when introduced.' These are key stakeholders. The Police Service said, 'One death from alcohol fuelled violence is one too many.'

Government Contractors, Overpayment

Mr CRANDON: My question without notice is to the Minister for Science and Innovation. With reference to contractors overpaid \$12 million by the department, can the minister advise what IT projects these contractors were working on?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. As I have already indicated, this duplicate payment occurred on 5 November. They were payments to vendors. There are an array of vendors and it was one payment that was duplicated—a batch. That batch was duplicated. As we understand it, it happened not so much as an IT failure, but more a conscientious effort to ensure that vendors were actually paid. As soon as I was informed of that—and that happened within hours of the actual incident—I insisted that vendors were contacted and we begin a system to retrieve that payment, which they have done quite successfully so far. Obviously, now we are doing a full investigation into the root cause of what actually occurred and if it is more than just a human error we will be working with the QSS to ensure that we fix that system.

Alcohol Fuelled Violence

Mr WHITING: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services. Will the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government's comprehensive package to address alcohol fuelled violence will help keep our police safe?

Mrs MILLER: I thank the member for Murrumba for the question. At the election we made a commitment to the people of Queensland to address the issue of alcohol fuelled violence right across the state and that is exactly what we are doing. The comprehensive package announced by the Attorney-General on the weekend is not just about keeping the community safe; it is also about keeping the police safe. As I travel across the state and talk to officers on the ground, time and time again I have heard firsthand horror stories from crews that every weekend patrol our entertainment area hotspots and have to deal with violent drunks.

I make it clear to the people of Queensland and to this House: our police are not punching bags. The Palaszczuk Labor government will not tolerate that kind of violence against the women and men in blue who put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe. Violence against our officers not only has a devastating impact on their health and wellbeing but also has a flow-on impact on the rest of the service. Every weekend, officers who out and about doing their job are being assaulted. As a result, some may have to take time off work to heal their wounds, which means fewer officers on the beat keeping Queenslanders safe.

While I travel the length and breadth of Queensland often I speak to the spouses and partners of police officers. They tell me about the emotional impact of having a loved one in such a high-risk profession. It is not surprising to hear of the stress and the toll that it takes on members of our police family. Our government will not sit idly by while our officers' families sit at home and worry themselves sick because their partners are rostered on to patrol an entertainment precinct. Why should they have to sit at home and worry about whether or not their family member will come home badly injured or not come home at all? It is just not on and that is why our government has made these reforms.

We have also provided the Queensland Police Service with \$20 million to assist them in their work. This will help police reduce alcohol fuelled violence and tackle organised crime and the drug ice. Right across Queensland, our police will continue to focus resources at target areas within the safe-night precincts and other entertainment hotspots and to enforce action against those who continue to act violently and put others' lives at risk. We are committed to the safety of police.

(Time expired)

Privacy Legislation

Mr WALKER: My question is to the Premier. Has the Premier received advice from the Privacy Commissioner in relation to the recently revealed practice of union officials undertaking desk-to-desk and floor-to-floor visits to government employees, to ensure there are no breaches of privacy legislation?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Mansfield for the question. No, I have not received any, but I will check if the minister for industrial relations has. I make it very clear that this policy was in place, on my understanding, from 2000 and is no different from what has been in place in years gone by. I make it very clear that there is no way that public servants are going to be impeded when doing their work—absolutely no way.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, they are not going to be. If there are any reports of that, I want to know about it. We will always stand by our public servants in this state, unlike those opposite who, as members will remember, sacked more than 20,000 people. They were told they had nothing to fear before the election, but they were sacked. Now all of a sudden they are changing their tune.

What I will say about the member for Mansfield is that I have seen him in the media lately. He seems to be doing a few press conferences. He seems to be there quite regularly. We do not see the Leader of the Opposition or the Deputy Leader—

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, one moment. Premier, I know you are keen to debate the opposition, but now is not the opportune time.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will do it later.

Mr SPEAKER: You can do it later, thank you. Before I call the member for Lytton, I am informed that students from the Bundaberg East State School are in the public gallery observing our proceedings.

Queensland Women 2015

Ms PEASE: My question is to the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth. Will the minister please advise the House what the government is doing to tackle gender inequality and ensure the safety of women and girls following the release of the *Queensland women 2015* report?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for Lytton for the question. Last week I released the *Queensland women 2015* report. The report draws together in one place all of the available statistics to provide a clear snapshot of the issues facing Queensland women and girls across a range of measures, including education, health, safety, finances and gender equality. The statistics in this report are a wake-up call to Queensland. I know the member for Lytton, a strong advocate for gender equality, has also been shocked by some of the statistics in the report.

The report shows that Queensland's gender pay gap is higher than it was 20 years ago, despite more women than men attaining tertiary education. Still only one in 12 Queensland women have worked in the mining, manufacturing, electricity and construction industries and women are more likely to work casually or take career breaks to care for children, which has a huge impact on women's super accumulation. Queensland women and girls are more than four times as likely as men to be sexually assaulted by a family member and five times as likely to be sexually assaulted by a stranger. Queensland men account for 86.3 per cent of offenders for the breach of domestic violence protection orders in 2014-15.

The stark reality is that women in Queensland are getting paid less, are retiring with far less super and are much more likely to experience violence, poverty or homelessness. Bright and talented Queensland girls are getting a good education, but the minute they step into the workforce they are behind. On average, Queensland women earn 82 per cent of a male wage and that is simply not good enough. The report highlights the need for a new strategy for Queensland women.

Therefore, we have launched a statewide consultation to develop a new whole-of-government strategy to look at how we can tackle gender inequality and support Queensland's women and girls. Queensland has not had a women's strategy since 2011 and I am so pleased that we are righting that wrong. The report forms the evidence base for consultation on the women's strategy and we now want to hear from Queensland women and men about how together we can tackle gender inequality.

Through the Office for Women and in partnership with QUT, last week we set up an insta-booth at Central station so that people can contribute their insights by SMS, Twitter, Instagram or leave a handwritten note. Queenslanders outside of the south-east corner can submit their views on the women's strategy at the Get Involved website. We are also working in consultation with key women's groups, NGOs and government agencies to gain input on this vital strategy. We have to make sure that Queensland's women and girls and their future shine brighter.

Privacy Legislation

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Main Roads. The minister has previously told this House—

The privacy rights of our employees will be respected.

I ask: does the minister stand by this commitment given that union officials can now approach any government employee at their desk in his department?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for her question. This has been a well-canvassed issue. The provisions that we have included across all of our departments are the same that were in place for a long time before we had the radical Newman government coming in and sacking 24,000 public servants. That was the situation—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order. You have ruled on the matter in relation to the statement made by the minister. I would hope that he would correct it again before being referred to the Speaker in terms of this matter.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the minister.

Mr BAILEY: I absolutely support a cooperative approach by the government, as outlined in our policy, to work with our workforce. It is the right of workers in this state to be properly represented and to have the possibility to receive representation. It is up to them whether or not they join a union. That is their choice. This is a democracy.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I understand the number which you referred to that the member for Mermaid Beach raised his point of order about is the subject of a ruling by me. Would you like to correct the record?

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to correct the record. I believe it was over 20,000.

A government member: Tens of thousands.

Mr BAILEY: Tens of thousands. The experience of Queensland public servants in this state—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: I have corrected the record. It is the experience of public servants in this state that their treatment under the previous government was that many of them were sacked after being assured their jobs would be safe.

Our approach is to allow them to be adequately represented. We do not take a combative approach to our workforce. Unlike the previous government, we will work with them. It is up to them whether or not they wish to join a union. The policy is clear that normal work processes are not to be impeded. That is a clear part of the policy. This is not rocket science. We respect the rights of Queensland public servants to be adequately represented and for them to be informed of their rights in the workplace. This is normal around the Western World. It seems to be a bit beyond the grasp of the opposition to understand that governments should respect the rights of public servants.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, before your time expires, I point out that I have been informed that the actual number is around 14,000, not 20,000. I understand that that was the ruling.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for the Chatsworth, you are now warned under standing order 253A. If you persist you will be asked to leave for a maximum of one hour. Minister, would you please clarify the record.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to clarify that. I understand the specific figure was 14,000, but I also understand that there were thousands of temporary employees on temporary contracts who were also sacked. I am happy to stand corrected, Mr Speaker. I do seek your guidance in that regard.

The point is that there were thousands and thousands of Queenslanders without jobs. I find it amazing that the opposition is quibbling about how many thousands when in fact—

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I would urge you not to debate the issue with the opposition. Do you have anything further to add otherwise I will call the next member?

Mr BAILEY: I would simply add that we will work with Queensland public servants in a cooperative fashion not in a combative fashion, as the previous government did.

Northern Queensland Economic Summit

Mrs GILBERT: My question is to the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries. Will the minister update the House on the Queensland government's Northern Queensland Economic Summit and how the agriculture sector will benefit from the summit?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. Last week it was my great pleasure to make a presentation to potential investors at the Northern Queensland Economic Summit in Cairns. It was a very fruitful event with almost 300 people in attendance. My role was to make the case for investment in North Queensland agriculture. With so many opportunities to establish supply chains and a range of government initiatives to capitalise on our competitive strengths, there was an energy about the summit that was infectious. The attendees loved it.

As we all know, by 2050 world food demand is expected to rise by 77 per cent in monetary terms. Much of that demand is expected to come from Asia and the Indo-Pacific where demand is expected to double.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BYRNE: I need to restate it so that those opposite understand this. These markets have a growing demand for premium and value-added products. That is where North Queensland opportunities will arise. That is the message I conveyed to investors—a message that was warmly received.

I was also able to host a group of forum attendees at a presentation by FinFish, which was very well received. We toured the existing facility in Cairns. Our guests could see firsthand each step of the breeding process for groper and coral trout. The presentation to investors highlighted our science and R&D capability and outlined the great opportunity for the export of groper and coral trout products—an opportunity that can only expand.

While in Cairns I received several deputations from a range of interests, including bioproducts companies, a company looking to capitalise on our recent announcements on water allocations in the gulf rivers and a company providing advice to agribusiness on how to attract capital. There was also a very welcomed announcement by QIC confirming the establishment of an agribusiness fund, which will be well subscribed to.

All in all, it was a very successful event that those opposite simply do not want to acknowledge. It certainly created a new sense of optimism in agricultural circles in the north. I look forward to seeing the tangible results and outcomes for local producers in the months and years ahead.

I also note that the market conditions now for premium product could not be better. I am sure members of the House have taken note of the recent beef prices. Some producers are receiving twice what they were receiving for their cattle last year and in some cases three times. The future for agriculture under a Palaszczuk Labor government could not be more optimistic.

Public Service, Appointments

Mr McARDLE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister advise when the position of director of communications in Queensland Health became vacant before it was filled by Robert Hoge?

Mr DICK: As I made clear at the last parliamentary sitting, there is a temporary appointment to that position. It is subject to a full merit selection process—something that could hardly be described as a characteristic of the previous LNP government; a government in which the member for Caloundra sat. There is a full process in place. There will be a full merit selection process. There will be an independent panel.

It may come as a surprise to the member for Caloundra that, unlike his government when people like Michael Caltabiano were handpicked by politicians and put into positions, we do not do that. I have no control over that at all. I have no control over the appointment of senior executives in the department. Full process—

Mr McARDLE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The question was very specific: what was the date the position became vacant before it was filled by Robert Hoge? It was a very simple question to the minister requiring a very simple answer.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Caloundra.

Mr DICK: \$14 billion, 86,000 people, 153—

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, it is not an opportunity to debate the question. It was a specific question. Have you anything further to add?

Mr DICK: What I will say is that I do not know the date because it is not a matter for the minister. I do not know the date because it is not a matter for the minister to oversight—

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Coomera, you are warned under standing order 253A. If you were responding to an interjection from the government side, I did not hear it. Do you have anything further to add, Minister?

Mr DICK: I will just make the point plain and simple and in a way that even the members opposite can understand. I do not know the date because it is not a matter for ministers to determine the dates of advertising, of appointment, of selection panels, of interview panels. It is not a matter for ministers; it is a matter for the administration of departments to select those dates. If the member for Caloundra wants to put a question on notice about this, let him do that. It has nothing to do with me or the proper administration of the health system in Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, you have had a pretty good run this morning with your interjections. One of the problems with sitting so close to my chair as Speaker is that I hear a lot of what you have to say. I urge you not to persist or you will be warned under standing order 253A. I call the member for Cairns.

Cairns, Tourism

Mr PYNE: My question is to the Minister for Tourism. At last week's Northern Queensland Economic Summit there was a key focus on tourism. Will the minister please update the House on what opportunities there are to grow tourism in Cairns?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for his question. I know how passionate he is as the member for Cairns about growing tourism jobs in Cairns and right across Queensland. That is why, as I said earlier, this government is absolutely focused on delivering additional tourism jobs and growth, and we put our money where our mouth is in order to do that.

As we heard, we had a very successful Northern Queensland Economic Summit in the honourable member for Cairns's electorate last week. It was wonderful to be there and meet with many of the operators, as well as the Chinese investors and many international investors who all came together to look at new ways to grow the Queensland economy and grow jobs for Queenslanders. In particular, I found that confidence in Cairns is very high at the moment. I am hearing from operators that the frequency of 100 per cent sellout days is now back to pre-global financial crisis days. This is wonderful for the business operators out there who are getting the confidence to re-employ staff and grow their businesses. This comes on the back of the recent introduction of SilkAir flights directly connecting Singapore to Cairns. We know that these additional flights will bring an extra 20,000 visitors to the Cairns region.

Right now in Queensland we know that there is more than \$8 billion invested in new tourism infrastructure including hotels and attractions right across this state. Cairns in particular will welcome two new leisure attractions over the coming years. Adventure Waters is a \$45 million investment that will deliver the region a world-class aquatic park. I am sure that this will be very popular with locals and tourists alike. In addition, there is the \$50 million Cairns Aquarium, which will provide visitors with an all-weather year-round attraction. I had the opportunity of meeting with the director and co-founder of the new Cairns Aquarium and Reef Research Centre while in Cairns for the summit. This will be the first new aquarium built in Australia in almost 20 years. We know that it will be expected to create around 650 jobs in the Cairns economy.

It is not only Cairns that is experiencing good business conditions. I have before me the new NAB Monthly Business Survey, the latest data released by NAB, which shows where Queensland is going and it is great news for Queensland. It states—

There was a notable deterioration in both conditions and confidence in WA, consistent with ongoing drag from mining—confidence also fell considerably in SA. In contrast, Qld recorded sizable improvements in the month (especially in business conditions) ... Business confidence showed similar trends, although Queensland remains the highest of the mainland states ...

So Queensland remains the highest of all mainland states in Australia when it comes to business conditions. We know that when we came into government we had a lot of work to do to rebuild business confidence and conditions in Queensland. After the mass sackings from those opposite and the highest unemployment Queensland had seen for a decade, we had a lot of work to do, and by golly we are working hard to make sure that we bring back business confidence.

(Time expired)

North Stradbroke Island

Dr ROBINSON: My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier explain why she has failed to attend an open community meeting on North Stradbroke Island to listen to the whole community but instead has held closed meetings and secret meetings with disgruntled union officials?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Cleveland very much for the question. I have not had closed meetings. My diary is revealed at the end of each month and it will reveal that I actually met with workers from North Stradbroke Island who have concerns about—

Dr Robinson: Not on the island; you never visited.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I clarify that I actually visit Stradbroke Island nearly every year. Our family goes there to holiday nearly every year.

Dr Robinson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Cleveland, you have asked your question. I ask you not to interject.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I know that the Deputy Premier has also been over to the island and met with workers. I understand that the Minister for Environment has also been over there and met with members of the Quandamooka people.

Dr ROBINSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. My question was clearly about why the Premier has failed to come to an open community meeting at the invitation of the elders and of all the stakeholders and talk about the issues facing them—an open community meeting.

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier has answered your question. There is no point of order. I call the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will make it very clear: I am more than happy to go and attend an open community meeting, as I am right across the state. But, as everyone can realise, Queensland is a huge state and at different times I delegate ministers to do different functions, such as the Deputy Premier went to Stradbroke Island and the Minister for Environment went to Stradbroke Island. I met with workers in the city to discuss their issues and their concerns, and it was a very productive meeting.

In answer to the member's question, I am more than happy to go there. I go there nearly every year with my family for a private holiday. The issues of North Stradbroke Island are very dear to my heart. My government remains determined in our endeavours to make North Stradbroke Island once again a truly iconic place to visit and to work.

Dr ROBINSON: Premier, you have an invitation open from 2 July that you have not replied to.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Cleveland, it is not an opportunity to put a supplementary question or make a supplementary comment. You will have ample opportunity later today. We have one minute left. I call the member for Bundaberg.

Manufacturing Industry


Ms DONALDSON: My question is to the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. Will the minister outline what the Palaszczuk government is doing to further Queensland's manufacturing industry?

Mr SPEAKER: I call the minister. You might have a few seconds on the clock.

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for Bundaberg for her wonderful question. We have many factories worth \$19 billion to the Queensland economy. Our Working Queensland policy is very clear. We made an election commitment to establish a voluntary industry and manufacturing advisory group with high-level representation of industry, government and unions. Simply, we are delivering on this commitment. We need to have a dedicated focus on industry and manufacturing, because it is so important to Queensland and to the people of Bundaberg. We need to support increased productivity, employment growth and building a more competitive industry with greater access to major domestic global supply chain opportunities. The Palaszczuk government is doing just that.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Further Answer to Question; Government Contractors, Overpayment

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation) (11.36 am): Earlier I informed the House that a duplicate or overpayment was made in 2013 under the former LNP government. I am advised that that overpayment was \$6.4 million and it occurred in the former education department under the watch of the member for Surfers Paradise.


Dr Miles: Was it disclosed?

Ms ENOCH: I am also advised that that was never made public.

Government members interjected.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.37 am): Again this morning there is a whole lot more cluelessness going around from the Palaszczuk government. There are so many things that they did not know about this morning when the opposition asked question after question after question in relation to a number of matters. Indeed, with the Minister for Tourism we saw a Monty Pythonesque performance where she basically said that the original tourism investment strategy guide was not pulped; it just went away. It reminds you a little of the dead parrot, doesn't it? The dead parrot was sort of hanging there over the perch. He was not really dead; he was just sleeping. If you look at the situation here with the Minister for Tourism, she had to take this away, pulp it and shred it because it was fundamentally wrong.

Ms JONES: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. My point of order is that the Leader of the Opposition is deliberately misleading the House. I have already answered a question today where I said none were pulped. There was no pulping—none were pulped.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Minister for Education.

Ms JONES: I will be writing to you because it is on the public record.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister for Education, this is not an opportunity for a debate. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Apparently they were not pulped or shredded; they just went away. We have a whole new way of dealing with public administration in Queensland when you produce documents that are wrong. You do not pulp them, you do not shred them; they just miraculously disappear. That is a whole new way of doing things in government administration. I would love to know how many other things just miraculously disappear. I wonder if the head of the Premier's Economic Policy Group has disappeared—not pulped or shredded but evaporated as though it did not exist. It is one of those things that you do not mention because it is in the past. Do not ever look backwards. Only look forward because it is only any good if you are looking forward. It is vintage Peter Beattie. Do not look over here; look over here because this is where all the light and action is. We have heard that from the Minister for Tourism today.

What the Minister for Tourism did not tell us is how she got her tourism investment strategy so wrong. Not only did they leave half of the Gold Coast off the first one—which is probably a surprise to the people of the Gold Coast because a lot more has happened on the Gold Coast—we now have the Minister for Tourism dabbling in a major infrastructure portfolio in Queensland. The Deputy Premier earlier this year, within one month of coming to office, completely ruled out the Bus and Train tunnel. It was dead, finished, over and done with. It does not matter if you look at it from a Monty Pythonesque view or another view: it is dead, finished, over; it is not happening.

Mr Powell: It's a flesh wound.

Mr SPRINGBORG: It is a flesh wound, as the honourable member for Glass House said. As we now know, they still remain in favour, apparently, of the cross-river tunnel. We have known about that, but this strategy document refers to a Bus and Train tunnel so we have some revisionism going on. It was very interesting when we asked this question this morning because it was as though they did not want us to ask the question. The Premier wanted it all to go away. The Deputy Premier was fuming, running in and out of the room really upset with something or other. We were waiting for an amazing revelation. The Premier talked about something else and the tourism minister talked about something else, and did not admit how they got it so wrong in this document. We are talking about a piece of infrastructure worth at least \$5 billion, maybe even more, which was dead and buried in March of this year but apparently has risen like a dead hand from the grave. It is very important that the minister and the Premier tell us what is going on in Queensland, as their draft plans were thrown out last week—or they went away last week; they were not thrown out or pulped. They went away last week.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Maybe these 7.101 tonnes have ended up in the CFMEU's skip bin, as the honourable member for Glass House said. If this is what is happening when you are revising your policies and your plans that you are getting wrong and you keep bungling the redrafting of them, is it any wonder that this government is holding Queensland back? This state needs a side of politics that is able to unleash the potential, because at least we had a plan for Queensland. At least we were able to take to the people of Queensland a plan. At least we are able to stick to a plan. This government cannot even devise a plan.

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The minister who is interjecting has had three goes in a week and is still getting it wrong. She has managed to keep alive a \$5 billion project that was previously ruled out by a minister in a superior position in March this year.

While we have the member for Ashgrove in the room, it is very important that we find out exactly what has gone wrong with regard to the privacy failure in the systems of Education Queensland. We also know, notwithstanding the protestations of the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, that she or her office was informed on at least five occasions about the failings of OneSchool. It was elevated to the highest level and the member for Ashgrove did absolutely nothing about it.

Today we have a major failing with regard to privacy issues in the systems administered by her department linking in with the Attorney-General's department, and we still do not know what the details are. What are the details? Was there any threat from criminality with regard to any of those things? What was the extent of the breach? Who was involved and how was it detected? It is not good enough to stand here and say that it is all done and dusted; it has just gone away—like version A, B and probably even C of the tourism strategy. It is not worthwhile thinking about because it is one of those bumps on the whole road of political life. Do not worry about it; it did not happen. That is not how this place operates. The member for Ashgrove has to stand up and give a full account of this as well. Is the Bus and Train tunnel still alive? What has happened with regard to privacy breaches in her own department with regard to children and adolescents? It is very important that she tell us all about that.

Also extraordinarily this morning, the minister responsible for science and technology in this parliament stood up in answer to a question from the member for Toowoomba South and was completely and absolutely clueless. We had an overzealous, overenthusiastic pay officer—

An opposition member: Conscientious.


Mr SPRINGBORG: Conscientious—someone who thought, ‘We should pay them twice.’ Maybe that is what happened in Health with regard to our friend the fake Tahitian prince. Maybe that is what happened with regard to the Queensland Health payroll. Maybe that is what happened with regard to the Premier’s Economic Policy Group. What is very clear is that none of them have a clue what they are doing. They were inexperienced when they came in here, and nine months later they are still inexperienced overseeing major portfolios where they are double paying invoices in Queensland.

We see further stuff misplaced this morning from the Attorney-General, who is seeking to rewrite history with regard to the commission of inquiry into organised crime in this state. I am very disappointed in that commission of inquiry, because despite what was promised it did not hold public hearings, it did not take evidence in public and it was not able to test that which was presented to that inquiry. The reason the Fitzgerald inquiry and its recommendations were able to be implemented in such a bipartisan way by this parliament—and I was fortunate to be in here at the time—was that the majority of stuff, notwithstanding the uncertainty over potential criminal charges which were then tested in a superior court, including electoral reform and administrative reform, had been tested in an open inquiry environment. Therefore, they had the validity, the sanction and support of both sides of this place. That is not the case with this inquiry that was held in secret with the purpose solely being the dismantling of organised crime laws which have stood the test of time, in my view.

If you want to use statistics with regard to the number of crimes related to so-called outlaw motorcycle gangs in this state being 0.5 per cent, you need to be very careful about statistics because the total amount of all crimes reported in this state last year as sexual offences, including those against adults and children, were 0.65 per cent. But does that make them less serious? No, it does not. It makes them equally as serious, because these are the things that strike at the heart of a human being. We believe safety, whether it be that affected by organised crime or sexual crimes—

(Time expired)

Alcohol Fuelled Violence

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (11.48 am): I rise today to speak about alcohol fuelled violence and the impact that I have witnessed firsthand over my 15-plus years as a front-line paramedic in various states, various locations and various cities. To put it into perspective, I will run through a small segment of a night that I can recall. It is three o’clock on a Saturday morning. I am on shift in my ambulance with my partner. Much of our night after dark has been taken up with cases resulting from assaults, alcohol and drugs. We are sent from the hospital in Cairns on an emergency dispatch into the city. It is about a five- or six-block drive. Under lights and sirens it is three minutes, give or take. The case as given to us is a male in his 20s, unconscious from an assault lying on the footpath outside a busy nightclub. The perpetrator has apparently left the scene. Police have been dispatched, but we will arrive first given our location. We are advised to approach with caution, but there was a large degree of background noise on the call. Three minutes later I am first confronted on the scene by an intoxicated female in her 20s carrying her heels in her hand, her make-up smeared, and she is yelling at me because I have taken so long to get there. I try to refocus her by saying that we got here as quickly as we could, and asking ‘Where is the patient?’ but she is having nothing of it. She swings out at me and strikes me to the chest. A friend grabs her. I instruct her friend to do something about her and do it now.


Before arriving at the patient I am further confronted by a male in his 20s, also intoxicated. He tells me that his best friend is the one who has been king-hit. He starts to cry then suddenly grabs me by the shirt front and tells me that if his friend dies he will find me and he will kill me. I have not even got to the patient yet and already I have been assaulted twice, but there is little I can do about it. I think to myself, ‘When did it become okay to physically assault paramedics?’ I have to brush that aside; I have to find the patient. I push through a wall of people. I find the patient. He is unconscious, bleeding from the face, lying on the ground. First aiders have done a good job. Over the next five minutes we focus on him, working with our back turned to the crowd. There is a crowd controller nearby but he is one and there are many people. The crowd is angry and the space we are working in is getting smaller. I cannot move from left or right or even stand up without having to push through people. At any time I could be struck from behind or struck over the head. I know of paramedics who have had this happen to them. I sit there treating the patient thinking, ‘Will tonight be my time?’

In almost a rehearsed move we can hear the distressed screams of a female approaching. I know it will be his girlfriend. I have heard it so many times. She arrives distraught, angry and emotional. She wants answers, 'Who did this? Why did he do it?' She is joined by a group of friends who have been rallied by smartphones coming to help, coming to get payback. By now our patient is awake, confused, concussed, intoxicated and startled. He does not handle the noise, the lights or the questions. The last thing he remembers is being in a fight. His first automated response is to begin where his brain switched off and that is to fight. I am the closest person to him. He reaches out to strike me and misses. I am expecting it so it is no surprise to me. I spend the next minutes reassuring him that I am a paramedic; I am not the person he had a fight with. He continues to ask me what happened and he continues to forget what my responses are. You see, he is concussed; his short-term memory is struggling to keep up. Each time he asks me what happened, each time I tell him and each time, on cue, he gets upset and angry and wants to find the person who did this to him. He recalls talking to a girl and then walking out of the club. Some guy just came up from out of the blue and hit him.

As we get into our ambulance with him, police are helping with controlling an angry crowd of up to 20 or 30 people. By now word has gone around that the guy who did this was wearing a blue shirt. I can hear vigilante groups beginning to mobilise looking for this man in the blue shirt. We get our patient to the hospital. By now he is very agitated, scared and it is not long before he is involved in a scuffle with a nurse in the emergency department. Despite pleas from medical staff, he walks out of the emergency department into the night, still concussed and still suffering a brain injury, but the staff are unable to reason with him. He is intoxicated, he is angry, he is sore, he does not reason; he just wants to go and get revenge.

Before we have a chance to gather our thoughts, a dispatch for a further case is given to us: a male person assaulted by a group of males in the city. We are to wait for police as the assault is still underway. I comment to my partner, 'I bet it is some random guy in a blue shirt standing in the wrong place at the wrong time.' That is a snapshot of 30 to 40 minutes of one ambulance crew on one Friday or Saturday night. If any members are in doubt as to the authenticity of my words, please take *Hansard* and go ask any paramedic working in Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane or the Gold Coast. We must do something about alcohol fuelled violence.

Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (11.53 am): I rise to raise the issue of Michael Byrne QC and his political report on the Queensland Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry that was handed down after months and months of speculation, months and months of secret hearings, no openness or transparency despite Michael Byrne QC saying at the outset of the commission of inquiry, 'Oh yes, I intend to hold open hearings.'

Mr Cramp interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member in terms of the farcical nature of this inquiry. This inquiry report has been handed down and we are to believe everything in it without anything being tested—no evidence being tested, no open hearings. The accusations against our hardworking men and women in our Police Service are unwarranted and unfounded. What we have seen from this is a complete lack of support from the police minister for the men and women who wear blue in this state.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. Where was the Minister for Police? Where has the Minister for Police been for the last five days?

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister has been silent.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Member for Kawana! What is your point of order, Minister?

Mrs MILLER: I find the words of the member for Kawana personally offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister finds your words offensive. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. I have found it absurd and interesting that the police minister has not held a press conference or made a statement in support of the men and women in Task Force Argos or Task Force Maxima, who deal every day with the issues facing children in this state, criminal motorcycle gang members—

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: The police minister—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Kawana. Minister, what is your point of order?

Mrs MILLER: The comments being made by the member for Kawana are untrue, they are misleading, I find them personally offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask that the member for Kawana to withdraw the comments.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will withdraw, but I seek your clarification, Madam Deputy Speaker. A member of the House makes a statement that the police minister has not held a press conference supporting the police men and women in the state—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister has asked you to withdraw your comments. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. The police in this state hold this police minister in contempt. Morale in the Police Service is at an all-time low. I travel around the state talking to grassroots men and women who put their lives on the line every day. They know that they do not have a police minister who stands up for them. They know they do not have a police minister who backs them.

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: They know that they have a police minister who could not care less about the men and women in blue in this state.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! One moment. Point of order, Minister, please?

Mrs MILLER: I find the comments of the member for Kawana untrue, misleading and personally offensive, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, you have been asked to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. I will give the police minister a break for 30 seconds; I will go to the education minister. The education minister also has contempt for the men and women in blue in the Police Service. Once Michael Byrne's report was handed down, the education minister said—

We feared all along that just looking at bikies could lead to other types of organised crime flourishing and now we have it in black and white.

That was the education minister. That forced the acting Commissioner of Police, in an unprecedented move, standing next to the police minister, the Attorney-General and the Premier, to condemn the report and say that crime has not flourished, child exploitation has not flourished and the men and women, the grassroots officers in blue, are protecting the kids and they always have. He said that the sex offenders did not flourish because of resourcing, a re-resourcing or a change of resources. The assistant commissioner, the acting Commissioner of Police at the time, said in an article by Steve Wardill—

A terse Acting Commissioner Ross Barnett yesterday revealed police had increased resources to hunt down child-sex predators since their bikie crackdown began.

...

One of Queensland's top cops has slapped down claims pedophilia has been allowed to flourish as the State Government announced it would allocate \$3.2 million to address the problem.

We have the acting Commissioner of Police forced to go out there and stand next to the Premier at a press conference and defend the police in the state, yet the police minister stands next to the acting commissioner and says nothing; she stays silent.

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: The acting Police Commissioner has to do it.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order, member for Kawana. Minister?

Mrs MILLER: I find the comments of the member for Kawana to be personally offensive and I ask them to be withdrawn. I also would request, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the member for Kawana desist from verballing the acting Commissioner of Police.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has found offence. Member for Kawana, I ask that you withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. Let me quote the acting Commissioner of Police, Mr Ross Barnett, in an article titled 'Premier denies police rift'. The acting Police Commissioner states in that article—

"I don't accept there was any reduction in effort in the area of child protection," he told ABC radio yesterday.

That is not a verbal; that is a quote. I table a copy of that article.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 4 November 2015, titled 'Premier denies police rift' [[1594](#)].

The police minister is agitated today because she knows that what I am saying is the truth. She knows what I am saying is what grassroots men and women on the ground are saying about the police minister.

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order. The member for Kawana is continuously misleading this House. I consider his comments in relation to me as police minister to be untrue and personally offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn again.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Member for Kawana, the minister has raised a point of order. She has taken offence; I ask that you withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I rise to a point of order. Under the standing orders I seek clarification in terms of frivolous interjections. I ask for a ruling in terms of the minister's continuous frivolous interjections


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take advice on that. Member for Kawana, resume your seat. Member for Kawana, if you would like to resume. The minister has found your comments to be personally offensive.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask that you continue.

Mr BLEIJIE: While in government the LNP gave \$360 million to the Police Service to put an extra 1,100 police men and women on the beat, and when we left government we had delivered 800 out of that 1,100. I know that the police minister is now handing in the homework for the extra police officers on the beat. In terms of tackling criminal gangs, we gave \$20 million to the Police Service and the CCC to tackle criminal gang members, and I find it frustrating and I take offence at Labor members, through this commission report, saying that the police dropped the ball in terms of dealing with child exploitation. As shadow minister, I will back our police in this state. I will back the men and women who every day put their lives on the line. I will back the work that they do in Task Force Argos. I will back Task Force Maxima. I will back the assistant commissioner for police. Every day of the week I will back the work of our men and women in blue, because everyone knows that the police minister certainly does not back them.

Alcohol Fuelled Violence


 **Mr HARPER (Thuringowa—ALP) (12.00 pm):** I rise today to share with members of the House some experiences that I have had in relation to alcohol fuelled violence. As a former intensive care paramedic with over 25 years experience and with that particular skill set, you are called to the most challenging cases. One in particular remains with me to this very day. It was at a similar time of year in relation to celebrating Christmas, when people go off to workplace parties simply to enjoy end-of-year achievements with their work colleagues. This case was no different from thousands of others around Queensland in the lead-up to the Christmas break. It is traditionally a time of happiness, but not for this young man. No doubt he had arrived at his Christmas work celebration with the intent of having a good time with his friends, but at that establishment in Thuringowa there was another group who were also celebrating and an argument ensued over a tray of food. This young man walked away from the incident, but he was met outside by an irate person who on that night quite simply had consumed way too much alcohol. When mixed with his rage that was just a recipe for disaster, and that is exactly what occurred.

This young man received one punch which caused him to fall backwards and strike his head on the concrete, knocking him unconscious immediately. What happened next still astounds me, because he was left on his own and he proceeded to vomit, which resulted in him aspirating—that means drowning—in his own vomit. No-one came to his aid or rolled him on his side, and when we arrived some seven minutes later it was all too late: he was now in cardiac arrest. We commenced full resuscitation with CPR, intravenous lines were placed and adrenaline was given. Despite my skill set with intubation, a nasogastric tube and airway suctioning, his aspiration had done the damage. That night, despite our very best efforts, a life was lost. A family member was lost and a son to loving parents was lost. As for the perpetrator, his life would change forever too.

There are simply too many of these stories, and the research says it all: there were 15,000 assaults last year alone, of which a large percentage were alcohol related. Not only do we have the social implications of alcohol related violence, but there is also a significant cost to our emergency

departments, which have seen a 30 per cent increase in alcohol related trauma since 2007 costing \$1.4 billion. Something must be done and a conversation is well underway with the community of Queensland, who want this alcohol fuelled violence stopped. I do not want to hear of another unnecessary death in my community as a result of alcohol fuelled violence this Christmas. I do not want to hear about my friends and peers in the QAS being subjected to violence themselves as a result of attending these scenes, and as the member for Barron River recently said, they are difficult and challenging scenes to manage when everyone around you is affected by alcohol. How is it that the very people who are called upon to help are now the targets of violence themselves? I hope that our emergency service personnel do not continue to be exposed to assaults, particularly as we near the Christmas festive season. There are members in this House like the member for Gaven, the member for Moggill, the member for Barron River and the member for Greenslopes; there is a member who is a surgeon, there is a member who was a police officer, and they all acutely know too well of what I speak. We need to do something about it, so I would ask that when the bill comes before the House each and every member give it his or her due consideration. As legislators we need to do everything that we can to stop the unnecessary damage and deaths that are occurring in our communities.

November

 **Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (12.05 pm): To quote Henry Palaszczuk from years gone by, 'I have good news for Queensland.' It is not November; it is 'Movember'. Traditionally one grows a moustache, but mine has gone the full monty. I am potentially growing a beard, and I am joined in this great endeavour by the member for Burleigh and the member for Barron River. I intend to well and truly exceed the member for Glass House, who has a mangy looking thing hanging off his chin at the moment.

But there is a very important side to this and that is men's health, Movember and the issues surrounding that. In 2012, 3,125 women in this state were diagnosed with breast cancer and 4,094 men were diagnosed with prostate cancer. In that same year 512 women died from breast cancer and 658 men died from prostate cancer. I am not for one second demeaning the importance or the critical nature of breast cancer to women, but I am also highlighting the fact that men need to do more about their own health. Prostate cancer can be detected early, treated and cured if you do the right thing. If you go to a doctor and have a test done, whether it is digital, a biopsy or a blood test, it can ensure that you will live with your family, your wife and children or your partner, for many years to come. Men are simply terrified of going to the doctor. Men are simply terrified of going to have their health checked, and I do not know why because it detected my prostate cancer back in 2013 and allowed me to get the treatment that I needed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a lot of commentary in relation to breast cancer. I recall hearing a lady on ABC Radio a number of years ago made it quite clear that for a woman to lose one or both breasts is devastating. I get that. There is no question about that. Can I say to the women in this state that one of the outcomes of having your prostate removed is the potential inability to maintain or gain an erection, and that is a reality that many men have to face. Can I say that that incapacity is as devastating to a man as is the loss of a breast or breasts to a woman. There is no doubt about that. I have met men who, for two years post their operation, have had incontinence. I have met men who have had to use a bag strapped to their leg for two more years before they could get further treatment and surgery with regard to prostate cancer. These are issues that men do not talk about. Women talk about their concerns and their illnesses in clusters. That brings the issues out into the open. Men do not go to the doctor. I say to the women in this House and right across the state: go to your brother, your husband, your partner, your father and even your male friends and ensure they get tested. It does not take a great deal of time. It can prevent a great deal of pain. It will keep them alive for many years to come.


Beyond that, men do not do enough with regard to physical exercise, either. Men do not do enough with regard to mental health issues, either. Men do not do enough to look after themselves. Men do not look after themselves with regard to diabetes. Michelle Trute from Diabetes Queensland will be in the Undumbi Room today providing diabetes check-ups. I urge all men who have time between 12 and 2 pm to go there for a check-up and see how they are travelling. They should also see their doctor about a diet and exercise routine and make certain they are around for a long time to come.

The hands of the men in this chamber hold their health, for themselves and their families. There are doctors, paramedics and nurses in this chamber. They understand the necessity of a check-up. I cannot comprehend why men do not do that, but I applaud women who take the step of doing so but, more importantly, talking about the issues.

The issue of emotional health in men is poor right across this nation. Again, women talk through their emotional issues with their friends. They can teach us a great deal about how we care for ourselves and how we care for our families as a whole. Finally, fellas, get a check-up. It will save your life in the long term.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): I hope we raise lots of money. I call the member for Gladstone.

Gladstone Electorate, LNG Industry

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (12.11 pm): I rise today to speak with pride of the continuing contribution my electorate of Gladstone is making to the growth of Queensland through its industrial city status. The badge 'industrial city' is gladly worn by the people who acknowledge the opportunities that come with that label in terms of generating jobs, advancement, opportunity and wealth.

On Friday, 16 October Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk was in Gladstone with Minister Anthony Lynham to share the excitement of the maiden Santos GLNG shipment. This project's construction began in 2011 and to date has taken more than 95 million work hours to complete. More than 10,000 people have worked on the project, which saw more than \$15 billion invested Australia-wide including \$8 billion in Queensland alone.

Production from the first train commenced in September, and work on the second train is continuing to progress well. The second train is expected to be ready for start-up by the end of the year, with its first LNG shipment in the second quarter of 2016. GLNG is a pioneering venture which produces natural gas from Queensland's coal seams and converts it to LNG. It involves gas field development in the Surat and Bowen basins, a 420-kilometre gas transmission pipeline and a two-train LNG plant on Curtis Island, near Gladstone, which will have the capacity to produce 7.8 million tonnes of LNG per year when fully operational.

In January this year QGC delivered its first cargo of LNG out of Gladstone. I believe it is only a matter of weeks—or maybe even days—before the third LNG project, APLNG, joins the ranks of exporters of production to the world market. Gladstone has already seen in excess of four million tonnes of LNG exported in 2015 in over 60 vessels. Within 18 months the Curtis Island plants will be exporting in excess of 20 million tonnes of LNG per year.

I am proud to say that the LNG industry's coming to our city and state was approved and completed under Labor. This is evidence of great things that continue to happen as a result of responsible decisions made by a responsible government. These projects have a combined value of \$60 billion, a maximum of 14,000 construction jobs and approximately 500 to 600 operational jobs with all plants running. Also, royalties from the LNG produced for Queensland will eventually reach nearly \$2 billion per annum—depending on the price of gas, that is. That wealth is shared around every corner of Queensland. There is not a region in our state that has not somehow been rewarded by what is being generated in my electorate of Gladstone.


The original and forward thinking behind the setting up of the Gladstone Economic and Industry Development Board was to facilitate continued attraction of major industry to Gladstone. It was a viable organisation until the Newman government dismantled the board on 30 June 2012. Thankfully, what we have had returned since 31 January this year is a fruitful and meaningful relationship between the Palaszczuk Labor government, the Gladstone Ports Corporation and the Gladstone Regional Council. We now need to reinstate the development board to ensure our local economy keeps booming through cooperation, growth, expansion and diversification.

The term of little or no support by the former Newman government had massive impacts on my electorate. As I have previously alluded to, the disbanding of the GEIDB was just another poor decision made on a whim by a short-sighted member for Callide, Campbell Newman and the LNP government. They abolished the Gladstone Economic and Industry Board citing government-wide reforms to cut red tape and improve the overall efficiency of the public sector. In actual fact, quite the opposite occurred. That negative action significantly impacted on the Gladstone electorate. Thankfully, the Palaszczuk government acknowledges the huge contribution that organisation made during its time and also acknowledges the benefits that would be gained by the reinstatement of this board.

It is now time for Gladstone to shine again. We have a Premier who listens and ministers who consult with members. This has flowed on to immensely boosting community confidence in Gladstone. Opportunities abound in this government—a government that values Gladstone's contribution to Queensland.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Gaven, I welcome to the gallery school captains from Miami State School in the electorate of Burleigh.

Synthetic Drugs

 **Mr CRAMP** (Gaven—LNP) (12.16 pm): There are many misconceptions around the availability, use and consequences of synthetic drugs. With growing evidence about the serious health effects including death, suicide, serious injury and non-fatal overdoses, we need to continue to inform the public about the very serious threat that these drugs pose to our communities. What is frightening about these drugs is that they are being promoted by sellers as legal highs and as a cheaper alternative to existing illicit drugs. Young people assume that they are safe and do not expect them to pose any danger. You only have to search online for the effects of synthetic drugs to see footage exposing the behaviour of people on these so-called legal highs. Drugs like flakka, which is said to be similar to bath salts, had users clawing at bitumen roads, digging with their bare hands until they had worn the tops off their fingers.

It is absolutely evident that these people not only are endangering themselves but also are capable of harming others including the healthcare workers and law enforcement officers on the front line. Assaults on healthcare workers are a significant issue in Queensland which the LNP is championing the fight against. The expanding use of synthetic drugs will only exacerbate this issue.


Prior to becoming the member for Gaven, during my time in the Ambulance Service, I was aware of the use and effects of synthetic drugs. Since being elected I have continued to hear about the real and growing threats and issues that these drugs continue to pose for our community. This growth is evidenced through the assessment undertaken by the Crime and Corruption Commission between 1999 and 2012. New and emerging psychoactive substances, NPSs, were for the first time in 2009 responsible for some drug related crime. When assessed in 2009 this indicator was low, but in 2012 it had been raised to 'medium and rising'. Now in 2015 NPS popularity and availability continue to increase, particularly in central and northern Queensland—those areas with large mining populations.

There is some evidence that NPSs are being specifically marketed towards youth in Queensland including by using colourful designs and cartoon characters on substance packaging, similar to how you would expect some candies and sweets to be marketed in a corner store. We also know that these drugs are being distributed at a commercial level in Queensland.

The good news is that there are persons in our community—dedicated volunteers like Roberta Cava from the Gold Coast North Crime Stoppers—who are working to provide the much needed education required to combat this scourge. I first met Roberta at a local community group meeting in the Gaven electorate where she provided an exceptional presentation on the dangers of synthetic drugs. Roberta has authored a number of publications regarding public safety and in her most recent book, *Keeping Our Children Safe*, Roberta has highlighted some of the statistics regarding NPS worldwide. For example, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and Europol currently monitor more than 450 NPS drugs—more than double what is monitored under the United Nations international drug control conventions. Roberta also highlights that in Australia 0.4 per cent of Australians aged 14 years and over have used NPSs at some stage in their lives. The use of synthetic cannabis is higher at 1.3 per cent. I absolutely commend Roberta on her efforts to date in educating our communities and will continue to work with and assist her to apply for public funding grants to expand her education programs.

The previous LNP government's tough stance on synthetic drugs made an impact less than two months after new legislative amendments were passed. These amendments meant that Queensland synthetic drug laws were the toughest in Australia. Under the LNP, Queensland became the first and only jurisdiction in Australia to ban any product that mimicked the pharmaceutical effects of an illicit drug, not just certain active ingredients. Unfortunately, we know that there will continue to be a need for changes and amendments to legislation as the makers of synthetic drugs seek to thwart detection and law enforcement efforts. We must, however, continue to recognise the absolute importance and need to expand the education on the dangers of synthetic drugs. Awareness is truly one of the most effective weapons for communities, especially for parents of young children, to combat the misperceptions being spread by the criminal distributors about synthetic drugs. The fact remains that these substances are neither legal nor herbal and we must continue to educate the public to this effect.

Moreton Bay Rail Link


 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (12.21 pm): I rise to address the House on how the Moreton Bay Rail Link is generating and supporting jobs in the electorate of Murrumba. Last week I was fortunate to have the Deputy Premier and member for South Brisbane in my electorate along with the federal Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects. We were also accompanied by the Attorney-General and member for Redcliffe and the member for Kallangur. We were inspecting the

now-ready Mango Hill station on the Moreton Bay Rail Link and I was very pleased to show it off and particularly pleased to talk about how this infrastructure project will be a great boon for local jobs. Looking over the station and all of the activity that was happening around it, it was very clear that the Palaszczuk government is delivering infrastructure that is delivering jobs—jobs now, jobs for the future. The Moreton Bay Rail Link will have a great impact on creating and supporting jobs for locals and will open up job opportunities for the residents of Murrumba. Firstly, it will create jobs. Over 800 direct jobs have been created at the peak of construction and many local jobs are supported by this construction. One example of local jobs being supported is the bus drivers of Thompson Bus Services, a local bus company. It is used nearly every week for all of the tours and visits over the site. Another is Moody Civil & Pipe, accredited suppliers of the sewer and water infrastructure, based at Brendale. Another is Holcim, who employs hundreds of local people and supplies the ballast under the tracks. Its quarries and batching plant and delivery drivers are based at Narangba and Brendale.

Secondly, the Moreton Bay Rail Link will support jobs for local residents, especially in residential construction. This approximately \$1 billion infrastructure project is creating development opportunities around our stations. It is a catalyst for housing growth along the alignment. Around the stations, construction is booming. New streets full of new houses are being created each month. Many different housing products are being built within 400 to 800 metres around stations, walking distance to the station. This is creating new communities and new housing choices for residents in my electorate. Thirdly, the Moreton Bay Rail Link will make it easier for locals to access more job opportunities. It will provide transport to the major employment centres both within and outside the Moreton Bay region. Within our local communities there will be a train line that has 17 trains in morning peak hour and 15 in the afternoon. That is one train every six to 12 minutes. It will be an average 55-minute journey between Kippa-Ring and Brisbane Central. For young people in Deception Bay—a place where unemployment went up to about 18 per cent under the former LNP government—it creates a brand-new chance to go to where the jobs are or to travel to TAFE, college or university. The Moreton Bay Rail Link is in fact an example of Labor planning for infrastructure and delivering infrastructure that delivers jobs for Queenslanders—jobs for now and jobs for the future.

The decision to build it was a crucial decision—a crucial initiative—by federal Labor and state Labor governments. It is Labor that is delivering an infrastructure plan in 2015 for Queensland—a state that has not had a coordinated plan for infrastructure investment since 2011. Labor has also brought in Building Queensland which will lay out the infrastructure pipeline to support jobs now and jobs in the future. Supporting job-creating infrastructure is central to the Palaszczuk government's first budget which has delivered over \$10 billion this year in infrastructure funding. Our capital program will ensure a consistent flow of works that will support jobs growth and support more than 27,000 full-time equivalent jobs. In roads and transport related infrastructure projects, 10,500 jobs will be supported, with almost \$4 billion committed for grants for projects in this network. The Moreton Bay Rail Link is clearly already transforming the electorate of Murrumba as well as Kallangur and Redcliffe. This Labor initiated and driven project is creating opportunities for local businesses and development and it is creating a boon for local jobs and job opportunities. Labor is committed to creating jobs and growing and diversifying our economy and I know we can deliver on this commitment through delivering crucial infrastructure such as the Moreton Bay Rail Link. We certainly look forward to next year to be on the first passenger train that heads out from Kippa-Ring.

Gold Coast, Public Safety

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (12.26 pm): Today I rise to speak about the safety of our families on the Gold Coast. For the last three to four years the people of the Gold Coast have felt much safer than they ever felt before. During the five, six or 10 years before the previous government was in power it was not unusual to see a lot of bikies touring around the Gold Coast and a lot of criminal activity that was associated with bokie groups. That is why the previous government had to take such strong action to fix those issues that were infesting the Gold Coast and, for that matter, the whole of Queensland.

Mr Rickuss: Protecting people like those in the gallery at the moment.

Mr HART: There are some young people from my electorate in the gallery today and it is very important that on their behalf we offer them protection from what is a scourge on our society—that is, criminal organised gangs. This government told us when it first came into power that it was all about transparency and accountability and we have seen minister after minister as well as members opposite stand up and say that they are a transparent and accountable government. Far from it! They are not transparent and they are not accountable. This government has set up about 80 inquiries. Last week when the organised crime commission of inquiry reported there was quite a bit of misinformation and it was quite a political report that was, I would have to say, almost orchestrated for its outcome in order

to attack the strong laws that the previous government brought in. There was a lot of misinformation in that inquiry. There were some quite conflicting numbers and we have since heard from the assistant commissioner of police that the numbers in that report were possibly not right. The latest figures are that there are in fact 89 members of Task Force Maxima as against 100 members of Task Force Argos, as there rightly should be, and over 600 police officers are tackling child protection. That report was just another in what this Labor government calls accountability and transparency and it is now moving on to the VLAD laws that we put in place.

We all know that in September 2013 there was an incident at Broadbeach where bikies confronted each other in a restaurant and then they confronted police officers. That led to the surrounding of Southport Police Station by a group of bikies who demanded—demanded—that police release those persons who were arrested on that night. They attempted to bully those police into doing that. That shows a complete lack of respect for our police officers and that is something that we have to fix.

This government has decided that it will have an independent inquiry into the VLAD laws. How independent is that when the very first sentence of the terms of reference of that particular task force states—


The Taskforce will note the Queensland Government's intention to repeal, and replace the 2013 legislation, whether by substantial amendment and/or new legislation.

One of the terms of reference of this task force is—

How best to replace or amend the 2013 legislation.

This is an inquiry with a predetermined outcome. Today we saw the Minister for Police come in here and tell us that she is worried about the health and safety of our police force. Far from it: she is not concerned at all about our men and women in blue. If she were, she would appreciate that what we have done is uncuff the hands of our police force and give them the necessary powers to tackle these criminal groups head-on. The VLAD laws are having a dramatic effect on the Gold Coast. We cannot afford to undo the good work that the previous government did. I call on this government to be transparent and accountable.

Greenslopes Electorate, Education

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (12.31 pm): I have personally benefited greatly from a family that valued education and a society that ensured that educational opportunities were available to me. I am amazed at the array of opportunities that are available in our schools for students. The environmental group at Coorparoo State School are building an understanding of our natural environment and how each student can play a role in creating a sustainable society. The quality of the artwork on display at the Nursery Road Special School biannual art auction was astounding and results from the school's art extension program. Recently I was made aware of a biology assignment by a student at Cavendish Road State High School and was stunned that someone so young could have such a deep understanding of molecular biology—much more advanced than my own. Many of these available opportunities in science, maths, archaeology, music, drama, dance and legal studies just simply were not available when I went to school, which I can assure members was really not that long ago.

The Palaszczuk government knows that the educational opportunities that we create for young people will shape the society that we become. That is why I was so excited about the announcement of the recent Advancing education plan. This plan builds on important reforms such as a full-time prep year, kindy programs and day care centres and moving year 7 into high school. There are many exciting aspects of this plan—creating a confident start, connecting our schools globally through languages, valuing our teachers and educators, investing in schools and supporting student learning—but I want to focus on the schools of the future section of the plan.

I reiterate that I really did not go to school that long ago, but at that time robots and computers belonged to a world of science fiction. Orac of *Blake's 7* could run a spaceship, R2-D2 could interpret any language, *Kit* was a car that could tell Michael where to go, and who could forget Class M-3 Model B9, General Utility Non-Theorising Environmental Control Robot, who would regularly yell, 'Warning! Warning, Will Robinson!?' Those robots seemed to my young mind the stuff of fantasy, but I now live in a world where computers and robots do all of these things and are now in everyone's pockets. Robots can be built at home with parts printed on a 3D printer. Like many people my age, I love these technological advances, but please do not ask me to explain how they work. For students in the schools of the future, understanding coding and robotics will be essential. It is fantastic that the Premier and Minister Jones have grasped this and will make it a reality for students.

To assuage my curiosity, I decided to head to one of the schools in my local area to check out what is happening. When I went to school, pulling out a robot in class would have earned me some form of punishment, but not so for the students of Mount Gravatt State High School. The maths teachers, Ms Janke, Mr Drew and Mr Taylor-Woodlands, have worked with students to establish a robotics club. At the moment, this club has 27 keen members, with numbers down a bit whilst senior students focus on final exams. The students of this club were so proud to demonstrate their handiwork. The young women and men showed me robots that could do things such as navigate along lines, pick up things, move things and sort out items for recycling. Robotics is not a solitary exercise; the students must work together as a team to build robots that can achieve these amazing things. The students start with a kit but also design and create parts using a 3D printer.

The students demonstrated their preparation for an upcoming competition that is sponsored by the Queensland University of Technology. These young women and men spoke passionately about robotics. Most said that they were keen to pursue further their studies into robotics at university, with most picking science, engineering, mathematics and robotics as their first choice. Mount Gravatt State High School recognised what the students were gaining from their involvement in the robotics club and have since incorporated this study into the curriculum, with robotics courses being offered as part of information and communication technology.

This was a really exciting visit for me, not just because I got to play with robots but because I was surrounded by young people who had a passionate interest that will benefit not just themselves but society as a whole. I am proud to be part of a government that is investing in the schools of the future. I am extremely saddened that the federal government is on course to cut billions of dollars in funding from our education system while at the same time racing to hike the GST, all done while those opposite are silent. To build the schools of the future, we must invest wisely and we must do it now.

The young people of Mount Gravatt State High School demonstrated that we had everything we need right here in our state to be global leaders in these fields. I want to thank the Premier and Minister Jones for their vision and I want to conclude by thanking the principal, Richard Usher, and the teachers who support the robotics club, but mostly I want to thank the members of the club for their passion. I wish them all the best in the QUT robotics competition on 21 November.


DEPUTY SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

School Group Tour

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! The time for matters of public interest has expired. Before I call the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, I would like to acknowledge that we have in the gallery today students from Mitchelton State High School, who are in the electorate of Ferny Grove.

TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS (SMOKE-FREE PLACES) AMENDMENT BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (12.36 pm): I present a message from His Excellency the Governor.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): The message from His Excellency recommends the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS (SMOKE-FREE PLACES) AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, PAUL de JERSEY AC, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—


“A Bill for an Act to amend the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 for particular purposes”

GOVERNOR

Date: 10 November 2015

Tabled paper: Message, dated 10 November 2015, from His Excellency the Governor, recommending the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015 [[1595](#)].

Introduction

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (12.36 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Health and Ambulance Services Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015 [[1596](#)].

Tabled paper: Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes [[1597](#)].

The Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015 amends the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 to strengthen Queensland's tobacco laws. This bill is part of a continued multistrategy approach aimed at reducing the cost of smoking to Queensland individuals, families and the community. To reduce rates of smoking and involuntary exposure to second-hand smoke, the tobacco act has progressively banned smoking in many outdoor public places. Strong smoke-free laws, in conjunction with retail restrictions, quit smoking campaigns and targeted services to help people stop smoking have reduced smoking rates in Queensland by 30 per cent since 2001, when the Beattie Labor government commenced initiatives to expand the number of smoke-free places in Queensland. Even though that has occurred, every day almost 10 Queenslanders die from a smoking related illness. One of these 10 people will be a nonsmoker who has died from an illness related to inhaling other people's smoke. This is why smoking is a key health priority of the government and why I am introducing the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015 into the House today.

This bill amends the tobacco act to create more smoke-free places, which the government believes will reduce exposure to second-hand smoke, reduce the normalcy and social acceptability of smoking behaviours, and provide smoke-free environments to help people quit smoking. There is a growing community expectation in our state that people, especially children, will be protected from second-hand smoke. Young people are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke and are more likely to view smoking as desirable the more often they see people smoking. Therefore, this bill will ban smoking within 10 metres of sporting grounds during an organised under-age sporting event or training session, where children under 18 years are the main participants.

It will also ban smoking within 10 metres of any part of a skate park. Other amendments prohibit smoking at a swimming pool that is owned or operated by a local government, including all areas associated with the swimming pool, such as the kiosk, viewing areas and diving platforms. The smoke-free places bill will continue to protect young people from exposure to second-hand smoke by banning smoking at early childhood education and care services, providing a five-metre smoke-free buffer around the land from which the service operates. This ban will apply to long day care services, kindergarten services, family day care, limited hours services and outside school hours care.

Public transport waiting points are another area where nonsmokers are regularly exposed to second-hand smoke. This bill will enable bus stops, taxi ranks and ferry terminals to achieve the same smoke-free status as railway, busway and light rail platforms have under state transport legislation. All outdoor pedestrian malls are also set to become smoke-free areas. This is consistent with community expectations that people will not be exposed to second-hand smoke at busy public outdoor areas. Currently local governments have the ability under the tobacco act to create local laws banning smoking in these places. To date, only five local governments have prohibited smoking at public transport waiting points and outdoor pedestrian malls in their local government area. The Ipswich City Council and the Fraser Coast Regional Council have declared all bus stops and taxi ranks on local government or state controlled roads in their local government areas to be smoke-free areas. Redland City Council prohibits smoking at each jetty and ramp that is considered a public transport waiting point within their local government area. Brisbane City Council, Ipswich City Council and Logan City Council also took the initiative to use the earlier provisions to declare particular malls to be smoke-free places in their local government area. To ensure consistency across Queensland when the bill commences, local laws banning smoking at public transport waiting points and outdoor pedestrian malls will no longer be valid. The bill will, however, explicitly empower local governments to make local laws prohibiting smoking in other outdoor public places where statewide smoking bans do not apply. This will allow a local government to create areas, like restaurant precincts, boardwalks or picnic grounds, to be smoke free in line with the needs and expectations of their local community.

In 2014 the tobacco act was amended to prohibit smoking at and within five metres of outdoor areas of public and private health facility land. The smoking bans applied to residential aged-care facilities on state hospital and health services land, but did not apply to all residential aged-care facilities. To provide smoke-free environments for all residents, visitors and staff at residential aged-

care facilities, the bill will prohibit smoking at all residential aged-care facilities. The bill does, however, provide residential aged-care facilities with the option of establishing nominated outdoor smoking places. This acknowledges the needs of the elderly residents and recognises that residential aged-care facilities are their homes.

The bill also provides for smoking to be prohibited at national parks or a part of a national park where prescribed in regulation. National parks are significant places for Queensland, both as areas to protect and conserve nature and to encourage active and healthy lifestyles. Smoking bans at national parks would increase community enjoyment and safety by preventing exposure to second-hand smoke, particularly in areas of the parks where there are a high number of visitors.

The bill provides that a person must not smoke at a prescribed government precinct. Areas which may be considered a government precinct and prescribed in a regulation can include land around a state government building, buildings occupied by the state, the Legislative Assembly, a court or tribunal, an entity that represents the state or another entity established under an act. In addition to creating more smoke-free places, the bill will prohibit the sale of smoking products from temporary retail outlets. Smoking products are marketed to young people through temporary stalls at major arts, music and sporting events. The bill also includes a number of other minor and technical amendments to strengthen and clarify the tobacco act.

This bill is an important step in Queensland's tobacco legislation, targeting outdoor public places that protect and promote healthy lifestyles, particularly for children, young people and their families. I acknowledge the Health and Ambulance Services Committee's recent report into the private member's bill introduced by the member for Caloundra, the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Extension of Smoking Bans) Amendment bill. I note that this bill has some elements in common with the private member's bill. However, the government's bill goes much further than the private member's bill. It also addresses a number of drafting issues identified by the Health and Ambulance Services Committee. I will welcome bipartisan support.

I also note that the government has taken the time to consult with the community since I announced our intention for this bill on 17 October. Feedback from stakeholders on the proposals in the smoke-free places bill has been supportive, acknowledging the importance of strong and consistent tobacco laws. Our government will continue to work with stakeholders in relation to enforcement and education, which are important components for the successful implementation of these legislative changes. I would like to thank our stakeholders for their support on this important issue and their well-considered feedback which helps make these reforms successful. These reforms reflect the government's commitment to continue the momentum of Queensland's tobacco control efforts. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. CR DICK (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (12.44 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 Ambulance Services Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Health and Ambulance Services Committee.

WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (12.44 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the River Improvement Trust Act 1940, the Water Act 2000 and the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014 for particular purposes. I table the bill and explanatory notes. I nominate the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 [[1598](#)].

Tabled paper: Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes [[1599](#)].

I am pleased to present the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This bill is a necessary step in implementing the government's strategy to align the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014, known as the WROLA Act, with Palaszczuk government policy and election commitments. Honourable members will recall that the WROLA Act was passed by the previous Queensland parliament on 26 November 2014. That act included a number of changes to the Water Act 2000 that the current government, when in opposition, did not support. In particular, we strongly opposed the removal of the principles of ecologically sustainable development from the new purpose of the Water Act. We also did not support the introduction of a water development option for major water infrastructure projects under the WROLA Act because of, firstly, our concern about risks to the Great Barrier Reef, secondly, our concern about the risk of over-allocating water resources and, lastly, our concern about the total lack of consultation prior before a water development option is issued.

The majority of the provisions relating to water allocation and management in the WROLA Act were originally scheduled to commence on 18 February 2015. However, the Governor in Council approved an amending proclamation on 17 February 2015 to defer the commencement for a number of uncommenced provisions. This was an important step to deliver on our election commitment to act immediately to prevent the commencement of the Newman government's water laws which will have a detrimental effect on the Great Barrier Reef catchment systems and allow for overallocation of Queensland's precious water resources. This has given us time to consider whether they are consistent with our policy.

We have reviewed those uncommenced provisions and determined what elements aligned with our policy. As a result, the Governor in Council approved the commencement of a number of provisions of the WROLA Act and amending subordinate legislation on 10 September 2015. These provisions included simplifying the process for the release of unallocated water and establishing a watercourse identification map, among others.

The new bill does two things: it amends the uncommenced provisions of the WROLA Act to make them consistent with our government's policy; it also removes those provisions that are inconsistent. Actions in the bill to address inconsistencies include: reinstating the principles of ecologically sustainable development into the new purpose of the Water Act contained in the WROLA Act; replacing the term 'responsible and productive management' with the term 'sustainable management'; omitting the water development option provisions in their entirety; and, importantly, omitting the provisions for the declaration of designated watercourses.

The bill proposes amendments to ensure the new purpose of the Water Act included in the WROLA Act includes principles of ecologically sustainable development. This upholds our government's policy and our election commitments. The bill also clarifies that concepts such as the efficient use of water are promoted only through the water planning framework and the allocation of new water, rather than simply by administrative decisions. This is an important component of this bill. The bill proposes to replace all references to 'responsible and productive management' with 'sustainable management' to ensure that sustainable management is advanced in the water allocation and management framework.

As I said earlier, the WROLA Act included provisions for the granting of a water development option, which we strongly opposed when in opposition. Our opposition was based on concerns that those options could be granted to proponents outside of the proper planning process and without appropriate community consultation, transparency or reference to independent science. It is important to have transparency, consultation and reference to independent science, especially when we are dealing with something as important and vital as our water resources. Without water resources there is no agriculture and, importantly, without water resources there is probably no mining. True to the government's election commitments, the bill proposes to remove the water development option provisions in the WROLA Act.

The WROLA Act passed by the previous parliament also included provisions to enable the chief executive to declare a designated watercourse, which would remove the requirement for a water licence or permit to take or interfere with water in a designated watercourse.

Mr Nicholls: I hope you operate faster than you read. They'd still be lying on the table by now.

Dr LYNHAM: I am very careful in both operations, as a surgeon and now. Stakeholders expressed legitimate concern about these provisions, particularly in terms of ensuring transparency and appropriate regulation of water resources. The safeguards around designating a watercourse are not as strong as for other low-risk activities that do not require a water licence or permit to take or interfere with water. That is because there are no formal requirements to consult before declaring a designated watercourse. That is what this government is about: consulting with the community. The previous

provisions had very little in the way of consultation with the community. This government is strong about consultation with the community as a whole, on this bill and on other bills. We want to take the community with us; we do not want to act against the community. That is important in this bill. As a result of community feedback, the bill I am introducing proposes to remove these provisions from the WROLA Act.

In addition to the key amendments already mentioned, a review of the WROLA Act identified a number of minor and other necessary amendments. These amendments will enable smooth implementation, improve operational efficiency and correct minor errors. For example, the bill updates transitional provisions for water planning to ensure that water planning instruments can transition effectively from the current water planning framework of the Water Act to the new water planning framework introduced by the WROLA Act. The new planning framework included in the WROLA Act is consistent with our policy. However, it will need to await consideration of the bill before it commences, because the provisions are intrinsically linked to the proposed changes relating to the purpose.

Of great importance is the framework for managing underground water impacts associated with the resources sector, which is also consistent with our policy. These matters actually fall within the responsibility of my colleague who is here with me today, the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef. Indeed, over time we have had a lot of consultation regarding this very important bill. One must not forget the impact on the environment of the resources industry, the agriculture industry and the like, which are all after our vital water resources for their various purposes. Restoring things such as ecological sustainability into the legislation sends a message about how important the environment is to both myself, the minister for environment and also the people of Queensland. As such, they are not a part of this bill other than a minor operational amendment to enable the chief executive to deal with a resource tenure that is partially within and partially outside a cumulative water management area.

The WROLA Act includes provisions for the underground water framework that provides substantially stronger protections for landholders impacted by mining and a limited statutory right for miners to take certain water. These provisions will commence on a date to be agreed upon between the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef and myself as the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. Before then, our departments will continue to engage with key stakeholders in the lead-up to the implementation of the framework to ensure those affected by the framework are ready and understand the implications of the framework before it takes effect.

The bill also includes minor amendments to clarify the intent of a number of amendments to the River Improvement Trust Act 1940, the RIT Act, made by the WROLA Act. These amendments commenced on 19 December 2014. Clarification is needed in relation to the establishment and possible membership structures of river improvement trusts, as well as the powers and obligations of trusts in undertaking and maintaining works. The bill also proposes to amend the Water Act 2000 to provide certainty to the Lower Herbert Water Management Authority. The Lower Herbert Water Management Authority was formed in 2005 by amalgamating four category 2 water authorities. However, the amalgamation was not properly effected under the Water Act. The bill includes provisions to validate the formation of the authority and the actions it has taken since its formation. All other uncommenced provisions of the WROLA Act have been reviewed and determined to be consistent with government policy.

This bill has been informed by consulting with key stakeholder organisations, including through the Water Engagement Forum of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. That forum includes senior representatives from organisations across environmental, agricultural, local government, fisheries, natural resource management, resource sector, water service provider and financial interests. I am pleased to advise honourable members that the organisations represented on the forum have provided general support for the bill.

First Reading

Hon. AJ LYNHAM (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (12.59 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 Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

Resumed from 17 September (see p. 2012).

Second Reading

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (2.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015 amends the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 to provide the opportunity for a local government to seek an extension of time to complete its local government infrastructure plan, LGIP. One of the priorities of this government is to support local government in planning reform, and extending the current statutory time frame for making an LGIP will give local governments more opportunity to ensure their planning for infrastructure is sound and provides an appropriate basis for determining their infrastructure needs into the future.

An LGIP is also necessary to inform a local government about the infrastructure conditions that should be imposed on development approvals. Through a prescribed preparation process, an LGIP provides information about necessary infrastructure in a transparent and consistent way. An LGIP is that part of the planning scheme that identifies the local government's plans for infrastructure that are necessary to service development in a coordinated, efficient and financially sustainable manner and at the desired standard of service.

If the proposed amendments do not occur, after 30 June 2016 local governments will not be able to levy infrastructure charges if they do not have an LGIP in place. To support local governments in implementing this aspect of planning reform, the bill extends the deadline to 1 July 2018.

This is not a blanket extension. Local governments will have to show commitment. They will do this by firstly making a resolution to submit a request to me with supporting information that outlines the steps they intend to take to prepare the infrastructure plan, the time frames and the necessary resources. This will ensure both councillors and staff are aware of the final deadline and are committed to complete their local government infrastructure plan by that date. I will consider the requests for extensions of time on a case-by-case basis.

The bill also amends the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009, the SEQ water act. The SEQ water act mirrors the infrastructure charging provisions in the SPA to ensure infrastructure charging for water and sewerage matters are kept transparent and consistent with the infrastructure charging framework for all other aspects of development. Water and sewerage matters of a development are assessed and approved under the SEQ water act by distributor-retailers for the local government areas of Brisbane, Ipswich, Somerset, Scenic Rim, Lockyer Valley, Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast and Noosa.

The bill allows applicants for a development approval and water connection approval to indicate to the local government or the distributor-retailer that they are not seeking information about an offset or refund in an infrastructure charges notice. An infrastructure charges notice is normally issued by the local government or the distributor-retailer when it approves the development application or water connection. SPA and the SEQ water act outline the information required to be included.

This is so the developer has a clear understanding of how the charge has been calculated and whether an offset or refund has been taken into consideration for any trunk infrastructure the developer has been conditioned to provide by either the local government or the distributor-retailer. This has the great advantage of certainty and transparency at the approval stage. However, it can take some time to do the necessary analysis to determine the costs of required infrastructure and this can lead to more time in the process and delay the development approval. The bill's amendments allow for applicants who are either unconcerned about the prospect of an offset or a refund or are prepared to receive this information at a later time to get a more timely development approval.

I now turn to the amendments to the City of Brisbane Act 2010 and the Local Government Act 2009. Without amendment local governments are prohibited from publishing or distributing how-to-vote cards during the caretaker period for a local government election. The prohibition is inconsistent with the Local Government Electoral Act 2011 that requires accepted how-to-vote cards to be available for public inspection at the place of nomination, the local government's public office and on the Electoral Commission's website.

The Electoral Commission is responsible for accepting how-to-vote cards if the card is unlikely to mislead or deceive an elector in voting. The same scrutiny is applied to how-to-vote cards used in state elections. The bill provides for local governments to make accepted how-to-vote cards available for inspection at the local government's public office during the caretaker period for a local government election. Finally, the bill makes a minor amendment to the Local Government Electoral Act 2011 to repeal an obsolete reference to mayoral first-past-the-post voting.

I will now address the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee's report on the bill. Firstly, I thank the committee and the secretariat for its consideration of the bill. My thanks also go to those stakeholders who made submissions as part of the committee's examination of the bill and for the time and effort in communicating their concerns, suggestions and support of the bill. In addition to the committee's recommendation for the bill to be passed, the government notes the committee's requested two clarifications.

The first clarification is to advise the House how and when the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning would clarify to local governments that no further extensions would be considered after the proposed deadline of 1 July 2018. Departmental officers have already prepared a guideline for my approval that summarises the requirements of the bill and the steps that local governments must take to apply for an extension of time to prepare their infrastructure plan. Pending passage of this bill, I will be sending this guideline out to all local governments. My letter and the guideline will both make clear that no further extensions of the time frame past 30 June 2018 will be considered.


The second clarification requested by the committee has three parts, but is overall seeking advice about what may happen if a local government were unable to achieve the steps outlined in their project plan submitted to me as part of their application for extension. Firstly, the committee requests advice about any monitoring the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning would conduct in relation to a local government achieving the steps outlined in their project plan. Local governments will be requested for regular updates to monitor the progress they are making in the preparation of their local government infrastructure plans.

The department has staff in regional offices who have direct and ongoing contact with local governments. This monitoring will also be integral to the assistance provided by the department, which is the second part of the committee's request—how would the department assist a local government in achieving the time frames as set out in the project plan?

The department has been assisting local governments in relation to the new infrastructure planning and charges framework arrangements since they commenced in July 2014. The department has conducted workshops, convened meetings and provided advice to local governments. This experience has shown that the skills and needs of local governments vary right across the state. The department will continue to be available and will provide support and technical advice according to the specific needs of the local government.

The final clarification sought by the committee is about any consequences for local governments if they were unable to meet the requirements of their project plan, excluding not meeting the extension deadline and not being able to levy charges. It is simple. If a local government fails to meet the steps in their project plan, the consequences will be that it will fail to adopt a local government infrastructure plan by 30 June 2018. This means that they will not be able to continue levying infrastructure charges. In other words, it will cost the local government and ultimately the community it represents.

I want to make it clear that the process described in the bill is to ensure that local government managers and elected members are all aware and committed to preparing and adopting an infrastructure plan within the required time frame. Local governments are responsible for the preparation and implementation of their planning schemes and local government infrastructure plans. The state's role includes conducting a review of the draft plans to ensure it aligns with state policy and requirements outlined in legislation. The state will assist as much as it can, but ultimately it is a local government's responsibility if they wish to levy infrastructure charges. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (2.39 pm): I rise to speak to the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015. As has been mentioned, this bill amends the City of Brisbane Act, the Local Government Act, the Local Government Electoral Act, the Sustainable Planning Act and the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail) Restructuring Act.

Firstly, I would like to address amendments as they pertain to the Sustainable Planning Act and particularly infrastructure charging. The planning and delivery of infrastructure is a vital responsibility of government and requires more than wish lists; it requires funding pipelines. Local government often rely upon being able to charge developers for infrastructure to ensure that that infrastructure is able to support the local communities. It has been a contentious area in years past and not always handled well. That is the reason why the LNP brought in a strong framework of reforms. It was to address this contentious area and to ensure that frameworks were put in place so that there was accountability when it came to infrastructure charging.

The state government, through these amendments, is giving local governments more time to complete their infrastructure plans, with up to a two-year extension until the middle of 2018, by which time if they do not have a plan they will no longer be able to charge those particular infrastructure charges. So this is an extension. As the Deputy Premier has noted, it is not a *carte blanche* extension; however, it is an extension of up to two years. The concern we have in regard to this extension is that, if there continues to be a pushing out and a failure to deliver these plans in a way that is accountable to the local area, it can put a brake on appropriate investment in that local area. It certainly does not aid transparency.

I note that there have been requests from some local governments for this extension and that there will be worthy reasons for putting those forward, but it is vitally important that the deadlines for the delivery of these plans are not allowed to keep blowing out. The plans need to be in place in order to appropriately and transparently level infrastructure charges with the appropriate investment that underpins those plans. We are talking about infrastructure such as water supply, sewerage, stormwater, transport, parks et cetera.

Local governments do need to be able to appropriately charge developers for infrastructure required by those developments to support the local community. These plans are also important for the cost-effective delivery of infrastructure, with industry knowing what work will be available and being able to plan accordingly. As we know, recently the Civil Contractors Federation released its *Building our future: 2015 update* for Queensland and pleaded for greater investment in infrastructure projects amid fears of a looming backlog over the next five years. Certainly recent construction statistics show that there has been a slump in the civil construction industry.

It is important at all levels of government that plans are clear, that there are not only wish lists but also pipelines of funding and, in respect of local government, that there is transparency for the charges they seek to levy on those who are being asked to pay. This is important not only for communities but also for investment in local jobs and for housing affordability locally. State legislation should facilitate local government's ability to grow their local economy, and housing and construction, through appropriate development, is a key part of that. The LNP recognises that local governments are the elected bodies closest to Queensland communities; therefore, it is appropriate that the department provide support as planning reforms continue to be put in place.

We also know from feedback from local government and industry that in this previously contentious area of infrastructure charging there was a lack of transparency in some areas and certainly a lack of consistency. That is why in government the LNP established a long-term local infrastructure planning and charging framework for Queensland that sought to address that, that sought to address the shortfalls of the previous system. Following extensive stakeholder consultation and engagement, the LNP implemented reforms to the Queensland local infrastructure planning and charging framework. I wish to acknowledge my colleague the former deputy premier and minister for infrastructure, Jeff Seeney; the assistant minister at the time, Ian Walker; and also the subsequent assistant minister, Rob Molhoek, who were extensively involved in working up these changes.

These amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act were to support local governments in delivering a framework to provide confidence to industry when planning and developing projects that ensured industry had a better understanding up-front of what they would be expected to contribute to local government, as well as the water distributor-retailer in terms of trunk infrastructure. This is so important to help create jobs and boost the economy and to deliver more affordable housing for Queenslanders, as well as being reflective of the communities' aspirations and requirements in their local environment.

As mentioned, our reforms aimed to provide greater consistency to the development industry when planning and developing projects to ensure they were clear about what they were expected to contribute to local infrastructure. Our reforms also provided local governments with the legislative tools to better plan and manage this process so that they could meet the needs of their growing local communities. It was important that local governments be able to properly plan with the full knowledge of what their revenue from such activities will be so that they understand what revenue will be coming in and the infrastructure that can be supplied.

One of the key features of our reforms was that levying infrastructure charges and conditioning development approvals for infrastructure were intended to be more consistent across local government and distributor-retailer entities. We were critical of the way that the previous Labor government rolled out priority infrastructure plans, as they were more about bureaucracy than delivery, and local governments just had to live through it while the subsidies for their water and sewerage infrastructure were slashed. The process for these priority infrastructure plans was expensive, full of red tape and cumbersome. At the same time, as mentioned, local governments lost subsidies for water and sewerage. Previously, these priority infrastructure plans made it nearly impossible for local governments to effectively prepare and deliver infrastructure plans and policies and charging regimes such that they could provide certainty to industry. In contrast, there was a lot of effort put into this area by the LNP to find a way forward, commence new funding avenues for local governments and encourage new infrastructure.

The LNP opposition is pleased to see that the Labor government in this case is not undoing worthwhile LNP reforms; therefore, we will not be opposing the amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act and South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail) Restructuring Act. As I have mentioned, I do have concerns about the extension and that certainly needs to be assessed with rigour. We do need to see accountability with any level of government but certainly with our local government as well—that the infrastructure plans are being put in place, that they are transparent, that they are accountable and that costs can be appropriately levied against developments to ensure the infrastructure is put in place.

The accountability of these plans is important for the communities served by the infrastructure, for the industry which invests in them and also for local jobs. It is fundamental that local governments have these plans in place as soon as possible. As noted by the Property Council and the Shopping Centre Council of Australia, it needs to be made clear that no further extensions will be provided if a local government does not meet the proposed new deadlines, and certainly where extensions are provided under this legislation, as I have mentioned, there has to be great rigour.


I wish to note that the Shopping Centre Council of Australia opposed the extension, as they do not want to see concession to the local government sector result in an unaccountable and expensive process which sees no improvement in the delivery of local infrastructure across Queensland. The Property Council opposed the proposed two-year extension, as to them it meant that local governments were not being held to account in meeting statutory deadlines associated with infrastructure planning.

I turn to some of the other provisions in the legislation that are uncontroversial. An amendment will allow the exhibiting of election material such as how-to-vote cards to take place during the caretaker period for local government elections. It is a reasonable amendment and one that we do not oppose. We will be supporting it. The amendment will remove inconsistency and permit an accepted how-to-vote card to be available for inspection at a local government's public office during the caretaker period for a local government election.

There is also a redundant provision that is being removed from the legislation where it makes reference to mayoral first-past-the-post voting in undivided local governments to appropriately refer to it as optional preferential voting. To clarify, there have been quite a few changes in recent years in this area. In order to make the voting system for mayors the same across all local governments and consistent with the method of voting for members of the Legislative Assembly, last year the LNP changed the voting system for mayors in undivided local governments from first past the vote to optional preferential voting. This is making sure that some of those redundant provisions are removed from the legislation.

To bring this to a close, I reiterate that I am pleased that some of the reforms that we were able to put in place in government essentially remain in this legislation. It makes a refreshing change because most of the time we spend in here is the Labor government undoing a lot of LNP legislation, but in this case they are only minor amendments and ones that have been requested by local

government. We do stress, though, it is important there is accountability. There is some concern that there is another potential two-year extension, but it is important these infrastructure plans are put in place in a timely way so communities can know what infrastructure they are getting, there is accountability as to what people can be charged to deliver that infrastructure and there is no second-guessing.

 **Mr PEARCE** (Mirani—ALP) (2.51 pm): I am happy to join the debate today on the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015. The bill was referred to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee on 17 September. The bill corrects an inconsistency between the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, the City of Brisbane Act 2010 and the Local Government Act 2009 relating to making accepted how-to-vote cards available for inspection at the local government's public office during the caretaker period for a local government election. It removes a redundant reference to mayoral first-past-the-post voting and the Local Government Electoral Act, which was left over from the previous amendments made to the act.

It enables local governments to seek an extension of up to two years from 30 June 2016 to have a local government infrastructure plan in place. It enables an applicant to advise a local government that they are not seeking information about an offset or refund in an infrastructure charges notice and enables an applicant for a connection approval to advise a distributor-retailer that the applicant is not seeking information about an offset or refund in an ICN.

The committee made one recommendation—that the bill be passed—and requested that the Deputy Premier provide clarification on a couple of other matters. If you were listening with interest to what the Deputy Premier was saying, you would have heard that she covered those two areas. I thank the Deputy Premier for doing that. It eases a couple of concerns that the committee had.

The more significant amendments are the amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009 to extend the time frame for local governments to prepare a local government infrastructure plan. The committee noted that many local governments would not be in a position to be able to finalise their infrastructure plan by the current deadline of 30 June 2016. The first thought that goes through people's minds when they hear local government is struggling to get things done on time is usually what resources that local government has. I think any of us who have local governments in our electorates would realise that there are local governments which are efficient and there are local governments which are not so efficient, and often it comes back to the dollars. It was beneficial for the committee to follow advice from the department. The committee was satisfied that the department is providing enough assistance to local governments in preparing their plans. These plans are important documents and provide councils with the ability to impose conditions about trunk infrastructure and dealing with development applications.

The committee took note of concerns from the development industry about the two-year time frame. However, the committee noted that the department would not propose any future extensions for the preparation of plans after the two-year extension. I think that is a reasonable position to take. At the time I think the committee had some concerns about giving them more time because they have to show that they are doing their work, as requested by government, and that they have the expertise to get in and get that work done.

Local governments will be required to prepare a project plan which details how they will work through the development of their infrastructure plans. An incentive for local governments to meet the statutory deadline is that they will be able to levy charges. I have not seen a local government anywhere in Queensland that is not interested in taking in more dollars. You would hope that would be a good incentive for them to get that work done.

The committee also noted concerns about the waiver of appeal rights when a developer opts to not receive information about an offset or refund in their infrastructure charges notice. The committee was satisfied with the amendment on the basis that the developer chooses this path in order to obtain a faster approval. Developers are always looking for as much help as they can get from local government. They are also looking to see how much cheaper they can do it. Any option that we have in place where developers can work with local government has to be beneficial not only to the local government but also to the developer and to the community. I think that is a very important point to make.


There was some concern that the proposed two-year extension time frame for a local government to prepare its infrastructure plan was too long. The Property Council of Australia suggested that a more reasonable time frame for an extension for local government would be up to one year ending 1 July

2017. The PCA was concerned that the proposed two-year extension demonstrated that local government was not being held to account in meeting a statutory deadline associated with the infrastructure plan. I think that is a reasonable point given that they have already had a period of time to get on with the work, but I think what has been done here puts them in a position where they have to get the work done. They have a clear statutory deadline which is being passed in the parliament today which will encourage them to have their infrastructure plan in place.

In response to concerns that the proposed two-year extension might not be long enough for local government to prepare their infrastructure plan, the department advised us that much of the work had already been done, and you would think so. If a lot of the work had not already been done and they were not getting close to finishing their plans, you would be asking questions like, 'What have they been doing for the last couple of years?' I think that is good. They have an extra two years to do it. There should not be any excuses. We will be in a position to be able to monitor things as time draws near to ensure that everybody is on track. The department also said they were confident that two years was enough. The committee has been asking the questions and is confident that the department knows what is required to maintain proper management practices. They are showing their support for local government by suggesting to the committee that the time frame that was set is right. The committee was happy to accept that.

The committee indicated in its report that it was satisfied with the length of the extension. It also noted the department's advice that the amount of time would result in a more considered plan. We certainly do not want local government rushing in to get the work done, especially if they are underresourced in any way, and deliver a plan that will not flow and is also full of mistakes. I think it is better that if any local government in particular is having problems, it should communicate with the department of local government. They should look at where the local government is not able to fulfil its task and talk to it about it. I am sure there will be committees in the future that will go back and have a look at what was said in this place today, have a look at the support that the local government had from the department and start asking questions about why they have not been able to meet that time frame of two years.

There is a lot more to be said about this bill. I recognise that there are other members who want to make a contribution to the debate. I, therefore, will end my contribution. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (3.01 pm): I also rise to speak about the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015. I will be brief as well. This is quite a non-controversial bill. I do want to speak briefly about the local government infrastructure plans. Firstly, I will cover the other aspects of the bill.

Part of the bill amends the City of Brisbane Act 2010 and the Local Government Act 2009. Both of these acts prohibit a local government from publishing or distributing election material during the caretaker period for a local government election. However, the Local Government Act 2011 requires accepted how-to-vote cards to be available for public inspection at the place of nomination, the local government's public office and on the Electoral Commission's website. The bill amends those two acts to correct the inconsistency with the LGEA by permitting an accepted how-to-vote card to be available for inspection at the local government's public office during the caretaker period for a local government election. Secondly, the bill makes a minor amendment to the LGEA to repeal an obsolete reference to mayoral first-past-the-post voting as a consequence of the change made on 1 January 2015 to the voting systems for mayors in undivided local governments from first past the post to optional preferential voting.

Thirdly, under the Sustainable Planning Act the government currently requires local governments that extend a levy on infrastructure charges to include a local government infrastructure plan in its planning scheme by 30 June 2016. I will speak briefly about the reasons for that. When that bill was introduced in 2014 it came to the committee of which I was a member. There was a feeling at the time that there may be some instances where councils were charging for infrastructure that was not in place, had already been paid for by somebody else or was at an inflated price. At the time the government decided that the best way to deal with this would be for local governments to have those infrastructure plans in place. Until they do, they basically cannot charge for those infrastructure plans after 30 June 2016. That was the penalty that was involved. If local governments do not have those infrastructure plans in place by 30 June, they cannot charge an infrastructure charge in the future. That is what this bill fixes by pushing out that date for two years.


My concern revolves around that two-year period. On 1 October we heard from the department that there were no local governments that had provided a local government infrastructure plan. Being 18 months down the path, one would have thought that perhaps some of the local governments, especially the bigger ones that have the necessary manpower, may well have been able to provide those infrastructure plans. After all, they told the government that they could; that is why the two-year period was put in place. They knew full well that at 30 June 2016 they would no longer be able to charge infrastructure charges if they did not put those plans in place, and yet none of them did. Perhaps someone will pass this on to the Deputy Premier when she returns to the chamber. I would like to know how many local government infrastructure plans are in place now. I think there are one or two, and possibly the people from the department can enlighten us later. We heard from the department that they were anticipating there would not be too many more before 30 June. We did look at why we needed to extend the time for the plans for another two years. That seemed like the best outcome for everyone. That is why the committee only made one recommendation, and that is to pass this bill.

My concern revolves around the clarification that the Deputy Premier just made. One of the questions that the committee did ask is if she could explain the consequences for local governments if they are unable to meet the requirements of the project plan, and I will briefly talk about the project plan. The minister will require the councils to put forward a project plan as to when they are going to put in their infrastructure plan. What we have here is a plan for a plan. Some members in this House will probably remember that the Labor Party is good at producing plans for a plan but not actually coming up with a plan at the end of the day. Now they seem to be extending that to local government as well, which is pretty interesting. A plan for a plan—what can I say?

The Deputy Premier said that the consequence for local governments is going to be that they will not be able to charge infrastructure charges after the extension period, which runs to 30 June 2018; however, that is the consequence right now. The consequence at 30 June 2016 is that no council is going to be able to charge infrastructure charges if they do not have a plan in place. All we are doing is saying, 'We are going to move this back two years and the same old consequence will apply.' If the councils have not met the time frame by 30 June 2018, they are not going to be able to charge infrastructure charges. When we get close to that I suspect the government of the day may say, 'We are going to need to push it out again.' One has to wonder what these councils are doing. Why is it that they have not come up with these infrastructure plans? One answer to that might be that it does not suit them to come up with an infrastructure plan because the moment they have an infrastructure plan in place that is what they have to charge for.

There has been quite a bit of confusion around the place as to what is trunk and non-trunk infrastructure. We heard from the department that there may be some decision made around the size of a pipe. Once it gets to a certain size, possibly it becomes trunk infrastructure and a developer may well be conditioned to put in that particular trunk infrastructure and then claim some sort of offset or refund for it. We are unsure exactly what that is and the department is unable to give me a clear definition of what is trunk and non-trunk infrastructure. That could possibly be something else that the Deputy Premier might be able to explain to me in her reply—what is trunk and non-trunk infrastructure—so that the people out there who are working in this decision area have a clear view of what it is. I am not a planning expert, but our committee had the benefit of having a planning expert, and I thank the member for Keppel for her input on that. It was an advantage to us to have someone who knows a little bit more than I do about it and to give us a bit of feedback about it.

I still have some real concerns about offsets and refunds. That is not going to go away, and I hope that will not become a problem. Developers may decide that they do not need to know about the offset or refund and that they are happy to have their development approved in a timely fashion because the holding cost that may be involved in their development perhaps exceeds the offset or refund that they might get for trunk infrastructure charges and they may make a decision to move away from that. That is an ongoing concern that I have, and I will be watching this space closely to see what happens in the future. There are other members of the committee who want to speak on this bill and nine minutes is pretty good, so I will just leave it at that.

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (3.09 pm): I will try and last as long as Michael, but I do not have his skill to make it up as I go along. I rise today to speak on the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee and particularly the member for Keppel, Brittany Lauga, whose knowledge and experience with regard to local government rules and regulations was invaluable. It was an enlightening experience for me. I

would also particularly like to thank the secretariat, who did a great job turning our jumbled report into something absolutely fantastic. This bill was referred to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee, which examined four changes to the act. As stated in the explanatory notes—

The *City of Brisbane Act 2010* (COBA) section 92D and the *Local Government Act 2009* (LGA) section 90D prohibit a local government from publishing or distributing election material during the caretaker period for a local government election. The *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* (LGEA) section 179 requires accepted how-to-vote cards to be available for public inspection at the place of nomination, the local government's public office and on the electoral commission's website.

Under the LGEA, the electoral commission accepts how-to-vote cards if satisfied that the cards are unlikely to mislead or deceive an elector in voting and comply with certain administrative requirements.

The Bill amends the COBA/LGA to correct the inconsistency with the LGEA by permitting an accepted how-to-vote card to be available for inspection at the local government's public office during the caretaker period for a local government election.

This may not seem necessary for many, but some people like to see who their nominees are and whilst in caretaker mode it is a fantastic opportunity for them. If the bill is not enacted before the caretaker period for the 2016 quadrennial local government elections held on 19 March 2016, the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act will be in conflict with the Local Government Electoral Act. The early advice that we received during committee hearings is that the local government caretaker period will commence sometime in early February 2016, so we need to make sure that this bill is passed so those inconsistencies can be sorted out prior to that election.

The second part of the bill makes an amendment to the Local Government Electoral Act to remove an obsolete reference to mayoral first-past-the-post voting. On 1 January 2015 the system of voting for mayors in undivided local governments changed from first past the post to optional preferential, making the voting system uniform for mayors across divided and undivided local government areas and consistent with the method of voting for members of the Legislative Assembly. The explanatory notes further state—

The *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* (SPA) requires a local government that intends to levy an infrastructure charge to include a Local Government Infrastructure Plan (LGIP) in its planning scheme by 30 June 2016. SPA also requires an Infrastructure Charges Notice (ICN) issued by a local government to include information about any offset or refund that may apply.

As the member for Burleigh said, there was much debate and conjecture about how this was going to happen, and we were still very confused at the end of our hearings. The explanatory notes state—

However, many local governments have advised that they will not be in a position to prepare an LGIP by 30 June 2016 and so would not be able to impose charges on a development approval after this date. This may result in the local governments delaying or avoiding approving development applications that would have otherwise attracted significant charges. The Bill provides local governments with a further two years to have an LGIP in place if they have received the Planning Minister's approval for the extension.

Quite a few questions were asked of the department about why the extra time should be given, and the difference was that some of the local councils are fully manned and have these processes in place and are ready to go, but the department said that some councils have not even begun. This extension of two years will enable them to do the work. The explanatory notes state—

The Bill requires local governments to justify their ability to meet the extended timeframe.

Hopefully there will be penalties and enforcement. As stated in the explanatory notes—


The Bill has no impact on those local governments with an LGIP in place by 30 June 2016.

The requirement for an ICN to include information about any offset or refund that may apply has been effective in encouraging local governments to take proper account of the trunk infrastructure being delivered by the developer when the local government determines the appropriate charge. It has also provided applicants with certainty in relation to the value of their contribution to the cost of providing the trunk infrastructure. However, where the offset or refund is large enough to necessitate the approval of the local government's budget committee, this takes a considerable period of time to obtain, resulting in delays in development approvals. The current arrangement does not allow for an applicant who is either unconcerned about the prospect of an offset or refund, or is prepared to receive information about these matters at a later time, to advise the local government that they are not seeking information about an offset or refund in an ICN. The Bill allows an applicant to do so.

The *South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009* (SEQ Water Act) requires an ICN to include information about any offset or refund that may apply. The information in the ICN has provided water connection applicants with greater clarity and certainty around offsets and refunds for trunk infrastructure they may be required to provide. The information in the ICN also ensures the distributor-retailers properly account for trunk infrastructure that is conditioned on a water connection approval.

A large development however, may face delays in receiving a connection approval and ICN due to an offset or refund being of a magnitude that it requires specific budget approval within the distributor-retailer. However, an applicant may be unconcerned (at the time of approval) about the prospect of an offset or refund, or is prepared to receive information about these matters at a later time.

The decision is then up to them as to how they want to move forward. The current arrangement does not allow an applicant to provide the distributor-retailer with advice that the applicant is not seeking offset or refund information in an infrastructure charges notice. I am sure that those members yet to speak to this bill will be absolutely thrilled to continue with this debate. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.20 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015. The Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee examined this bill in detail during its inquiry, which involved a public hearing, review of submissions from stakeholders and a departmental briefing. The committee has recommended unanimously that the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015 be passed.

The policy objectives of the bill are to correct an inconsistency between the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, the City of Brisbane Act 2010 and the Local Government Act 2009 relating to making accepted how-to-vote cards available for inspection at the local government's public office during the caretaker period for a local government election. It also aims to remove an obsolete reference to mayoral first-past-the-post voting in the LGEA; enable local governments to seek an extension of up to two years to have a local government infrastructure plan in place; and enable an applicant to advise a local government or distributor-retailer that the applicant is not seeking information about an offset or refund in an ICN.


There was some concern, as previous speakers have mentioned, that the proposed two-year extension time frame for local governments to prepare their LGIPs was too long. The Property Council of Australia and the Shopping Centre Council of Australia both expressed concerns relating to the extension. The PCA was concerned that the proposed two-year extension demonstrated that local governments were not being held to account in meeting a statutory deadline associated with infrastructure planning.

The committee was advised, though, that the proposed amendment is necessary as many local governments had advised the department that they would not be able to finalise the preparation of their LGIPs by the current 30 June 2016 cut-off date. The department advised that extending the cut-off date would also allow local governments enough time to prepare considered LGIPs. The department confirmed that many of those councils which did not expect to have a plan in place were concerned that they had rushed the process and that they would probably have to go back and revise it anyway. So they were appreciative that they would have some extra time to do a better job than if the deadline remained at 30 June 2016.

With regard to waiving the right to information about an offset or refund in an ICN, an infrastructure charges notice is issued when a development application or connections application is approved. The bill seeks to change the SPA and the SEQ water act respectively to allow developers to indicate to a local government or distributor-retailer their preference to receive an infrastructure charges notice without offset and refund information. This arrangement will allow for those applicants who either are unconcerned about the prospect of an offset or refund or are prepared to receive this information at a later time and will allow for a speedier development approval.

This is a sensible amendment. The department advised that the impetus for this particular proposed amendment came from the development industry and that the amendments are supported by the LGAQ and the infrastructure charges working group. Having worked as a town planning consultant in the past, I know that this amendment will be welcomed by councils, developers and planners across the state. It is a sensible amendment which reduces time frames for development applications but does not compromise in any way the integrity of the development assessment process.

I thank those organisations and individuals who lodged written submissions on the bill. I also thank the departmental officers who briefed the committee: Mr Mark Saunders, Director, Planning Scheme Support, Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning; Mr Jan Cilliers, Manager, Infrastructure, Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning; Ms Josie Hawthorne, Manager Legislation, Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning; and Ms Anita Sweet, General Manager, Water Supply Policy and Economics, Department of Energy and Water Supply. I also thank the committee's wonderful secretariat and the Technical Scrutiny of Legislation Secretariat. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (3.24 pm): I rise to speak to the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015. Local governments are at the coalface of planning laws. They are at the coalface of issues which affect residents on a daily and weekly basis. Many members would know the old saying that local government is about roads, rates and rubbish. It is a truism that local government is about the basics, but a core business of council is planning. The challenge is how to be

discerning in addressing current and future needs. This challenge can be addressed with suitable planning. Councils are the best at this because they know the intricacies of their regions and can give meaningful consideration to planning for the future.

Before I was elected to this place I had 12 years experience as a local government councillor and a deputy mayor. I saw the impact of state government decisions on local government and how they often had to pick up the pieces of badly researched decisions and buck-passing. They are best at knowing what their communities need.

This bill aims to extend the time frame for a local government to prepare a local government infrastructure plan beyond the current cut-off date of 30 June next year. As it stands, unless councils have one of these in place before 30 June 2016 they will not be able to levy infrastructure charges. Local governments throughout Queensland have been working hard to complete their local government infrastructure plans, with an election scheduled in March next year and therefore potential administration changes. I note that the Local Government Association of Queensland welcomes this extension.

Today we often hear talk about liveable communities and liveable cities. Australia now has a federal Minister for Cities and the Built Environment. Governments and industry groups commission reports on what makes liveable communities. Infrastructure planning is about ensuring that the right infrastructure is in place to achieve a balance to make communities wonderful places to live in.


This is about councils being able to charge for non-trunk infrastructure in developments. This is infrastructure such as water supply, sewerage, stormwater, local transport, public parks and land for community facilities. These networks are about binding our communities together as liveable places with all the necessary amenities. Infrastructure charges are important to councils, which have to make sure that developments have the correct networks in place to meet future needs.

Much of councils' responsibility is about asset management. I am well aware of this because I served on a typical regional council which had a small population base but had to service a number of towns. The residents in each of those towns had a reasonable expectation of a network of water and sewerage infrastructure, bitumen, and kerbing and channelling. After amalgamation I served in a larger city council which incorporated those smaller, outlying rural areas. I had to deal with the budget dilemma of providing for the needs of the larger population centre, balanced with meeting the needs of the outlying communities. This could only be achieved by a form of cross-subsidisation which ensured everyone had a realistic and suitable level of facilities and services.

Infrastructure plans are about having the right information to ensure proper asset management. Local governments have not had the best track record in maintaining their assets. For many years their track record was in successfully attracting funding for and building the infrastructure but not maintaining it.

Local governments have not always been well practised at understanding what they have in their region. They have not always had the current, precise records on the buildings they administer or the road, water and sewerage networks they had to preserve. Without a proper infrastructure plan it is difficult to correctly budget for the depreciation of those assets as well as provide enough funding for maintenance. An infrastructure plan will help councils to factor in proper depreciation and an asset maintenance budget.

When councils come to establishing those charges, they have to be very aware of not seeing charges as a bottomless pit of funding. They are not a cash cow. They are not a weapon for imposing some ideological barrow on communities. Councils need to be mindful of putting in place the correct balance regarding prospective charges. They need to be mindful of not penalising and hindering development by overcharging developers. They also need to be mindful of not undercharging, thereby leaving a legacy of funding impost for the ratepayer to pick up. I support the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015 and ask the House to pass it.

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (3.28 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2). This bill makes a number of very good and technical amendments. The bill amends the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act to make how-to-vote cards available for inspection at a local government's public office during the caretaker period for a quadrennial local government election. I think that makes sense in that it removes the inconsistencies between the abovementioned acts and the Local Government Electoral Act 2011. Therefore the same scrutiny as is used in the state election is applied to local government how-to-vote cards, so we are getting consistency across both tiers of government.

This meets the government's election commitment that local government elections will be conducted to the same high standards of independence and efficiencies as do state elections. When it comes to the manner in which we are both elected, I think that the residents in those local government areas and the general public at large want to know that local governments and state governments have consistency.


The bill also makes it clear that prohibited actions under the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act do not apply to making an accepted how-to-vote card available for public inspection before polling day under the Local Government Electoral Act. So it removes that inconsistency, which I believe is a step in the right direction.

The bill proposes an extension of time for local government infrastructure plans, providing local government with a further two years to 30 June 2018 to have a local government infrastructure plan in place if that is approved by the relevant minister. Importantly, the bill requires local governments to justify their ability to meet the extended time frame and the reason they may want to have that extension. As we know, infrastructure planning is really important. I think that the two-year extension is a step in the right direction for those local governments that are having trouble meeting the current deadline. The plans are designed to provide information about essential infrastructure in a transparent and consistent way and may include only infrastructure for water supply, sewerage, stormwater, local transport or public parks—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Honourable members, could I ask members to keep their conversation to a minimum, please? The level of audible conversation is rising. I think we need to show the member for Brisbane Central respect in hearing her speak.

Ms GRACE: Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you. That is great—community facilities, commonly referred to as trunk infrastructure. So the legislation provides for a definition of trunk infrastructure. The bill meets the needs of many local governments that have advised that they will not be in a position to meet the current deadline. As I said, this bill allows the relevant minister to extend the deadline on a case-by-case basis. Without these amendments local governments would not be able to impose infrastructure charges on a development approval after 30 June 2016. Of course, these amendments will have no impact on those local governments that will already have a plan in place by that time.

Another sensible change is the ability of a development applicant to receive information about an offset or refund to be provided at a later date and time regarding information on an infrastructure charges notice, commonly known as ICN. Currently, there is no existing ability in any legislation to allow that to occur and, therefore, that can cause unnecessary days in development approvals when this information is not sought at that particular time by the developer applicant. They are more than happy to wait. I think it is sensible that this bill now allows them to wait to receive that information on any of those charges. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (3.32 pm): I, too, wish to acknowledge the work of my parliamentary colleagues on the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee for their informative report. Queensland is a growing state and, thanks to Palaszczuk government initiatives such as our Advance Queensland program; the restoration of funding to the tourism industry; the Queensland Tourism Infrastructure Fund; the 12 infrastructure projects in Queensland's Infrastructure Australia submission, which includes major public transport and road projects throughout the state underpinning our economic growth and jobs for the future; our infrastructure plan and our intention of having income-generating publicly owned assets, we are likely to see development happening right across our great state. Residents in every community, just as they are in the community that I represent, are keen to ensure that their local government authority has an infrastructure plan in place to cope with that development.

Our state government shares that desire, but such a desire must be a reasonable one. That is what this bill does: it restores some level of reasonableness to these matters. As the committee noted in its report, the Local Government Association of Queensland submitted that the arbitrary cut-off date for preparing such infrastructure plans was somewhat unreasonable. The LGAQ went on to describe the cut-off date as a 'stick'. The old stick was out again—a little bit like the stick that was waved around at the legal profession by the member for Kawana to get them to become compliant, with the former premier calling them hired guns, or a bit like the stick the opposition leader had out with doctors, forcing them on to individual contracts, or a bit like the stick that was waved at community groups gagging them from commenting on government policy.

The old stick seemed to be such an easy way of working for those members opposite. They just waved it around and watched folks cower. Instead, the opposition members could have tried listening and working with stakeholders to reach consensus and a solution. It seems to be reasonably practical

to work with stakeholders. As the Deputy Premier said when introducing the bill, we recognise the role played by others in our state. The Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning said—

This government recognises the critical role of local government in implementing the planning reforms to ensure they are delivered smoothly. This will have an impact on their resources.


It is clear that our approach to working with rather than fighting with is welcomed by all stakeholders. I note in particular that the LGAQ welcomes the amendments contained in this bill. In its submission the LGAQ stated that it—

... welcomes the ability for local governments to seek an extension of up to two years to have a ... LGIP in place.

The requirement introduced by the former State Government in 2014 for all local governments to have an approved LGIP by 1 July 2016 was considered unreasonable and unlikely to be achieved by most local governments. The arbitrary 1 July 2016 timeframe was understood to be the 'stick' to encourage councils to formally amend their priority infrastructure plans.

I note that the other measures contained in the bill also attract stakeholder support or were amended to attract such support.

Finally, I turn to the elements of the bill that go to electoral rigour, the availability of how-to-vote cards and the removal of obsolete provisions. These high levels of independence and efficiency in Queensland's electoral processes will be a hallmark of the Palaszczuk government. The measures pertaining to the elements of this bill are consistent with that objective. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (3.36 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2). There are three main aspects to this bill. Firstly, the bill contains amendments to the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act, which deals with refunds and offsets in relation to connections; secondly, an amendment to the Sustainable Planning Act; and, thirdly, the regulation of accepted how-to-vote cards in local government elections. I wish to speak briefly about the final two of these aspects of the bill today.

Getting planning right is vitally important to the community. It is important all over Queensland, and it is particularly important in my electorate of Stretton. I remember when I first moved into my local area 18 years ago that the Calamvale Central Shopping Centre, which is now a major landmark in my electorate, was just a grassy field. It was not that long ago that large parts of my electorate, particularly at Eight Mile Plains, Kuraby and Calamvale, were farms. In fact, we still have farmland in my electorate, the Warrigal farms, which have been farmland for 100 years.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr PEGG: The member from Lockyer might be interested to know that this farmland is set to become a residential site, with a development application recently approved by the Brisbane City Council for 254 residential lots.

This is not the only development going on in my local area. In recent times there has been significant growth in development in my area. It is vitally important that there are infrastructure and services in place to match this growth. It is so important that planning is done correctly because, if not, the whole community can suffer the consequences. Currently, there are some concerns being raised by residents in Calamvale about development issues in their local suburb, and I am continuing to monitor those issues closely. I commend Ann and Beitske Smallegange, Karen Hanni, Debbie Bell, Ross Hansen and all the other Calamvale locals who have been actively involved in this issue. We need to make sure that the amenity of our local communities is maintained.

This bill will enable a local government to seek an extension of time in order to ensure that its local government infrastructure plan is completed. The new infrastructure planning and charges framework under the Sustainable Planning Act enables local governments to impose infrastructure charges when approving development. The new framework will assist in levelling the playing field between local governments and developers by making it clear the conditions and charges that local government can level levy on a development.


I commend the Deputy Premier for the work that she has done in implementing planning reforms. It is important that development is undertaken in a sustainable way and is consistent with the character of the local area.

This bill also amends the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act by permitting an accepted how-to-vote card to be available for public inspection. As a result of these amendments, these how-to-vote cards will be available at the public office of the local government during the caretaker period for a local government election. This bill makes changes to the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act, which currently prohibited a local government from publishing or distributing election material during the caretaker period for a local government election.

Section 179 of the Local Government Election Act requires accepted how-to-vote cards be made available for public inspection. In addition, this act requires that the Electoral Commission accepts how-to-vote cards if satisfied that the cards are unlikely to mislead or deceive an elector in voting.

This bill amends the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act to correct the inconsistency with the Local Government Electoral Act by permitting the display of approved how-to-vote cards during the caretaker period of a council election. These changes also bring the local government requirements for how-to-vote cards into line with those of state elections whereby the Electoral Commission during state elections is required to accept how-to-vote cards before cards are made available to the public, before polling day, and, further, that those how-to-vote cards also be made available to the public for inspection.

These changes remove inconsistencies in legislation relating to the display of how-to-vote cards and also help to ensure that local government elections are conducted at the high standards expected by the people of Queensland, which is vitally important in maintaining public confidence in our electoral system. It is vitally important that we ensure that community members have the best opportunity to inform themselves during all elections, including local government elections, and these reforms will ensure that this occurs. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (3.40 pm): I rise to make a brief statement about the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2). This is a bill that is quite easy to support because it involves a lot of common sense, including the fact that obsolete references to first-past-the-post voting for the mayoralty are taken out. It will bring local government elections into line with state and federal elections. The fact that the how-to-vote cards have to be authorised and put on public display is important. The Sustainability and Planning Act 2009 infrastructure charges notice is also important. I represent part of Logan, all of Lockyer, part of the Scenic Rim, part of Ipswich and at times have represented some of Somerset as well.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr RICKUSS: I must admit there has been debate at times over infrastructure charges and how they are supposed to be worked through and who is going to pay for what. I will take the interjection from the member for Logan about the Logan City Council. Yarrabilba has been a real issue for the Logan City Council in relation to infrastructure charges. Of course, there is the Flagstone development area which is in my electorate. There will also be the Ripley development area as well. They are major development areas that need appropriate infrastructure.


We have to be careful that local governments manage their finances correctly. That is a bit of a concern with the Lockyer Valley Regional Council. It is a relatively small council but it is carrying something like \$33 million worth of debt at the moment. If appropriate infrastructure charges are not put in place they will either not be able to service that debt or will try to charge developers too much money. Even though over the last few years the council has received hundreds of millions of dollars of NDRRA funding to help upgrade some of the infrastructure in the area, it continues to overspend like drunken sailors. I table some documents from the ordinary meeting of the Lockyer Valley Regional Council which highlight it spent \$350,000 on legal expenses for the recent flood commission and \$200,000 on a consultant who virtually acts as the mayor's butler. It seems rather extraordinary.

Tabled paper: Correspondence and other documentation, various dates, relating to income and expenditure of the Lockyer Valley Regional Council [[1600](#)].

Mr Madden: What about the overseas trips!

Mr RICKUSS: We do not want the council to try to fund its champagne lifestyle by increasing charges too much. I will take the interjection from the member for Ipswich West. There were too many trips to America and those sorts of things. We do not want the council to unrealistically put infrastructure charges in place to try to fund this type of expenditure.

The bill does make a lot of sense and is realistic. However, I would ask the minister to comment on the fact that there is no set time for a caretaker period for local government elections. What is the caretaker period? There has been an ambivalent response: it could be four weeks; it could be six weeks. I would ask the minister to look at that. Maybe the member for Bulimba could give me some advice on that.

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (3.44 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2), which allows local governments the opportunity to extend the deadline for their local government infrastructure plans up to the proposed

deadline of 1 July 2018 on application to the planning minister while they are still able to continue to levy charges and/or set conditions relating to the provision of trunk infrastructure. The thing that strikes me about this legislation is that it reflects the fact that the Palaszczuk government is a government that listens.

I grew up in Central Queensland and have spent a large portion of my working life travelling throughout the state in regional areas and I maintain a lot of friendships in regional Queensland as well. I am particularly cognisant of the role that local government plays in our community, and some of the previous speakers have made that same point, and how important it is to be supporting them in the work that they do.

They do create the hub of the local community and we need to support them in every way that we can, which brings me to the point that the Local Government Association of Queensland made when it was submitting to this bill. Representatives from the LGAQ talked about the previous deadline which had been set by the LNP government. The LGAQ submitted that they considered it unreasonable and unlikely to be achieved. It bemuses me somewhat when the LNP claims that it is the champion of local government, particularly in regional areas, yet here is something which means an enormous amount to local governments and the LNP did not seem to be listening to that at all.


The bill recognises that there are a number of local governments that are struggling; it recognises the resource limitations of a number of the small local governments, not only in terms of money but expertise as well. The LGAQ said that it was very concerned that even if they made the previous deadline they would have been rushing the process and they would have had to go back anyway and do it again. This government has listened to that and has set a realistic deadline.

In addition to realising the impracticalities of the previous deadline, we will also allocate resources to those councils that are in need, which is another excellent initiative of the government and signals the support that we are willing to give where it is required. It was also noted that there are going to be guidelines about how to apply to the minister for an extension and to make sure that it is not onerous. That is again a great reflection that the government has listened to the concerns of those local governments. I also note the support for the relatively short time frames for the minister to make a decision—that is, 20 business days. From reading the report, there does seem to have been quite a lot of discussion about that, with some submitting that it should be longer than that, but again the bill reflects what councils are saying to them and their particular situation which is that there are local government elections happening in March next year and councils really need to have these things wrapped up by the end of this year. They need to get this out of the way.

I also note the minor amendments which are proposed in this bill—the tidying up amendments, so to speak—including amending the inconsistency of the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act with the Local Government Electoral Act by permitting an accepted how-to-vote card to be available at the local government's public office during the caretaker period for a local government. That makes it consistent with the Local Government Electoral Act. These things go to the heart of our democracy. We want to make sure that the people of Queensland are as confident and as comfortable as possible with the voting process. We want to make voting easy and accessible and by making sure that there are consistencies across all systems and by making sure people are as informed as possible about the way they are going to be voting and who they are going to be voting for is a small but really important step in that process.

I also note the amendment to remove the obsolete reference to the mayoral first-past-the-post voting as a consequence of the voting system for mayors changing on 1 January 2015 from first past the post to optional preferential voting. Obviously, it is very important to have those things tidied up.

This bill may seem like a lot of housekeeping to some but, in fact, it shows that this government is listening and wants to support important bodies such as local governments. I congratulate the government for doing that in such a supportive way. I congratulate the minister, in particular, who I know has spent a lot of time going around the state speaking to local governments so that she knows about this firsthand. I congratulate the committee for its work on this bill. Obviously, they have put a lot of time and thought into the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (3.50 pm): Today I rise to speak in support of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015 before the House today. We have already heard of the three main components of the bill, so I will cut to the chase. During the last sitting week, the Deputy Premier announced the draft State Infrastructure Plan outlining the government's clear vision of how we would like to grow Queensland, the infrastructure to deliver that growth and the process of prioritising infrastructure delivery and investment. The Deputy Premier highlighted that the


plan identifies future service needs and infrastructure challenges facing Queensland and highlighted the opportunities these present. Addressing these issues will require collaboration between government and the private sector to develop innovative and cost-effective solutions. The statement later outlined that the government is also working closely with other levels of government and the private sector to attract new investment and progress major infrastructure projects that will benefit all of Queensland.

Specifically to Townsville, the Townsville City Waterfront PDA scheme was adopted by the state government last month. This project marked a major milestone in the future planning of the Townsville CBD, with a clear focus on stimulating economic growth in our city heart. Development of the Townsville City Waterfront PDA will be facilitated through a partnership between the Queensland government, the port of Townsville Ltd and the Townsville City Council with planning and development assessment responsibility shared between the state government and the council. The impact of the Townsville City Waterfront PDA will see an estimated 30,000 people living in the CBD area by the year 2030. In the next 15-year period, that growth will mean a rapid movement of people into the city area, creating an incredible strain on infrastructure.

To support local government in planning reform, one of the Palaszczuk government's priorities is to extend the current statutory time frame for the making of a local government infrastructure plan. A local government infrastructure plan is part of the planning scheme that identifies the local government's plans for infrastructure necessary to service development in a coordinated, efficient and financially stable manner and at the desired standard of service. Infrastructure in a local government infrastructure plan may only include things such as water supply, sewerage, stormwater, local transport, public parks and land for communal facilities, commonly referred to as trunk infrastructure. After 30 June 2016, local governments will not be able to levy infrastructure charges if they do not have an infrastructure plan in place. Local governments that do not intend to levy these infrastructure charges are, therefore, not required to prepare an infrastructure plan.

To support local governments implementing these changes, some councils have indicated that meeting the time frame of 30 June 2016 is unachievable and have requested an extension of that time frame. Therefore, amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 will extend those deadlines up to 1 July 2018. However, councils will need to apply for the extension and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In this process, councils will need to supply supporting information outlining the steps that they intend to take to prepare the necessary infrastructure plan, time frame and any necessary resources to meet that plan. This will ensure that all councillors and staff of the respective councils will be empowered with the necessary knowledge around the final deadlines and are committed to their local government infrastructure plan.

I believe these amendments will support local governments with their long-term trunk infrastructure plans to meet the future needs of development in their local areas. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (3.52 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Local Government and Other Legislation Bill (No. 2) 2015, which seeks to amend a number of acts. My comments relate to amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, which requires local governments intending to levy infrastructure charges to include a local government infrastructure plan in their planning scheme by 30 June 2016. As the honourable member for Gympie said, planning is at the very core of council's business. Regularly I hear complaints from members of my local chambers of commerce, industry groups, builders and developers of larger and smaller projects that council inaction costs them time, which costs them money, with some councils dragging the chain more than others. Frequently, concerns are raised with me about the length of time approvals take and subsequent industry frustration.

Here we have yet another example of delays that will cost jobs and growth, with the request for an extension, this time until 1 July 2018. Whilst this may be acceptable for very small regional and rural councils, today I was somewhat disappointed to learn that our Gold Coast City Council is one that has requested an extension of time to complete its local government infrastructure plan, citing current time frames as being unreasonable. Last year, all of Queensland's regional tourism organisations managed to complete their comprehensive 20-year Destination Tourism Plan with only a few months notice, yet our peak local governments cannot meet deadlines that were already extended and are requesting further extensions. Opponents of another delay state that further concessions to the local government sector without improvement in the delivery of local infrastructure are merely costly processes.

As a very proud Gold Coaster of almost 30 years, I have seen our region transform from a series of scattered suburbs to a fast-growing and vibrant city, one renowned as a premier tourism destination with an enviable climate and lifestyle. Understandably, this rapid growth and our elongated coastline

landscape have placed pressures on councils to keep up with demand. However, as it is one of the largest local municipalities in Australia, it is difficult not to ask why it has not been able to comply with the time frames. The Deputy Premier mentioned the monitoring of various councils' progress in order to meet these timelines. I ask whether she is going to keep allowing extension after extension, whether there are any consequences for local governments that cannot or will not meet the deadlines and, if so, what are those consequences?


The long-awaited Gold Coast City Council draft city plan is a good example of an important document facing delay after delay. Mind you, this Labor government has not helped the process along with accusations that since its election this year the plan has been placed in go-slow mode. Despite countless requests for its gazettal, nothing has been forthcoming. Expectations of an approved plan in 2014 have been replaced with a lack of confidence by businesses in my electorate of Currumbin. The stalling of local government infrastructure plans could have a domino effect, as overdue maintenance of essential council infrastructure or replacement of mature facilities, such as the Elanora treatment plant, do not proceed as they should. Councils do not budget effectively for the replacement of those facilities and communities, along with taxpayers, suffer as a consequence. Delays only worsen the problem.

One local councillor in division 14, the southern-most aspect of the Gold Coast and in my electorate, tried to blame the lack of capacity at the Elanora treatment plant as the reason not to encourage more development to the region. It seems that this councillor not only told stakeholders an untruth, as there is ample capacity for another 10,000 dwellings in the area, but also made no attempt to see the facility properly repaired and renovated. It is that lack of planning for the future and the maintenance of essential ageing plant facilities such as those that taxpayers on the Gold Coast have every reason to be worried about. Attitudes such as this stifle progress and dissuade developers and investors from building new projects. The neighbouring councillor in division 13, where the treatment plant is located, is no better when it comes to attracting development and improving amenities. It takes a looming election to see any action.

The new Palm Beach master plan failed to impress locals when released last month and was described as a missed opportunity by numerous businesses after a number of key issues were overlooked in favour of minor beautification works. Measures to make the streets between Fourth and Eighth avenues more attractive are welcome, but they do little to stimulate small business growth within the precinct. The Palm Beach CBD has been neglected over many years, which has allowed it to become tired and somewhat unkempt looking.

While I do appreciate considerable work and consultation went into the plan, a number of key issues that have a direct effect on the future viability of this space were not addressed. These issues include a lack of parking, both short and long term; congestion on Palm Beach Avenue which is set to worsen with the removal of exit 93 on the M1; plans to improve the visual amenity of the fencing along the Gold Coast Highway, which is a state road; and a lack of economic investment and development. Even though the state controlled Gold Coast Highway runs through the middle of this master plan, there was not any engagement with the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Palm Beach through to Coolangatta should be the thriving precinct and community with modern developments that encourage investment and create jobs. Our residents and our small businesses have suffered long enough and deserve more support.

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (3.59 pm): I rise today to speak on the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015. The City of Brisbane Act 2010 and the Local Government Act 2009 prohibit a local government from publishing or distributing election material during a caretaker period for a local government election. Under the Local Government Electoral Act, the Electoral Commission accepts how-to-vote cards if satisfied the cards are unlikely to mislead or deceive an elector in voting.

The Local Government Electoral Act 2011, LGEA, requires accepted how-to-vote cards to be available for public inspection at the place of nomination or on the Electoral Commission's website. The bill aims to correct the inconsistency with the LGEA by permitting accepted how-to-vote cards to be available for inspection during the caretaker period for a local government election. The bill goes further by making a minor amendment to the LGEA to repeal an obsolete reference to mayoral first-past-the-post voting as a consequence of the change made on 1 January 2015, which in effect changed the voting system to optional preferential voting.


The Sustainable Planning Act 2009 required local government to levy an infrastructure charge to include a local government infrastructure plan, an LGIP, in its planning scheme by 30 June 2016. Many local governments have advised that they will not be in a position to prepare the LGIP by that date and

so would not be able to impose charges on a development approval after that date. This would result in delaying approval development applications that would have otherwise attracted significant charges. The good thing about this particular bill is that it provides two further years to have an LGIP in place.

I turn to the amendments in relation to the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009. The information in the infrastructure charges notice, the ICN, provides water connection applicants with greater clarity and certainty around offsets and refunds for trunk infrastructure they may be able to provide. However, a large development may face significant delays in receiving connection approval and an ICN due to an offset or refund being of a magnitude that it requires specific budget approval with the distributor-retailer. The policy objective in relation to the SEQ water act is to allow applicants for a connection approval the ability to advise the distributor-retailer that the applicant is not seeking information about an offset or refund in an infrastructure charges notice.

We have spoken about infrastructure and the need for infrastructure. In Townsville, as the member for Townsville articulated quite well, we have a priority development area and a state development area and a number of other major infrastructure plans in place. We do not want to see unnecessary delays with the approval process.

This bill is about our government consulting and listening to local councils. With this bill our government is providing a clear way forward for local government to get on with the job of planning and the provision of infrastructure in our great state. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (4.03 pm): I rise today in pain but in support of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015. I get many constituent inquiries about local government in my area—the Redland City Council—and I have many a constituent meeting on the topic, and many of them relate to matters of electoral integrity, donations and development applications to council.

My view of the relationship between the state and local governments is that the state provides a regulatory framework for councils to exist, but it is the council's responsibility to make determinations about the interests of local communities in the areas of the council's responsibility—one of these being development and growth. Local government is at the coalface of the day-to-day lives of our residents. I respect the autonomy and democratic mandate local councils have and as such have resisted calls from environmentalists and developers to meddle or intervene in council matters.

Our electoral system is sometimes confusing to voters. The local, state and federal systems all use different rules and different terms and time frames. Local government has low voter turnout and first-past-the-post voting versus optional preferential voting or compulsory preferential voting. This can lead to people inadvertently casting invalid votes. To make matters worse for us, Brisbane uses a different system to the Redlands and is governed by a different act. Brisbane obviously has the political party endorsement of candidates.


This bill corrects some of the inconsistencies between the Local Government Electoral Act and the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act relating to the display of how-to-vote cards. It removes an obsolete reference to first-past-the-post voting for mayoral candidates also—something that constituents of mine will be very interested in as more candidates raise their hands for the upcoming council elections.

This bill also enables local councils to seek extensions of up to two years to have local government infrastructure plans in place. I am a firm believer in making sure local government takes the time to get decisions right, particularly when it comes to spending public funds on public works. It also facilitates the exchange of information between applicants and councils and utilities relating to an applicant's information about offsets or refunds on an infrastructure charges notice.

I note that key stakeholders like the Local Government Association and the Property Council have submitted favourably on this topic. I think the bill reflects this government's collaborative approach to dealing with local government.

I further note a proposal that has recently come out of the Redlands regarding political donations. A councillor has proposed a restriction on developer donations to councils in line with the similar restrictions of other states. Our mayor, Karen Williams, proposed in reply a broad ban on political donations of all kinds. This is a radical proposal indeed and if Mayor Williams succeeds in her quest, I would suggest that, while the mayor is not breaching the letter of the Constitution, in the words of Dennis Denuto, 'It's the vibe of the thing.' Another quote from *The Castle* in light of this proposal is: 'I think she's dreaming.'


For the time being, I trust that local governments will find the amendments to this bill useful. I commend the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee on its work. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (4.07 pm): I rise to speak briefly in support of the bill. The Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) will bring rules for local elections into line with the rules for state elections, remove confusing contradictions and ensure that our election legislation is fair and uniform. It is timely that we deal with these matters now ahead of the local government elections due next year.

I want to focus on a couple of areas this bill seeks to address. The Local Government Electoral Act at section 179 requires accepted how-to-vote cards to be available for public inspection at the place of nomination, the local government's public office and on the Electoral Commission website. The City of Brisbane Act 2010 at section 92D and the Local Government Act 2009 at section 90D both prohibit a local government from publishing or distributing election material during the caretaker period for a local government election. This makes it impossible for local governments to comply with the Local Government Electoral Act. It is important to correct this inconsistency by permitting accepted how-to-vote cards to be available for inspection at the local government's public office during the caretaker period for a local election.

Under the Local Government Electoral Act, the Electoral Commission will only accept how-to-vote cards if they are satisfied that the cards are unlikely to mislead or deceive a voter. Making them available for scrutiny prior to election day provides greater transparency and gives everyone the same opportunity to access information which will help them to exercise their democratic rights come voting day.

How-to-vote cards are an important tool for helping voters to make a formal vote that best reflects their political wishes. Although, after a couple of weeks of pre-polling and a hot election day, many of us might rue the day how-to-vote cards were invented, they are nonetheless a feature of our elections—right up there with sausage sizzles and bunting. We are supporting democracy, making sure local government elections are conducted to the same high standard as our state elections. This is not contentious but it is a necessary step in delivering on that principle. It is crucial that we amend this contradictory law before the caretaker period for councils comes into effect in February, ahead of their elections in March. I congratulate the committee for their work. I commend the Deputy Premier and commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (4.10 pm), in reply: I thank all of the honourable members who have made a contribution to this debate on the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2). This is, as I advised the House during my second reading speech, a common-sense bill that seeks to respond to concerns raised by local councils in relation to the development of infrastructure plans, as well as remove some anomalies and allow councils to have how-to-vote cards displayed in the upcoming council elections, particularly in the City of Brisbane, where there are inconsistencies between the Local Government Electoral Act and the City of Brisbane Act.

Let me now turn to some of the issues and questions that have been raised during the debate. I understand that the member for Maroochydore and the member for Burleigh raised the question in relation to the progress that local governments have been making with the adoption of infrastructure plans. I thank both the member for Maroochydore and the member for Burleigh for raising the issue of the importance of certainty in the community around the issue of infrastructure.

In response to that concern and the specific question posed by the member for Burleigh, I can advise the House that a survey conducted by my department earlier this year showed that only 22 of Queensland's 77 local governments have included an infrastructure plan in their planning scheme. Primarily this is because even though infrastructure plans have been in place in legislation since 2004—previously, instead of being local government infrastructure plans they were priority infrastructure plans, but they have been part of the legislative regime in terms of infrastructure planning in this state since 2004—there has not been any legislative compulsion to make councils deliver them. Of course that compulsion was delivered in July 2014, when the previous government introduced revised infrastructure planning requirements. The infrastructure plans already in place will have to be updated to comply with the new requirements for the local government infrastructure plans.

To date only one local government—and that is the Somerset Regional Council—has submitted a draft local government infrastructure plan. However, most of the state's larger councils have advised that they are making good progress on the preparation of their local government infrastructure plans, although they have advised me they would be more comfortable with the additional time that this extension of the LGIP deadline will provide.

So this extension of the LGIP preparation time frame will help the many local governments that have said they are unlikely to have an LGIP in place by 1 July 2016. They are understandably concerned that if they do not have the LGIP they will not be able to levy infrastructure charges or impose conditions about trunk infrastructure for development. I do not want that to happen. I am sure nobody in this chamber wants that to happen any more than they do. That is why I am arranging for an extension to this deadline. It is common sense. It is what consultation is all about. We know that we need to have some compulsion there in legislation, but we have to be mindful and we have to be respectful of everything that local councils do. We want them to get these plans in place and we will help them to do so.

In relation to the member for Maroochydore's concern that by continuing to push out the LGIP deadline the brakes might be put on development, I suggest that the member misunderstands the role of the LGIP. An LGIP is about the council's plan for infrastructure; it is not about the charges imposed on development. Those charges are set in response to the state's regulated charges. They are happening now. They will continue to happen right up until 2018 and well beyond 2018. So the extension of the LGIP deadline will in fact enable councils to continue to approve development with appropriate charges.

In response to concerns raised by the member for Lockyer about section 90A of the Local Government Act in relation to the definition of the 'caretaker period', I can advise the parliament and the member for Lockyer that the caretaker period is defined in the legislation as the period between (a) when the ECQ, or the Electoral Commission of Queensland, gives public notice of the holding of the election under the Local Government Electoral Act and (b) the conclusion of the election. The conclusion of an election is defined in section 7 of the Local Government Electoral Act and will typically be the day of the declaration of the poll.

In relation to the member for Currumbin's query about how many more extensions should councils receive, I can advise the member that this is the first and last extension. I know this because for the first time there will be a requirement for councils to provide a program, a work plan, to show how they will deliver on their LGIP by 30 June 2018. This government is all about working in collaboration with councils and assisting them, not leaving them stranded with legislative requirements that they find hard to meet. It is not all about the stick. Sometimes you actually have to help people as well as ensure that there is compulsion for them to comply with legislation and regulation.

In closing, while we are talking about infrastructure and we are talking about infrastructure plans—and I note the member for Currumbin's negative comments about the Gold Coast City Council—I will say this in defence of the Gold Coast City Council. They have been one council that has been singularly focused on delivering better infrastructure for their residents, particularly in the lead-up to the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. They have been working very collaboratively with this government to achieve that ambition. They have been instrumental in ensuring that Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 2 was firmly on the agenda when we came into government and they worked with us collaboratively to convince the federal government to get over the line and join in a funding partnership arrangement to make Gold Coast light rail stage 2 a reality.

While the member for Currumbin might want to knock her council, the Gold Coast City Council, they have been incredibly helpful in terms of providing major infrastructure projects to their city. The member for Currumbin should acknowledge that, instead of coming into this place and knocking them all the time. Perhaps if she had stood up and been more of a vocal advocate for Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 2, if she had been more of a champion for her community, rather than letting this government and the local Gold Coast City Council do all the heavy lifting in relation to trying to secure this big major piece of infrastructure, transformational infrastructure, for the Gold Coast and all of Brisbane, can I say, if she had accepted her part of the responsibility in terms of this task, then perhaps we would have got there sooner. Perhaps even the former Newman government would have extended the Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 2. She was very silent at that time around the Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 2.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms Enoch interjected.

Ms TRAD: I take the interjection from the honourable Minister for Housing. Yes, they are awake. They are certainly awake now. I commend all of the members who have made a contribution to this debate. I think that it is a very good debate. It meets some very critical time frames for us in terms of making sure that there is orderly conduct during the council elections on 19 March next year. It also gives councils some breathing room and some capacity to work with the state government to do some proper infrastructure planning for their local communities. 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 18, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (4.18 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. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (4.19 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.

ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 15 September (see p. 1735).

Second Reading

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (4.19 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Before the debate on the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015 commences, I would like to thank the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee for its consideration of the bill. I also wish to thank those stakeholders who took the time to participate in the committee's consultation processes. The committee handed down its report on 29 October 2015, and I am pleased to say it recommended that the bill be passed. I now table the government's response to the committee's report.

Tabled paper: Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee: Report No. 7, 55th Parliament—Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015, government response [\[1601\]](#).

Before discussing the committee's report and government response, I would like to outline the key elements of the bill and why they are a good thing for Queensland. Firstly, the bill delivers on the government's commitment of supporting small business to facilitate job creation and economic growth by ensuring that high energy-using small businesses have access to a free and independent dispute resolution mechanism for electricity related matters. Currently, small businesses that consume high amounts of electricity are unable to access the services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland, known as EWOQ. As a result, they cannot resolve disputes with their electricity provider in the way that other small businesses and residents in Queensland can.

Many small businesses that are dependent on a high amount of electricity for their daily operations often do not have the time, expertise or resources to deal with issues and disputes that may arise with their electricity accounts. The amendments in this bill will allow small businesses that consume up to 160 megawatt hours of electricity per annum, such as small supermarkets, bakeries, manufacturing businesses, amateur sporting clubs, community groups and not-for-profit organisations, to access EWOQ services.

Key benefits for this type of customer include access to a free and independent dispute resolution service if they are unable to resolve a dispute with their electricity retailer, access to a valuable advocacy, investigation and information service which may also be effective in resolving disputes with their retailer avoiding litigation over contractual issues, and reducing the amount of time and resources small businesses require to resolve a dispute with their electricity retailer allowing them more time to focus on managing their enterprises.


The clear benefits for small businesses are reflected in the strong support from stakeholders including the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland and the Master Electricians for the amendments. Secondly, the bill extends the functions of EWOQ to allow it to apply for recognition as an external dispute resolution scheme, thereby making it possible for EWOQ to resolve credit information disputes between a customer and their energy provider. This is necessary for Queensland to comply with new requirements that exist as a result of changes to the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1998 regarding customer credit information and reporting. These changes require energy providers to be members of a recognised external dispute resolution scheme so they can continue to disclose and gain access to customer credit information from a credit-reporting body.

The key benefits of enabling EWOQ to apply to the Australian Information Commissioner for recognition as the official Queensland based external dispute resolution scheme will ensure retailers can continue to participate in the credit-reporting scheme and assess a customer's credit worthiness; and provide Queensland energy consumers with access to a local, convenient, fast and independent avenue of redress if they feel their credit information has been mishandled by their retailer.

Finally, the bill increases the transparency around EWOQ's invoicing practices to make it easier for Queensland energy and water utilities to reconcile the fees they are charged by EWOQ with a corresponding customer. Importantly, the customer information to be provided by EWOQ will only be used by retailers to verify that the complaints the retailer has been billed for are in fact their customers and not customers of another retailer. This will enable energy and water utilities to better account for the fees charged by EWOQ as they will be able to cross-check their own customer records and verify that no billing errors have occurred.

I will now address the committee's second recommendation which relates to this aspect of the bill. The committee recommended an amendment to the bill to enable EWOQ to disclose identifying information of a complainant to an energy or water utility entity where this is required for reconciling EWOQ user-pays fees for all case types. The bill had originally provided EWOQ with the ability to disclose customer-identifying information for refer-back-to-provider case types only. These are situations where a complainant is referred back to their provider by EWOQ.

The government accepts the committee's recommendation that EWOQ should have the ability to disclose customer-identifying information for all case types for invoicing purposes. This will allow entities to properly reconcile EWOQ bills against their own records, improving the transparency of the scheme. The government has received privacy advice that confirms the amendment proposed by the committee can be made without any material privacy implications for complainants. Clause 11 and clause 14 of the bill have been amended accordingly. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (4.25 pm): The minister may be relieved to know that the LNP will not be opposing this bill. I too would like to commence my comments by acknowledging the work of the committee and the committee staff in preparing the report that the minister has referred to. The main aspect of this bill as it relates to high energy-using small businesses goes back to a review announced by the former energy minister, the member for Caloundra, in March 2014. This is what the member for Caloundra said at that time—

Currently dispute resolution services are restricted to small customers who use less than 100 megawatts per year, which is normally households and small businesses. The definition of a small customer has led to the exclusion of some residents and small businesses.

The member for Caloundra said at the time that the Queensland Energy and Water Ombudsman should be available to those customers that need the most support such as residential and small to

medium size businesses. What followed this announcement was an extensive review process and a period of sustained consultation. The Queensland Competition Authority conducted a consultation regulatory impact statement, otherwise known as a RIS, into the ombudsman's access arrangements. Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback and submissions to further inform that process.

That consultation RIS provided the government with four options aimed at providing high energy small business customers with better access to dispute resolution services. The changes as outlined in this bill, the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015, represent option 1 as presented in the QCA RIS report. This was identified as the Competition Authority's preferred option because it is considered to provide the greatest benefit to high energy small business customers at the least cost to business, government and the community.

The LNP believes the government has achieved the best outcome by incorporating this option into today's bill. Of course, we are entirely supportive of any moves to provide further assistance to small businesses. This was an important aspect of what we did whilst we were in government. That is why we reduced the tax burden on small businesses by increasing the payroll tax exemption threshold, and it is why we took a policy of increasing that exemption threshold further at the last election. It is why we made the commitment to reduce red tape and regulation by 20 per cent, with a key part of this pledge being the establishment of the Office of Best Practice Regulation. Our red-tape reforms are estimated to be providing savings in the order of \$425 million each and every year. It is why we have reformed our electricity sector, stripping \$7 billion out of future expenditure from the energy GOCs, making them run as efficiently as possible knowing that this would provide savings to businesses and families across Queensland during the 2015 to 2020 Australian Energy Regulator regulatory period.

The AER's ruling last month signalled an end to consistent increases in electricity prices which started under Labor way back in 2014. I would particularly like to make mention of the CCIQ's submission to the parliamentary committee process. The CCIQ highlighted not only the importance of small business to Queensland, but the disparity that exists between businesses that are categorised as small and medium in terms of their turnover and employee size but categorised as large businesses in terms of electricity consumption. The important aim of this bill is to give those high energy businesses better access to the dispute resolution services provided by the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland.

Many of the businesses in the 100 to 160 megawatt hours per year range are family businesses. It could be the local baker. It could be a family-run laundry business. It could be that small supermarket where you do your weekly shopping. It could be small food production or manufacturing businesses. The point is these are not big businesses with the resources to deal with the many complexities of the electricity sector. Just as importantly—and this was highlighted through the public hearings—many not-for-profit or community sporting groups are also included in this category. For example, a football club like the Hinterland Australian Rules Football Club that bases itself out of Palmwoods who use a significant amount of power in having playing lights on for midweek training sessions may not have had access to the ombudsman's services. Quite clearly, these groups may not have the expertise or resources to properly negotiate with their energy retailer. When we consider how important the provision of affordable energy is to their ability to continue to function, it is obvious that we should be supporting these groups in whatever way we can. I believe that these changes, which provide the ability for these groups to utilise the services of the ombudsman, will help support these businesses and important community groups.

It is estimated that an additional 5,100 high energy-using small business customers will be eligible to seek access to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland under these changes. That number was again identified in the QCA consultation RIS. This should generate about an additional 200 cases for the ombudsman to consider each and every year. The advice from the ombudsman is that it should be able to meet these requirements within existing resources, and I heard the ombudsman say this himself during the public hearing. We will certainly be holding him to account. That is a good outcome because it strengthens the ability of dispute resolution services for small business customers but does not come at a cost to the government.

After considering the bill, I am also satisfied that the trigger range of 100 to 160 megawatt hours per year is appropriate. It is fair to say that there was a level of debate about the appropriateness of this 100 to 160 megawatt hours per year trigger range. The Master Electricians recommended an extension to small business customers using between 100 megawatts and four gigawatts to align with

distributor tariff structures. However, as highlighted in the committee's report on this bill, this will largely bring Queensland into line with every other jurisdiction. The QCA's regulatory impact statement again provided this analysis—

... the 160 MWh threshold limit has been developed in consultation with stakeholders and is considered to strike an appropriate balance between providing assistance to the customers that need it and minimising the financial, administrative and regulatory impacts on the community, business and EWOQ.

The LNP also understands and supports the amendment to section 11 of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006 to ensure the ombudsman has the necessary functions to be recognised as an external dispute resolution service. This is another aspect of the bill which was discussed at length by the committee and through the committee inquiry process. As highlighted in the parliamentary committee's report, the amendment results from recent changes to the Commonwealth Privacy Act. The Privacy Act now includes new credit-reporting provisions. Under part 3A of the Privacy Act, credit providers—defined to include electricity, gas and water providers—must be members of an external dispute resolution scheme recognised under the Privacy Act to participate in the consumer credit-reporting scheme. The change as proposed in the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015 will ensure energy providers can continue to participate in the credit-reporting system by providing the legislative powers for the ombudsman to resolve privacy complaints relating to the misuse of energy customers' credit information and apply to the Australian Information Commissioner for recognition as the official scheme in Queensland.


Perhaps the part of this bill which was the subject of most debate was the amendments highlighted in clause 11. This will provide the ombudsman with the ability to disclose customer-identifying information about complaints to respective energy and water entities for billing reconciliation purposes for refer-back-to-provider case types. In considering the appropriateness of this amendment, it is important to reflect on how the ombudsman is funded here in Queensland. The ombudsman is funded through user-pays fees, meaning that scheme participants pay the ombudsman's costs. So in practice, if a customer makes a complaint about Ergon, Ergon would pay the ombudsman for the cost of handling that complaint on a fee-for-service basis. As the current Energy and Water Ombudsman Act reads, it does not allow the ombudsman to provide customer identification details to respective utilities for the purposes of billing refer-back-to-provider cases. This can lead to instances where the ombudsman is billing these companies for services that the ombudsman has undertaken but is unable to provide any customer information so that the provider can determine that it is a customer of theirs and to reconcile their bills. The proposed amendments as detailed in clause 11 address this by allowing the ombudsman to provide customer-identifying information to water and energy entities for billing reconciliation purposes only. The Energy and Water Ombudsman submitted that the amendments as proposed in clause 11 would only give the ombudsman the power to provide customer information for cases known as 'refer backs'. The ombudsman was of the view that 'refer backs' represent only 35 per cent of all closed cases and the bill would not allow the ombudsman to provide customer information in all instances. As such, it recommended a further amendment to the bill to allow for a customer's personal information to be provided for billing purposes in all case types. The use of personal information instead of customer-identifying information was deemed necessary to make it consistent with section 25 of the act and the Information Privacy Act 2009.

I do note the committee's recommendation in relation to this submission. It is detailed quite extensively in the committee's report. However, we also note the evidence from the Department of Energy and Water Supply as part of the parliamentary committee's investigation of this bill. It is important that we get the balance right between the concerns of the industry, of the ombudsman and of protecting the privacy of individual customers. We note the minister has chosen to address this in his second reading speech and through the amendment tabled. I do take on board the minister's comments that he has sought information around the Privacy Act as to the capacity to give those details in all cases and we will accept that evidence and that support in making this amendment today.

Finally, the bill also includes a minor amendment to the National Energy Retail Law (Queensland) Act 2014. This is to correct a minor administrative error in which the wrong section of the Electricity Act is referenced. Failure to rectify this error prior to 1 July 2016 will prevent the national energy retail law from operating as intended.

I do not want to take up too much more time regarding the various aspects of this bill. I believe the committee has adequately considered the many aspects of the bill in its report. I know that the nature of this bill does not lend itself to widespread media coverage, but that does not take away from the importance of it for the 5,100 small businesses and community groups who will now be able to access the dispute resolution services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland.

I would like to congratulate again the department and the committee on continuing this important process which started last year. Small business is the backbone of the Queensland economy. Small businesses employ the vast majority of Queenslanders. If we can provide some assistance which enables them to better negotiate lower bills or provide more time to focus on growing their business, then that is a good outcome. The LNP remains committed to other outcomes to grow small business in our state. It is what we did in government and it is what we will continue to advocate for in opposition.

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (4.38 pm): Currently, the Energy and Water Ombudsman of Queensland provides a free and independent dispute resolution service for business customers who consume less than 100 megawatt hours of electricity a year and who are unable to resolve complaints themselves. The Energy and Water Ombudsman's primary functions are: to receive and investigate energy issues in Queensland and water issues in South-East Queensland, to manage dispute resolution between customers and the energy and water providers, and to identify systemic energy and water issues.


The issues that the ombudsman routinely deals with are: overly high and disputed bills; customers with difficulties in making payments; connections, disconnections and restrictions of supply; compensation for damage and loss; disputes about compliance with contractual obligations; the conduct of energy marketers; customer service; and quality of supply. The Energy and Water Ombudsman is fully funded by scheme participants through a combination of participation fees and user-pays fees. The following classes of entities are paying members of the ombudsman's scheme: Queensland's electricity distributors, Queensland's electricity and reticulated gas retailers and South-East Queensland's water distributors and retailers.

The objectives of this bill are: to amend the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006 to allow non-residential electricity customers consuming between 100 and 160 megawatt hours of electricity a year to access the dispute resolution services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman; to extend the functions of the Energy and Water Ombudsman to allow it to become a recognised external dispute resolution scheme in order to deal with credit-reporting complaints in relation to the misuse of a customer's credit information; and to enable the Energy and Water Ombudsman to disclose customer-identifying information about complainants to their respective energy and water entities where this is required for the purpose of account verification, reconciling the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland user-pays fees for all case types.

As stated, the bill proposes to extend the dispute resolution service for high energy-using small business customers who consume up to 160 megawatt hours of electricity per annum. I have similar businesses in my electorate to those of the member for Glass House: bakeries, laundries, small supermarkets, small food production manufacturing businesses and basically any business dependent on the high use of electricity for their daily operations, though they may not have a large number of staff or be a big business in other respects. Many not-for-profit organisations, community groups and amateur sporting clubs are also included.

The Queensland government first identified a need to extend the service following a review of high energy-using small business customers. The review found that these customers experience similar difficulties to residential customers when speaking to their energy retailer, they have a relatively poor understanding of contracts and tariffs, and they experience long waiting times and delays when making phone calls and attending to inquiries and disputes over services and bills. When this bill is enacted, the Department of Energy and Water Supply estimate that some 5,100 additional high energy-using small business customers will be eligible to seek access to the ombudsman, which would generate approximately 200 additional cases a year. According to the Department of Energy and Water Supply, the Energy and Water Ombudsman has identified that they should not have to employ any additional complaints officers to deal with the anticipated additional cases. When the bill is enacted, high energy-using small business customers will be on a more level playing field. They will enjoy access to the same electricity dispute resolution service as other small businesses, and it will ensure that Queensland's arrangements are broadly consistent with ombudsman services in other jurisdictions.

The change to this legislation aligns with the Palaszczuk government's policy of supporting small business to facilitate job creation. The Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee held departmental briefings and a public hearing. We have unanimously agreed that the bill be passed with one minor amendment which has been earlier sorted out. I would like to give thanks to the committee members for their hard work and willingness to work together for this outcome. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank those individuals and organisations who lodged written submissions on the bill. I would also like to thank the committee's secretariat and the Department of Energy and Water Supply for their assistance. I commend the bill to the House.


 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (4.42 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015. As a member of the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee that worked on this bill, I am proud to see it come forward to the House with the unanimous support of the committee with one amendment. It is refreshing to see such a collaborative approach in this place. Along with my fellow committee members, I would also like to thank the secretariat, Hansard and all those parties who took the time to make submissions during the review.

This legislation achieves a number of very important policy objectives. The bill allows non-residential electricity customers consuming between 100 and 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year to access the dispute resolution services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman. What this means in practice is that small businesses can now take advantage of the powers and authority of the ombudsman to resolve concerns that they might have with their electricity provider. This is great news for many small retail providers in my electorate of Capalaba, who I know from time to time have issues with their commercial electricity provider and who may need to appeal to the ombudsman.

Secondly, this bill extends the functions of the ombudsman to allow it to become a recognised external dispute resolution scheme in order to deal with credit-reporting complaints in relation to the misuse of a consumer's credit information. This change is a result of the new privacy legislation and ensures that the authority of the ombudsman continues to be backed by legislative power.

Finally, the bill enables the ombudsman to disclose customer-identifying information about a complainant to their respective energy and water utilities for resolution. This quite obviously deals with the privacy constraints on the ombudsman which restrict it from passing on a consumer's identifying information which might be a barrier to resolving consumer issues and complaints. This legislative maintenance work ensures that the institution, like the Energy and Water Ombudsman, keeps pace with other changing legislation like that concerning privacy, which is such an important legal area in the modern age where privacy is so little and so precious. It is also an example of this government's credentials as a friend of small business.

I am all for standing up for the underdog, and in a David versus Goliath battle you will never see me on the side of the giant. Small businesses can be exploited just as easily as a worker, and when it comes to power companies I am sure that we all know of examples of unfair practices which have come through our electorate offices. That is why I am proud to speak in support of this bill and why I am proud of the work that the committee did on this bill to include the amendments which facilitate the resolution of customers' concerns. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (4.46 pm): I also rise to speak in support of the bill and the minor amendments that have been proposed by the ombudsman and subsequently the minister. During the inquiry process the committee received four submissions: one from the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland; another from the office of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland; and further submissions from Master Electricians Australia and the Energy Retailer's Association of Australia.


The objective of this bill is quite simple, and that is to amend the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006 to allow non-residential electricity consumers consuming between 100 and 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year access to the dispute resolution services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland. It also extends the functions of the Energy and Water Ombudsman to allow it to become a recognised external dispute resolution provider, and it also allows the ombudsman to disclose customer-identifying information about complainants to their respective energy and water entities for billing purposes.

This is essentially an amendment that is about helping small business, and that is why I am particularly keen to speak in support of the bill and that is why we are supporting these amendments. The sorts of businesses that will benefit from these changes are smaller, privately owned businesses like bakeries, laundries, small supermarkets and small production and manufacturing businesses who are dependent on high amounts of energy consumption. It also includes a lot of community organisations like surf clubs and junior Rugby League clubs which are using extremely large amounts of electricity for the supply of lighting or for the operation of some smaller licensed clubs.

The review found that some of these high energy-using customers experienced difficulties similar to those of residential customers when speaking to their energy retailer. Many have a relatively poor understanding of contracts and tariffs because they are busy running their businesses and perhaps do not pay enough attention to the detail. Many also experienced long waiting times and delays when making phone calls and attending to inquiries and disputes over services and bills.

I am particularly pleased to support this bill. It means that some 5,000-plus small businesses across Queensland will have access to the services of the ombudsman. It will not create an onerous workload on the ombudsman's office. They estimate that it may add only about an extra 200 cases per year. The thing I particularly like about this is that no extra budget funding from the state government is required in order to support this because the claims are fundamentally paid for and dealt with by the energy providers under the current program of dealing with normal retail customers.

I am pleased to commend the bill to the House. I particularly want to thank the secretariat of the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee for their support in working through the various challenges of reviewing this legislation.

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (4.50 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill before the House. I will quickly touch on the contents and the aim of this bill. As has been said before, it will allow non-residential electricity customers consuming between 100 and 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year to access the dispute resolution services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland. Secondly, it will extend the function of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland to allow it to become that recognised external dispute resolution scheme. That is in order to deal with credit-reporting complaints in relation to the misuse of customer credit information. Thirdly, it will enable the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland to disclose customer-identifying information about complainants to the respective energy and water entities for the purposes of billing by the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland.

The minister has spoken very well on this matter. There are just a few points I would like to make. Firstly, this bill will allow many small businesses that have never been able to access the services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland to take advantage of its very effective service. Many high energy-using small businesses consume up to 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year. They are small businesses in terms of turnover or number of staff employed, but they have the high energy profile of larger businesses. They could be, as we have heard, a bakery, a laundry, a small supermarket or a takeaway that bakes its own rolls on the premises and are therefore high energy users.

Mr Krause: Dairy farmers.


Mr WHITING: And dairy farmers. I take that interjection. We have found that these small businesses experience the same difficulties as residential customers. They may have not fully understood the tariffs or the contract and they may experience long delays in sorting out disputes with the energy supplier, but until now they have been excluded from accessing the services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland. The amendments contained in this bill will allow an additional 5,100 high energy-using small businesses to have access to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland. That is a great figure—5,100 small businesses. That is a great outcome for small business in Queensland. As we have heard, the sector employs the vast majority of Queensland workers.

We want to help small businesses sort out disputes with electricity providers—to spend less time working on these problems and spend more time in the business. These small businesses can get what is an excellent service from the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland. These small businesses may not have the expertise or resources to negotiate a solution or a better deal with their energy retailer. Larger companies may have an accounts manager who is experienced in dealing with suppliers, but small businesses need an experienced negotiator on their side. The Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland is exactly that. In the previous year the ombudsman was able to negotiate monetary redress for businesses to the value of \$375,000. Overall, it was able to negotiate monetary redress of \$1.1 million for Queenslanders. These 5,100 businesses can now access that service.

Secondly, these amendments are necessary if the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland is to effectively operate that user-pays system. Basically, each scheme participant—the distributor or retailer—pays the cost of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland. So if a customer makes a complaint to the ombudsman about a retailer, that retailer or distributor would need to pay the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland the cost of handling that complaint on a fee-for-service basis. These amendments allow that energy retailer to reconcile a customer's information with the bill they are getting from the ombudsman's office. It may happen that a customer, after discussing their case with the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland, may be referred back to the retailer. That is what is known as a refer-back, and the energy retailer may get a bill for that. This is what the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland will be able to do with the changes to the act. In providing a bill to the energy retailer, the ombudsman says, 'This is the name of your customer who has been in contact with us and here is some basic information about them.' This bill is for reconciliation purposes, so the customer is protected. One of the great achievements of this bill is that it is about fairness to the energy customer and fairness to the energy company that is paying for the services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland.

Thirdly, the bill is necessary to further protect the privacy of energy customers. The Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland needs to be established as an external dispute resolution service under the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. The changed act now has new provisions including the introduction of civil penalties for breaching some credit-reporting provisions. That is a protection for the energy customers. Under this act, credit providers such as energy providers—they are credit providers because they charge for some services in advance—must be members of a recognised external dispute resolution service. That means that they can disclose customer information to a credit-reporting body to assess whether the proposed customer is creditworthy. If there is a problem with a breach of privacy for the customer, the customer can take their case to the external dispute resolution service. They are not just told to take it up with the energy provider.

This bill does create some new protections for customers, but I think the statistic we need to focus on is that it brings 5,100 small businesses in Queensland into the fold of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland. That is a great outcome for the state.

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (4.57 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015, which will amend the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006 and make a minor amendment to the National Energy Retail Law (Queensland) Act 2014 to correct an administrative error. The bill has been reviewed by the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee. I thank the chair, the member for Kallangur, committee members and the committee's secretariat for their careful and thorough consideration of the bill.

The objects of the bill are: to allow non-residential electricity customers consuming between 100 and 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year access to the dispute resolution services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland, otherwise known as EWOQ; to extend the functions of EWOQ to allow it to become a recognised external dispute resolution scheme in order to deal with credit-reporting complaints in relation to the misuse of customers' credit information; and to enable EWOQ to disclose customer-identifying information about complainants to their respective energy and water entities for billing purposes.

The policy intention of the bill is to provide access to a free and independent energy-specific dispute resolution service for small businesses that use high amounts of electricity. This includes businesses such as bakeries, small supermarkets, dairy farmers, manufacturing facilities and other small businesses dependent on high amounts of electricity. The 160 megawatt hours per year threshold limit was identified through early consultation with industry stakeholders who advised that customers consuming more than 160 megawatt hours per year are typically not small businesses.


The bill also applies to non-profit organisations, such as community sports clubs with floodlit playing fields that typically consume between 100 and 160 kilowatt hours per year. Operations such as aged-care facilities, which may consume between 200 and 1,000 kilowatt hours, suggest that not-for-profit organisations that consume more than 160 kilowatt hours are more likely to be large organisations with significant financial resources to settle a dispute with an energy retailer. The 160 megawatt hours is considered to strike an appropriate balance between providing assistance to those consumers who need it the most and minimising the financial, administrative and regulatory impacts on small businesses, retailers and EWOQ. The 160 megawatt hour threshold is also consistent with several other jurisdictions, including Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.

As outlined by the minister in his first reading speech, the bill includes amendments to increase the transparency around EWOQ's billing practices relating to user-pays fees issued by service providers. The bill also amends the National Energy Retail Law (Queensland) Act 2014 to correct an administrative numbering error that exists in the act's schedule.

Queensland's small business enterprises are recognised by the government as a significant contributor to the state's economic and jobs growth and are the backbone to regional economies. That is why it is important that all small businesses are given the strongest possible support to ensure that they can get on with servicing and employing people right across Queensland. Many small businesses that are dependent on high-use electricity for their daily operations often do not have the time, expertise or resources to deal with issues and disputes that may arise with their electricity accounts whilst still conducting their businesses.

The current dispute resolution mechanisms that are available to these types of business customers may not be specialised enough to efficiently and effectively deal with energy related disputes. This bill will allow these types of businesses and organisations to contact EWOQ for free assistance if they are unable to resolve a dispute with their electricity retailer. That will ensure that high

energy-using small businesses are on the same playing field and enjoy the same access to energy-specific dispute resolution services as do other small businesses. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.02 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015. I note that the review into this legislation was started under the previous LNP government. As a member of the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee, I want to point out that the policy objectives of the bill were to amend the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006 to allow non-residential electricity customers consuming between 100 and 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year access to the dispute resolution services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland; to extend the functions of the Energy and Water Ombudsman—known as EWOQ—to allow it to become a recognised external dispute resolution scheme in order to deal with credit-reporting complaints in relation to the misuse of a customer's credit information; and to enable the Energy and Water Ombudsman to disclose customer-identifying information about complainants to their respective energy and water entities for billing purposes.

So why were these changes necessary? Currently, EWOQ provides a free and independent dispute resolution service for non-residential electricity customers who consume less than 100 megawatt hours per year and who are unable to resolve a complaint with their electricity, gas or water supplier in South-East Queensland. EWOQ routinely deals with issues such as high and disputed bills, customers experiencing payment difficulties, connection, disconnection and restriction of supply, compensation for damage and loss, disputes about compliance with contractual obligations, energy market conduct, customer service and quality of supply. EWOQ is fully funded by scheme participants through a combination of participation fees and user-pays fees. This bill extends the dispute resolution service for high energy-using small business customers consuming up to 160 megawatt hours of electricity per annum. I am talking about customers such as bakeries, laundries, small supermarkets and small food production and manufacturing businesses. Many not-for-profit organisations such as community groups and amateur sporting groups are also included in this category. Many of these customers experience difficulties similar to those experienced by residential customers when speaking to their energy retailer, have a relatively poor understanding of contracts and tariffs and experience long waiting times and delays when making phone calls, which I am sure many of us here in the chamber today are familiar with.

If the bill is enacted. It is estimated that approximately 5,100 additional high energy-using small business customers would be eligible to seek access to EWOQ, which would generate approximately 200 additional cases for EWOQ per year. Importantly, the proposed legislation would allow high energy-using small businesses to be on a more level playing field as they would enjoy access to the same electricity dispute resolution services as do other small businesses and ensure that Queensland's arrangements are broadly consistent with high energy-using small business customer access to ombudsman services in other jurisdictions.

The bill also proposes to establish EWOQ so that it is eligible to apply for recognition as an external dispute resolution scheme under the Commonwealth's Privacy Act 1998 to provide eligible customers with access to a local dispute resolution service for complaints against their energy or water provider in relation to the misuse of a customer's credit information. The Privacy Act now includes new credit-reporting provisions, such as the introduction of more comprehensive credit reporting, a simplified and enhanced correction and complaints process, and the introduction of civil penalties for breaches of certain credit-reporting provisions.


Energy providers participate in the credit-reporting system so that they can access information relating to the creditworthiness of their customers. The bill proposes to ensure that energy providers can continue to participate in this system by providing the necessary legislative power for EWOQ to resolve privacy complaints relating to the misuse of energy consumers' credit information, to apply to the Australian Information Commissioner for recognition as the official scheme in Queensland for energy and water customers, and provide consumers with access to a local and independent avenue of redress for complaints or other issues that might arise between the individual and the service provider on credit-reporting matters.

The bill proposes to allow EWOQ to disclose customer-identifying information about complainants to the respective energy and water entities for billing reconciliation purposes for refer-back-to-provider cases. EWOQ is funded through user-pay fees. That means that the scheme participants pay EWOQ's costs. For example, if a customer from Ergon Energy makes a complaint to


EWOQ, Ergon would then need to pay EWOQ for the cost of handling that complaint on a fee-for-service basis. The proposed legislation seeks to ensure that scheme participants have the ability to reconcile the customer information with the billing that they are getting from EWOQ. When we consider that over the last financial year almost \$375,000 in monetary redress was achieved, with significant monetary outcomes for some customers, we begin to understand the potential scale of compensation and debt waivers for customers.

Importantly, EWOQ offers a valuable advocacy, investigation and information service that would be able to assist customers to resolve disputes with their retailer, including being effective in assisting in the resolution of disputes before the matter progresses to litigation over contractual issues. Alternatively, if a resolution cannot be reached and a breach of contract is clear, EWOQ may refer the customer to other options, including recommending that the customer seek independent legal advice.

I am entirely supportive of any moves that will provide further assistance to small businesses. Small business makes up 97 per cent of all businesses in Queensland. I am pleased that this legislation will remedy the disparity that exists between businesses that are categorised as small and medium in terms of their turnover and employee size but categorised as large businesses in terms of their electricity consumption. With those points in mind, I support this bill, noting the safeguards that it provides small business and not-for-profit groups in Queensland.

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (5.08 pm): I rise to make a very brief contribution in favour of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015. This bill is a good example of the sort of practical support that small business and community sectors can expect from the Palaszczuk Labor government. I commend the minister for his efforts. We can all identify with the challenge of resolving a dispute with an electricity retailer. For better or for worse, it is a complex area and when faced with possible questions or issues with your electricity contract it is tempting to stick it in the bottom drawer—the too-hard basket. Energy contracts and tariffs can be difficult to understand and navigating through the process and, for that matter, trying to contact retailers to inquire or resolve a dispute can be time-consuming, stressful and detracts from the running of your business.


The Energy and Water Ombudsman's dispute resolution service is a great service for consumers and small businesses who do not necessarily have the knowledge, skills, resources or time to work through issues with energy retailers. It is independent, free and fair. This bill makes that same service available to small businesses with high energy needs. It helps level the playing field, not only by providing access to the dispute resolution service that helps consumers negotiate on an equal footing with their electricity retailer but also by providing the same access to small businesses that consume high amounts of electricity as other small businesses with less electricity consumption. An additional 5,100 businesses are expected to be able to take advantage of the service as a result of this bill. By providing high energy-using small business customers, including not-for-profit organisations, with access to a free and independent energy-specific dispute resolution service we are giving these organisations more freedom to do what they do best: provide valuable goods and services to their customers and support for community groups and activities. We all know that when our small business sector is strong that means more jobs and opportunities for Queenslanders. I am proud to support a bill that supports small business and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms DONALDSON** (Bundaberg—ALP) (5.10 pm): I rise in support of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015. In particular, I would like to outline the benefits of the bill for small businesses in Queensland. Small businesses that consume high amounts of electricity are currently unable to access the services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland or, as in the *Star Wars* reference, EWOQ. As a result, these businesses are unable to resolve disputes with their electricity provider in the way that other small businesses and residents in Queensland can.

It has been identified that many of these small businesses struggle to negotiate on an equal footing with their retailer. Like a number of residential and other small business customers, they often find it challenging to understand their energy contracts, tariffs and bills. They also often face long waiting times if they try to contact their retailers to resolve disputes or inquire about their situation. These difficulties place a considerable burden on the operation of many small businesses as disputes with their electricity provider can be extremely time consuming and resource intensive. For these reasons, high energy-using small business customers need more support to help them resolve electricity related matters so that they can focus on their core business of providing valuable products and services to Queenslanders. By increasing the threshold limit for access to EWOQ to 160 megawatt hours per year

it is expected that up to an additional 5,100 small business customers will gain access to a free energy-specific dispute resolution service. This will give these businesses the same access to EWOQ as businesses who consume less than 100 megawatt hours per year as well as residential customers.

In this way the bill delivers on the Queensland government's policy aim of supporting small business. Government recognises that a strong, supported small business sector means more jobs for Queenslanders. Importantly, the bill maintains EWOQ's core role of facilitating dispute resolution for energy and water customers who require the most support. It delivers an inherent consumer rights advantage by allowing high energy-using small businesses to access an independent, free and fair dispute resolution mechanism for assistance with their energy disputes. This bill also brings Queensland into line with other Australian jurisdictions, such as Victoria and Western Australia, where high energy-using small businesses can access the services of jurisdictional ombudsman schemes for the resolution of energy disputes. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (5.13 pm): It would be remiss of me in consideration of this bill not to rise up and reflect on a few pieces of history in relation to the bill and also to offer my support for this outstanding piece of LNP policy. It is always good to see my old sparring partner from the Brisbane City Council, the minister, bring in yet another good idea initiated by the LNP.

It goes back even further than that. It goes back to July 2007, back when full retail contestability was introduced by the then Beattie and Bligh governments, when they then sold off the electricity retailers. At that stage they had not descended into the recidivism and recalcitrancy of the current left-wing controlled, union dominated ALP government in this state, but actually did see some benefit in allowing full retail competition. Their heroes actually went forward with it. One of the important aspects of that was to allow a dispute resolution process to be put in place.

I remember very clearly in this House standing up and speaking on the bill and speaking on the merits of the electricity ombudsman at that stage, Mr Barry Adams, a fine electricity ombudsman who did a great job. Certainly in terms of those relatively few complaints, but nonetheless serious complaints, that were received by me in my electorate office, Barry Adams made himself immediately available to help resolve those complaints and I think served for something like four years up until 2011 when the then deputy ombudsman for the state of Queensland, Forbes Smith, was appointed to take over that role.

In particular, I recall a lengthy and long-going incident involving a small business that occurred around late 2010, early 2011, if memory serves me correctly. The reason I remember it is that it occurred at Ashgrove Avenue in the electorate of the minister for small business. A little milk bar called Milk had been charged—erroneously as it subsequently turned out—by their electricity provider some \$25,000. They ran a milk bar that used lots of refrigeration to keep all their goods and perishables intact. They had made a number of requests to the retailer that had not been satisfactorily resolved. They had gone to the local member at the time—

Mr Minnikin: Who was that?

Mr NICHOLLS: I am struggling to think who was the member for Ashgrove in 2011; it was the recently re-elected member for Ashgrove—and had got no satisfaction. The matter was then referred to me.


Ms JONES: I find that personally offensive and I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr NICHOLLS: I withdraw. Having received an unsatisfactory response, the owner and operator, Amanda, I believe, if memory serves me correctly, contacted Ms Madonna King of ABC Radio fame at the time I was engaged in sparring lessons with the then treasurer Andrew Fraser. She referred the matter to me. I took the matter up with Barry Adams and asked him to investigate. Notwithstanding the fact that the retailer had not been able to do anything, other avenues that had been investigated by this small business operator, which was paying over the odds for electricity, had not resulted in any satisfactory conclusion, the involvement of Barry Adams at that time saw that that power bill was actually reduced substantially—by more than half—and actually reflected the true cost of electricity into those premises at that time showing that, in fact, decent representation by someone who is prepared to go after a matter can actually end up with a result notwithstanding the Electricity Ombudsman being in place.

When we think back to the need for an Electricity Ombudsman, if you like the establishment of it, we have the Labor Party and its sale of the electricity retailers—the full retail contestability that they introduced; we saw the appointment of Mr Barry Adams and the operation from July 2007 of his

organisation, the Electricity Ombudsman Queensland, then the appointment of Forbes Smith; we of course have the small business Milk that was being done over and deserved to have their case heard but was not yet getting satisfaction but finally got satisfaction—I think a subsequent member there used to frequent that place quite regularly. He obviously supported that small business in a way that they were not then being supported by other elected representatives who were happy to see \$15,000 go out the door and make plans about sea level rises, but nothing to do with helping a small business in that part of the world.

Therefore, one can imagine that I do fully support this piece of legislation, as it provides additional services for those small business that would not otherwise be able to access them. It was a great idea when it was promoted by Mark McArdle, the member for Caloundra, in March 2014, it was a good idea when it went through the regulatory impact statement that was initiated by our government shortly afterwards and it is still a good idea. It was considered by the Office of Best Practice Regulation. It is another innovation of the LNP government. The bill before the House today will see the culmination of a good outcome for small businesses throughout the state that will be able to access a fair, just and speedy resolution process for disputes with their retailers.

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (5.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015. It is great to hear that there is bipartisan support for the bill. Of course, the member for Clayfield has to claim credit for every single thing that has been achieved in the energy industry, although he did not mention electricity prices rising by 43 per cent when the LNP was in government. However, I guess it would have been inconvenient to mention that or the fact that they promised that there would be no cost-of-living increases.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Order! Pause the clock. Members will not conduct their conversations across the chamber. The member for Bulimba has the call.

Ms FARMER: I will turn to the amendments proposed in the bill which allow for EWOQ—after the various contributions of speakers I think we all know what it means—to be recognised as an external dispute resolution scheme for the purposes of the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988, to increase the transparency around EWOQ's billing practices relating to user-pays fees issued to service providers and to amend the National Energy Retail Law (Queensland) Act 2014 to correct an administrative numbering error. I see this as a bill for the little guys, as it extends access to EWOQ to small business customers using between 100 and 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year.

There are about 5,000 small businesses in my electorate and they are the backbone of our community. They are the social and economic hub of the community and the contribution they make to employment in my local area and across the state is really significant. Therefore, any initiative that will provide really practical support to them is something that I support wholeheartedly. I know that the excellent local South East Brisbane Chamber of Commerce will look forward to hearing this news from the government and the support it can relay to the small businesses that it looks after so well.

This amendment bill focuses on high energy users—that is, people who depend on the high use of electricity as an integral part of their business, but may not have the time, expertise or resources to deal with their bill issues and disputes. I note in the committee report that there was certainly a recognition that often these small businesses are run by people who, just like residential customers, may not necessarily have a good understanding of contracts or how to negotiate disputes. They may not have the time to make long phone calls to energy retailers when attending to inquiries and disputes. That can be quite a soul-destroying experience. I think probably all of us have had one of those long and frustrating phone calls at home. I note that, if passed, this amendment will make some 5,100 additional high energy-using customers eligible to seek access to EWOQ. The bill talks about businesses such as bakeries, small supermarkets and manufacturing businesses. Certainly, there are a number of manufacturing businesses in the Bulimba electorate.

I was very pleased to see that access will apply also to community groups and sporting organisations. I can think of a number of conversations that I have had with high energy-using sporting groups in my own electorate, in which I have been told that energy bills and disputes with energy retailers are sucking up their resources and their resolve. I think of the Camp Hill Bowls Club, where the average age of the executive is probably 80. Those fine men and women look after their club because they want to play bowls, but they have suffered enormous anxiety and stress because of the energy bills they face for the lighting that they provide both to their club and to the parks around them.


I had the same conversations with people from the Morningside Services Club who were simply trying to attend to their core business, but unfortunately the club has folded. The club's energy bills was one of the reasons for that. I think of the Bulimba Junior Sports Club, which incorporates Riverside Rugby, the Ravens Gridiron and the Bulimba Valleys Rugby League Club. They are all high energy users, as are AC Carina and the Southside Eagles. Many of those clubs have been funded by the sport and recreation facilities program. We give them lighting because we want to increase participation, which is one of the government's key aims in the sport and recreation portfolio, but at the same time that does cost them money.

I am pleased to see that under this amendment clubs such as those may have access to EWOQ. I think of Hockey Queensland and the Bulimba Bulls, which are also high energy users. We have talked about aged-care facilities, which is an issue that the member for Ipswich West raised. Places such as Georgina Hostel, Prescare Carina, Regis Bulimba and Blue Azure Cannon Hill are going to be very interested in and grateful for this amendment bill.

I was interested in a quote in the committee report from EWOQ, which was that last financial year it conducted 105 investigations resulting in 341 outcomes for customers, including billing adjustments, the payment of compensation and debt waivers. From those investigations, nearly \$375,000 in monetary redress was achieved. Significant monetary outcomes for some customers included bill adjustments of \$34,000 and \$15,000. That is fantastic. What a great opportunity this bill provides. I note that stakeholders made submissions about increasing the threshold for high energy users. However, the committee—quite rightly, in my view—said that the core purpose of EWOQ is to provide a service to those who need it the most, that is, residential and small business customers.

I want to mention the issue of increasing transparency around EWOQ's billing practices relating to user-pays fees issued to service providers. I am sure every member of this House has had come to them desperate people who are having disputes with their energy providers. Usually by the time they get to the ombudsman they are pretty desperate, frustrated and upset. From the committee report I note that concerns have been raised about the disclosure of information. However, the next time I talk to a distressed elderly lady about whether she would be happy for her personal details to be provided, I know that there will not even be a discussion. Such people desperately want to get their issues resolved, which are such an impost on them and cause such stress.

I congratulate the minister. He is doing an excellent job. He is totally committed to reform in the energy sector. He has come in after huge price increases under the previous government. I note his referral of electricity pricing and solar feed-in pricing to the Queensland Productivity Commission. I know everyone is looking forward to the outcome of that. I congratulate the committee that oversaw this report, including my friend the member for Kallangur who I know is much loved on the other side. The committee obviously dealt with some very tricky issues and received some strong submissions from stakeholders. These are quite difficult issues, so I congratulate the committee on a great job. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WILLIAMS** (Pumicestone—ALP) (5.28 pm): I rise to speak on the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015. The particular part of the bill that I wish to speak to is the effect it will have on local businesses in Pumicestone. However, firstly I commend the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee for its in-depth consideration of the bill and for the substance of its deliberations and report.

The amendments in this bill are welcomed by small businesses in Pumicestone and no doubt many other small businesses throughout Queensland. I have shared in their frustration until now. In Pumicestone we have many bakeries. One such bakery is the Big Bun bakery on Bribie Island. The owner of this bakery has made repeated representations to my office on behalf of his bakery and other small businesses.

His plight is that his electricity bill went from \$900 per month to \$2,000 per month under those opposite. He recently got a quote from Ergon. They said that as a large business his bill could possibly go to \$5,500. These bakeries deliver bread to the community. This is not a luxury. This business uses 110 megawatts of electricity per annum. It is above the 100 megawatts level and below the 160 megawatts level. He has had nowhere to go until this bill passes.

The Palaszczuk government has given small business a voice through this EWOQ bill. These small businesses have been screaming out for a voice under the former government. In fact, recently the member for Glass House invited the shadow ministers to a community question and answer forum

at Bribie Island. He could not take them to Glass House. One newspaper said, 'They weren't fighting for a seat' and 'Obviously there was nothing else happening on Bribie that day.' The attendance was extremely poor.

Small business people had no confidence to take it up to those opposite. They are without direction. They are caught up in navel-gazing. They are in a political wilderness and they have not realised it. They deserve to be where they are.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Order! Member for Pumicestone, take your seat please. The interjections are not being taken. I understand that he is provoking you.

Mr HARPER: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Glass House should be in his own seat if he wishes to interject.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Glass House is representing the opposition from that seat. There is no point of order.

Mr WILLIAMS: The only thing left for me to say is that I congratulate the Palaszczuk government and the minister for the fine work that has been done on this bill. I commend the bill to the House.



Mr de BRENNI (Springwood—ALP) (5.33 pm): When the Premier launched her historic election campaign in January 2015 she said—

Governments should do all the work they can to work with business to help create secure jobs now, training for those seeking work or changing jobs and new jobs for future generations.

Day after day I make a point of meeting with small businesses as they are the job creators in our economy. Whether it be supporting them to be innovative, supporting them by creating a growing economy, supporting them by building consumer confidence, this is a government that supports small business.

I grew up in a small business household. My parents taught me the value of hard work and initiative. Like many small business people, my parents are not rich. They simply make an honest living by working long hours and doing the right thing by their neighbours and helping others to earn a living if they can. That is why for me this bill is an important one.

Whilst my parents' small business is not a heavy user of electricity, many in the Springwood electorate are. For many, it is one of their most significant costs. My parents specialised in family law and property law, but managing their utilities was not their speciality nor would they ever have had the time or expertise to manage a dispute if one had ever arisen.

That is why I welcome this bill's objective which, in a nutshell, is to provide a mechanism to let small business do what they do best, and that is employ people. Our government wants small business to be innovating, to be growing and to be employing. By extending access to the Energy and Water Ombudsman, small business can focus on job creation.

There is much of this to be done thanks to the previous LNP taking an axe to jobs across this state. Unfortunately, the miserable and ill thought out jobs cutting agenda just did not hit government employees in the public sector, it hit at the heart of small businesses in this state that rely on a strong economy and on a stable Public Service.

I refer to correspondence received by me from one such business in the community I represent. I later passed the letter on to the Minister for Small Business. The letter was titled 'Effects of previous government on small business'. Mr Barry Leddiman stated—

As a small business owner ... it became very apparent that during the time of the previous government, many of my customers were in fear of losing their jobs or had indeed lost their jobs.

This affected both individuals and married couples with mortgages to pay and as such many of them were worried they would lose their homes and they had little confidence in finding work in their chosen profession.

The letter goes on to state—

It takes time for people to gain confidence but I'm hoping the new government will more clearly see the big picture.

It was unfortunate that the previous government did not realise that by hurting people financially, it had a crippling effect on the economy and resulted in people not spending and small business struggling to survive.

Small businesses in my community like that one, like the bakery, like the printer, like the metal fabrication workshop are all set to benefit not only from our restoration of stability in employment in Queensland but also from our bill that will give them a free and independent dispute resolution service, access to advocacy, investigation and information and, most importantly, time to focus on their business. This bill gives small business a fair go and a level playing field. All they want from government is to be understood.


As the Master Electricians stated in their submission—

As an organisation representing electrical contractors, the majority of whom are running small businesses, we support any initiatives that will ease the regulatory, administrative and financial burdens felt by small business owners in all sectors of the economy.

The Master Electricians go on to state—

Having to dispute a bill is just an added expense that small businesses are in no position to outlay when the outcome is not guaranteed to be in their favour. Ready access to the expertise of EWOQ will be an invaluable support measure that is sure to encourage small business to pursue their rights.

Finally, it is pleasing to also see that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry also recognises good work from this government. What these submissions tell me is that this government gets small business. This government supports small business. I commend the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill to the House.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (5.37 pm), in reply: Firstly, I thank all honourable members for their participation in this debate. I would also like to thank the members of the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee who spent some time looking at the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015 and assessing its pros and cons. I welcome the support of the opposition for the Palaszczuk government's bill to help small business in Queensland. I even acknowledge the contribution from the member for Clayfield. Although, pro-privatisation tendencies do slip into the speeches of the member for Clayfield, I notice.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr BAILEY: The member for Clayfield was calling me recalcitrant when it comes to asset sales. I do sense that the pro-privatisation posturing tends to come through.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: Judging by the interjections that landed. I would also like to acknowledge the considerable input into the debate by government members. We had nine government speakers. I think that shows the commitment and regard for small business the Palaszczuk government has. There were very strong contributions from government members. I would also like to acknowledge the very strong support of the Minister for Small Business, the member for Ashgrove. She has been very supportive of this bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you have heard throughout the debate today that the bill will deliver on the government's policy aimed at supporting job creation by supporting small business. The government recognises that Queensland small business enterprises are a significant contributor to the state's economy and jobs growth and are important, of course, to regional economies. That is why it is important that all small businesses are given the strongest possible support to ensure that they can get on with their job of employing Queenslanders right across our state.

This bill will also ensure that high energy-using small businesses are on a level playing field and enjoy the same access to an energy specific dispute resolution service as other small businesses. The bill will also extend the functions of EWOQ to allow it to apply for recognition as an external dispute resolution scheme to resolve credit information disputes. These requirements will come into effect for Queensland energy providers from 1 January 2016, in less than two months.

The credit-reporting regime outlines how service providers, such as energy retailers, may access credit history about an individual and use this information to assess a customer's credit worthiness. To support the changes to the Privacy Act, it is necessary to establish an appropriate external dispute resolution scheme in Queensland to deal with disputes relating to customers' credit information. The bill extends the current function of EWOQ to incorporate these disputes by enabling EWOQ to apply to the Australian Information Commissioner for official recognition as an external dispute resolution scheme in Queensland.

Finally, the bill proposes a minor amendment to increase the transparency around EWOQ's billing practices as Queensland energy and water utilities are currently experiencing difficulties reconciling the fees they are charged by EWOQ. As EWOQ is currently unable to disclose the account number or other customer-identifying information of the specific individuals who have sought their assistance, service providers are unable to reconcile the fees against their customer records. The bill ensures that information EWOQ can access which identifies customers will only be used by retailers to verify that the complaints the retailer has been billed for are in fact their customers and not customers of another retailer. This will enable energy and water utilities to check the fees they are issued by EWOQ against their existing records.

I will now provide a little more detail on a few elements of the bill. The amendments in the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill will facilitate access to EWOQ for high energy-using small businesses. To implement the objectives, the bill amends the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act and introduces a new type of customer with eligibility to access EWOQ. This customer type is defined as a 'non-residential' energy customer consuming up to 160 megawatt hours of electricity per annum. This will provide high energy-using small businesses and organisations with access to a free, energy-specific dispute resolution service. The bill also amends the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act and extends the functions of EWOQ to incorporate credit-reporting complaints.

Establishing a recognised external dispute resolution scheme in Queensland will ensure that energy retailers can continue to participate in the credit-reporting system and that customers have access to a local, convenient, fast and independent avenue of redress if they feel their credit information has been mishandled. The bill also amends the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006 to enable EWOQ to disclose the customer-identifying information of a complainant to their energy or water provider so they can reconcile the number and nature of cases with their own records. This information can only be used for this purpose, and the bill has been carefully drafted to strike a balance between addressing the concerns raised by industry over this matter and maintaining stringent safeguards over individual customer privacy.

Currently, small business customers who consume less than 100 megawatt hours of electricity per year are able to contact EWOQ for assistance. The amendments deliver an inherent consumer rights advantage by ensuring that these types of businesses have access to an independent dispute resolution mechanism. It is expected that these amendments will open up eligibility for up to 5,100 additional high energy-using small businesses to access EWOQ's valuable advocacy, investigation and information services, which may also be effective in these customers resolving disputes with their retailer without the need for litigation over contractual issues.

The bill also extends EWOQ's functions to allow it to apply for recognition as an external dispute resolution scheme in accordance with the Commonwealth Privacy Act. Establishing a Queensland external dispute resolution scheme will ensure Queensland energy consumers have access to a local, convenient, fast and independent avenue of redress if they feel their credit information has been mishandled by their retailer.

The amendments that I will move during the consideration in detail stage are in response to a submission made by EWOQ and will enable the Energy and Water Ombudsman to provide energy and water utilities with the customer-identifying information needed for reconciling EWOQ invoices for user-pays fees charged for any case type and not just to refer-back-to-provider complaint cases as originally drafted. This will ensure energy and water retailers will be able to confirm that they have only been invoiced for complaints brought to EWOQ by their own customers and to check that billing errors have not occurred relating to any of the charges they have received.

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the hard work of Consumer Policy in the Consumer and Pricing Branch in the Department of Energy and Water Supply. I certainly support the bill. It will benefit up to 5,100 customers in our small business sector in Queensland. 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 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—



Mr BAILEY (5.46 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 11 (Amendment of s 25A (Use and disclosure of personal information))

Page 7, lines 10 to 34 and page 8, lines 1 to 15—

omit, insert—

11 Insertion of new s 25B

Part 3—

insert—

25B Disclosure of customer identifying information

- (1) The making of a dispute referral by an eligible customer is, of itself, taken to be agreement by the customer to the customer's customer identifying information being disclosed to a utility entity to the extent reasonably necessary for invoicing the utility entity for a user-pays fee.

Example—

disclosing the customer account number of an eligible customer to the utility entity to allow the entity to confirm that the account is held with the entity

- (2) Without limiting subsection (1)—

- (a) the making of a dispute referral by an eligible customer includes—

- (i) the purported or proposed making of a dispute referral by an eligible customer if the energy and water ombudsman advises the customer that, under section 19A(1)(c), the customer can not make the dispute referral; and
- (ii) the making of a dispute referral by an eligible customer even though the energy and water ombudsman refuses, under section 22(1)(d), to investigate the dispute referral or to continue the investigation of the dispute referral; and

- (b) for an eligible customer who is an individual, this section applies for any IPP under the *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill, explanatory notes to Hon. Bailey's amendments [1602].

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 11, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 12 and 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—



Mr BAILEY (5.47 pm): I move the following amendment—

2 Clause 14 (Amendment of s 79 (Privacy))

Page 9, line 2, '25A'—

omit, insert—

25B

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 15 to 17, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. MC BAILEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (5.48 pm): I move—

That the bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. MC BAILEY (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (5.48 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.

COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY


Portfolio Committees, Reporting Dates

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (5.48 pm): I seek to advise the House of determinations made by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly at its meeting today. The committee has resolved, pursuant to standing order 136, that the Health and Ambulance Services Committee report on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015 by 15 February 2016 and the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee report on the Water Legislation Amendment Bill by 1 March 2016.

SUSTAINABLE PORTS DEVELOPMENT BILL

Resumed from 3 June (see p. 1034).

Second Reading

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (5.49 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I would like to thank the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee for its report tabled on 1 September 2015 and its detailed and robust consideration of the Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those who made submissions to the committee and those who participated in the public hearings held during the committee's inquiry. I have considered the committee's report and the 13 recommendations outlined therein and I am pleased to advise that the government accepts all recommendations of the committee either in full or in principle. I will move amendments during the consideration in detail of the bill to give effect to the committee's recommendations as required. I am pleased to table the proposed amendments and explanatory notes.

Tabled paper: Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015: amendments to be moved in consideration in detail by the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Hon. Dr Lynham [[1603](#)].

Tabled paper: Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015: explanatory notes to Hon. Dr Lynham's amendments [[1604](#)].

I reaffirm the Queensland government's commitment to protect the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area through the sustainable management of port development adjacent to the area. Since I introduced the bill on 3 June 2015 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Committee, on 1 July 2015, made a unanimous decision not to place the Great Barrier Reef on its World Heritage endangered list. In response to committee recommendations 2, 3, 5 and 6, I will move amendments to further strengthen stakeholder consultation and participation in the port master planning process. The consultation process provided by the bill as introduced was comprehensive, and during the committee's inquiry stakeholders acknowledged their satisfaction with the level of consultation in relation to port master planning. However, we have accepted the committee's recommendations to provide more opportunities for the public to have a say and gain information about port master planning for priority ports. The amendments to the bill will provide enhanced opportunities for engaging and consulting stakeholders and the community throughout the master planning process.

As part of a consultative government that listens and responds, I will move an amendment to the bill to include a port of Cairns specific exemption to permit limited capital dredging within the port's inner harbour. This is in response to the committee's recommendation that I consider declaring the port of Cairns a priority port. In accordance with the recommendation, I have considered the potential environmental impacts on the Great Barrier Reef, the economic benefits to the Cairns region and our commitments made to the World Heritage Committee and under the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. The amendment will limit capital dredging to less than 50,000 cubic metres per approval with a total volumetric limit of 150,000 cubic metres in a four-year period. Any future development at the port of Cairns must be consistent with our commitment to protect the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and our ban on sea based disposal of port related capital dredge material. After four years, the government will review these limits to ensure that the balance between economic development and protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area at the port of Cairns is being achieved.

This limited exemption will ensure Queensland can still meet its port related commitments in the Reef 2050 Plan. This government will not divert from those elements of the bill which form part of our Reef 2050 Plan. The Australian and Queensland governments committed to the World Heritage Committee to limit priority status to within the regulated port limits of the ports of Gladstone, Abbot Point, Townsville and Hay Point/Mackay and that commitment must stand. Any move to designate the port of Cairns as a priority port under the bill would be a breach of commitment. Accordingly, the government will not declare the port of Cairns a priority port.

The proposed amendment also addresses the concerns raised in statements of reservation about the bill by the member for Gladstone on behalf of the government members of the committee and by the member for Dalrymple. This government is committed to supporting the growth and sustainability of Far North Queensland and the Cairns region and ensuring these communities are supported by a port that is in a strong position to take up viable opportunities for growth that do not adversely impact the Great Barrier Reef. The proposed amendments will provide the port of Cairns with opportunities to undertake small-scale development of its inner harbour to enable future growth and economic prosperity without compromising the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. A good example of these opportunities for the port of Cairns and the region's military marine industry is the Pacific patrol boat replacement project currently out for tender by the Department of Defence. This project is worth \$594 million and potentially \$1.38 billion over 30 years and fits well with Queensland's niche capacity to build and sustain Navy vessels up to 2,000 tonnes.

The member for Dalrymple expressed concerns about limitations imposed by the bill on the ports of Cairns and Mourilyan. I note the committee found that there was no overwhelming evidence to support granting priority port status to the port of Mourilyan. Consequently, the government does not propose to make any amendments to the bill in this regard.

I will also move an amendment to the bill to address the committee's recommendations to clarify this government's policy in relation to prohibiting sea based disposal of material generated by port related capital dredging in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. The amendment will ensure that after the commencement of this bill any port related capital dredge material resulting from dredging must be beneficially reused or otherwise disposed on land regardless of when an approval was granted. The amendments I will move provide examples of beneficial reuse. This includes land reclamation, beach nourishment and environmental restoration purposes such as creating or restoring wetlands or nesting islands. I now table the government's response to the committee's report.


Tabled paper: Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Report No. 6—Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015, government response [\[1605\]](#).

We have addressed the committee's recommendation 7 in response to the Queensland Environmental Law Association's query about the operation of clauses 38 and 39 of the bill, which relate to the impact of a port overlay on development approvals and applications. We have reviewed the operation of those clauses and no amendments are required as the bill does not affect approval processes under existing legislation.

The government response addresses the committee's recommendation 10, which sought clarification of the application of the bill in relation to the temporary placement of dredge material for rehandling. Allowing the temporary placement of dredge material would be contrary to our election commitment to ban sea based dumping of capital dredge spoil material within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area.

I note that the member for Burleigh, on behalf of the opposition members of the committee, made a statement of reservation about the bill requesting further explanation and clarity regarding certain aspects of the bill. The proposed amendments, the explanatory notes to these amendments, the government's response to the committee's report and the matters I have just discussed have strengthened and clarified the policy intent of the bill and responded to the member for Burleigh's request.

I am pleased to stand in this House and be overseeing a bill which will implement this government's commitment to the World Heritage Committee to ensure high standards of environmental protection of the Great Barrier Reef while also driving economic development and job creation. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (5.58 pm): I rise to speak to the Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015. The primary purpose of this bill is to provide for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area through managing port related development in and adjacent to that area. In my opinion this is a narrow purpose and does not have sufficient regard for the critical

economic, social and strategic role that our network of ports in Queensland, whether or not they are adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area, plays for the communities in this state. There is no doubt that over the last 30 years increasing local, national and international attention has been paid to the challenges of appropriately balancing the need for economic development, including the development of ports, and the appropriate protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area.

It is right and proper that governments at all levels take steps to protect the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. It is World Heritage Listed for a very good reason: it is a spectacular natural wonder; it is beautiful and has tremendous environmental significance that has been recognised around the world. I have lived in communities adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area for almost my entire life. I know it, I value it, I respect it and I want to protect it for future generations of Queenslanders and visitors to Queensland who come to enjoy it.

Debate, on motion of Mr Cripps, adjourned.

MOTION

Select Committee on Rural Debt and Drought



Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.00 pm): I move—

1. That this House establishes the Select Committee on Rural Debt and Drought to examine Queensland farm businesses' rural debt issues which have been exacerbated by drought and propose policy responses.
2. The committee is to consider:
 - (a) the nature and extent of financial problems faced by agriculture associated enterprises, local government and supporting communities;
 - (b) identify causes of problems and contribution of established policy;
 - (c) the extent of such problems and effect on regional stability;
 - (d) what strategies might be adopted and initiatives undertaken to rectify such problems;
 - (e) the impacts that such strategies and initiatives might have;
 - (f) policy options available to coordinate effective remediation;
 - (g) the nature and desirability of select actions; and
 - (h) adequacy of existing financial systems to fund policy solutions.
3. The committee is to comprise:
 - i) the member for Mount Isa (Chair)
 - ii) one member appointed by the Leader of the House
 - iii) one member appointed by the Leader of the Opposition.
4. Notwithstanding standing orders, the appointment of members by the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition shall be by writing to the Clerk, who shall table immediately the letters of nomination.
5. Every member of the committee has a vote in every question before the committee and the chair of the committee has a vote and a casting vote.
6. The committee is an authorised committee and has the power to call for persons, papers and things.
7. The committee shall report within 60 days of this order.

We are at one with the government on this issue. Something needs to be done to address areas of deficiency in the system with regard to rural debt and drought, but we do have a bit of a difference in how we believe this needs to be addressed. A couple of weeks or so ago the Treasurer and the member for Mount Isa made a joint announcement regarding the establishment of a Rural Debt and Drought Task Force to be comprised of three members of parliament and others from an external basis who have an interest in this particular issue.


When I spoke with the Treasurer and the member for Mount Isa at the time, I made it abundantly clear that the opposition had some concerns regarding the powers and ability of the committee to address this issue because it was established as a task force under the authority of the Treasurer in Queensland and it was to report to the Treasurer. If we are going to get to the bottom of this issue we do need to have a committee of this parliament established within the broad authority, aims and objectives outlined by the Treasurer when he announced the establishment of the task force. It does need to be able to identify causes of problems and the contribution of established policy. It also needs to look at the issue of regional stability and strategies which might be adopted and initiatives undertaken to rectify such problems. It also needs to look at some of the financial issues and failings and all of those things that were contained in the government's announcement of the task force which was made with the honourable member for Mount Isa.

The reason that the opposition has brought this motion before the parliament is so that we can do all of those things which were enunciated in the statement made by the Treasurer and the member for Mount Isa, because the establishment of a simple task force does not do that because the task force does not have the powers of a select committee. It does not have the power to compel or order witnesses. It does not have the power and the authority of a select committee of this parliament. A select committee of this parliament operates, as committees do, with certain powers and immunities and the ability to cause things to happen that a task force cannot. It is also important to note that you cannot provide false information, evidence or testimony to a select committee of this parliament, which is going to be critically important to get to the bottom of certain facts possibly surrounding the failings of financial institutions.

It is also important to note that there may be people out there in rural Queensland who have been subjected to less than savoury conduct or habits of certain financial institutions, and at the moment they would be constrained in what they could say if they were appearing before a task force, but they would not be constrained in what they might like to say before a select committee because they have privilege. They would be able to provide that evidence in a privileged environment before a select committee of this parliament, so we believe that this is the most effective way to reach the shared objective of the government, the opposition and the KAP.

If the government is concerned about the construct of what has been suggested, and that is the member for Mount Isa as the chair with the deliberative and casting vote and a member of the government and a member of the opposition, then the opposition remains absolutely open to whatever construct the government may wish. If it is three government members, two opposition and one KAP with no—

(Time expired)

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing) (6.04 pm): I move the following amendment—

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

welcomes the establishment of a government taskforce on rural debt and drought to examine Queensland farm businesses' rural debt issues which have been exacerbated by drought and propose policy responses.

2. The government taskforce, announced publicly on 19 October 2015, is to consider:
 - (a) the nature and extent of financial problems faced by agriculture associated enterprises, local government and supporting communities in Queensland;
 - (b) identify cause of problems and contribution of established policy to their magnitude;
 - (c) the extent of such problems and effect on regional stability;
 - (d) what strategies might be adopted and initiatives undertaken to rectify such problems;
 - (e) the impacts that such strategies and initiatives might have;
 - (f) policy options available to a State Government to coordinate effective remediation;
 - (g) the nature and desirability of some select actions; and
 - (h) adequacy of existing financial system to fund policy solutions.
3. The taskforce is to comprise:
 - i) the member for Mount Isa (Chair)
 - ii) one member appointed by the government, suitable to the chair
 - iii) one member appointed by the opposition, suitable to the chair
 - iv) stakeholders representatives including AgForce, the Queensland Farmers' Federation, LGAQ and other nominees as agreed by the chair.
4. The taskforce will hold public hearings and can call for public submissions.
5. The taskforce will conduct its investigations over a 60-day period, with a report compiled thereafter.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for moving this motion this evening. It means that we can use this debate to raise the important issues of debt and drought across Queensland and their effects on farming communities. It gives me the opportunity to inform the House of the work that is already underway by this government, as the opposition appears to be playing catch-up here this evening. The government has been working in a bipartisan manner to address these serious issues, and despite the opposition being a bit slow to the party we welcome this somewhat belated interest nonetheless.

The pressures of rural debt in regional communities have been exacerbated by the drought, as we all know, which is gradually spreading across this state and is now entering into another difficult season. The Palaszczuk government came into office with a firm commitment to continue the existing

drought funding arrangements through to 2018 and to increase them where necessary. The Palaszczuk government has done just that. In office we have delivered a drought budget for 2015-16 of over \$46 million. We have increased the cap on the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme for those who are in prolonged drought, and we have worked with other agencies to deliver land rent and water fee relief, wild dog and weed control and social and community support.

This motion is simply the opposition trying to 'try it on'—trying to get some skin in this game somewhat belatedly. The motion wheeled out tonight is a word-for-word carbon copy of the letter sent to the Leader of the Opposition by the Treasurer over the weekend. I seek leave to table a copy of that letter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 6 November 2015, from the Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Hon. Curtis Pitt, to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lawrence Springborg MP, regarding the establishment of a Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce [1606].


If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then we are indeed very flattered. What the opposition has done today is to replace the words 'cross-party Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce' in the Treasurer's letter with 'Select Committee on Rural Debt and Drought'. The terms of reference are identical; they are exactly the same. This is the No. 1 priority for the opposition—and this is what I find amazing—turning task forces into committees. Clearly there is some nuance that I have missed, despite the Leader of the Opposition's comments. Turning a committee into a task force is like turning water into water. The opposition tactics team must have thought they were on to a bit of a winner here this evening, but what I think has happened is they have simply missed the mark again. They have missed it completely.

The government has had this task force announced and in the public domain since 19 October this year. We have been engaged in conversations with the opposition since then on the basis of them joining the task force in a sensible fashion along with the member for Mount Isa and a member of the government and representatives of industry. That is a pretty straight-up and reasonable approach.

There is one big difference between this motion and the approach proposed in the letter to the Leader of the Opposition. That is, this motion cuts out industry. I find that simply extraordinary in and of itself. The motion excludes industry participation, except I suppose in front of their proposal.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition when he states that something needs to be done, and the government's actions indicate our support for that sentiment. All we are asking and all we have asked from day one on this issue is for the opposition to recognise that a frank and honest ventilation of this issue is for the good of all Queenslanders.

I find it interesting that in that environment the opposition would be thinking that people would present information to a task force requiring the powers of immunity—that people, banking institutions or somebody would come forward to this task force and give false evidence. Of all of the thin threads one will hear this evening about this proposal and the motion moved by the opposition, that is certainly the most parlously lacking intellect—the idea that a task force will be in some way compromised by people fronting it who require powers of immunity relating to false evidence. My advice to the opposition is: get on board with the task force.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (6.10 pm): It is incredible to me that the minister has just so simply missed the point. As the Leader of the Opposition has so adequately said, the purpose of the motion is to create a parliamentary select committee. I appreciate that the minister has not been in this place for very long—he has actually been here the same length of time as I have—but surely he would know that the committee he has proposed to set up is a completely toothless tiger. We as an opposition are giving the government an option to have a committee with a task force—a parliamentary select committee—that has some teeth. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, it can do things. It can ask industry groups to report to it. In the 22 days since the minister stood up and announced this committee, what has happened?

Mr Springborg: Nothing.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Absolutely nothing, in 22 days. The minister says that this is a bipartisan committee. Where is the bipartisanship? The government will not even let us choose our own member! How is that bipartisan? The government is set on dictating terms to the opposition. We propose a parliamentary select committee to which industry groups can come along and give evidence.

Mr Springborg: In public.


Mrs FRECKLINGTON: They can give evidence in public and the committee will have some teeth. Just today I spoke to several of our agricultural industry groups in relation to this. They are very supportive of a parliamentary select committee. They tell me that the reason they are very supportive of it is that it will have some teeth. They can come in and report to a parliamentary committee that actually will carry some weight. They have been waiting 22 days for a meeting. They have not even had a meeting. The industry groups that the minister refers to are still waiting on the terms of reference—22 days into the 60 days set down by the minister when he first announced this.

One of the issues the parliamentary select committee would be able to raise is encouraging our financial institutions to provide the information to QRAA so that QRAA would be in a position to conduct a drought survey and release that drought survey information. That information has not been prepared since 2011. It was at that point that industry groups were saying, 'Should we be able to have that information?' That should be put on the table in front of a committee. Then it would have some teeth—to force the government to actually listen to a policy that it may be able to implement.

This is all about developing positive policies for the situation our rural producers find themselves in in relation to rural debt and drought. This is not about saying, 'We just need to throw more money at the situation.' This is about finding some policies and utilising the powers of a select committee, with the imprimatur of the parliament, to get some outcomes.

Our primary producers are sick of waiting for this. They have heard the announcement. Twenty-two days later, we are still standing here and there is no bipartisanship. This minister will not even allow the Leader of the Opposition to choose the committee member from this side of the House. That is exactly why we are looking to have a parliamentary select committee—so that it has some teeth and can actually produce some outcomes.

I note for the minister that we have had parliamentary select committees—one into petrol pricing in 2005 and another into the presence of TVs in the chamber in 2007. If it was important enough to have a parliamentary select committee to talk about the price of petrol or about whether we should have TVs in this chamber, surely the financial crisis faced by our rural producers is important enough to warrant a parliamentary select committee.

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (6.15 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendment moved to the motion. The opposition is playing a terrible game of catch-up this evening. The Leader of the Opposition well knows that the government has already announced the Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce. In fact, the government has already invited the opposition to join the task force.

The consequences of the opposition leader's motion are twofold. Firstly, the changed membership to include only politicians cuts out industry and farmer voices and prevents stakeholders from having an equal seat at the table. It cuts out groups like AgForce, the Queensland Farmers' Federation and the Local Government Association of Queensland—groups that one would think the opposition would like to have at the table.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! There is too much audible conversation. I am struggling to hear the member for Ipswich West.

Mr MADDEN: Secondly, it just slows down and delays the commencement of the work that this task force needs to get on with. The task force was announced on 19 October. The opposition has been invited to join since that date.

Critical preplanning work, including public hearing schedules, secretariat preparation and industry membership, has already occurred. If we went down the path being suggested by the Leader of the Opposition this evening, that would all have to start again under the auspices of the parliamentary committee process. There are a great many things that this parliament does and does very well. However, I do not think even the staunchest defender of parliament would suggest that it would be able to set up a new select committee, resource it, plan it, work out the schedule of meetings and carry out the associated work required, all within the time frame suggested by the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

This is the worst form of bureaucratic madness—turning a government task force into a parliamentary committee. It will delay the work of the task force, do nothing for farmers and wrap more red tape around a job ready to be done. This is the big debt and drought solution of the Leader of the Opposition: less task force and more committees!


As the letter the minister has already tabled shows, we think the member for Gregory, with his experience and credentials in the policy space, would make a fine contribution to this important task force. The member for Gregory is a rural MP with a large number of drought and debt impacted farmers in his electorate and is the ideal candidate for the opposition to support this task force.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ipswich West has the call. Member for Ipswich West, it might be better if you direct your comments through the chair.

Mr MADDEN: However, I understand that the opposition is instead favouring appointing the member for Clayfield to the Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce—or as he could be called, the ‘cocky from Clayfield’. He is not a genuine representative of the bush like the member for Gregory is. He is not a genuine representative of the bush like the member for Gregory. We can only hope that common sense prevails with the selection. The Palaszczuk government recognises the impact of drought in regional Queensland. I have spoken on this issue in this House a number of times. That is why we are delivering over \$46 million in drought relief funding this financial year alone.

As a government, we have been standing up for farmers and their families right across the state. In the 2015-16 budget, we included \$32 million for the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme. We included additional rural finance counsellors, a program for feral pests, initiatives against feral cats and wild dogs, land rent and water relief, social and community support and additional funding for schools of distance education. As well, the budget provided for major infrastructure projects like the Second Range Crossing. This side of the House is getting on with the job. Those opposite are stuck in the past. I support the amendment to the motion.

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (6.20 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I will be opposing the amendment moved by the Minister for Agriculture, but in doing so and in an attempt to assist the House, I move the following amendment to the government’s amendment—

That the amendment moved by the minister be amended by omitting the words ‘suitable to the chair’, occurring in paragraphs 3(ii) and 3(iii).

I table that amendment for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Amendment moved by the Member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Andrew Cripps MP, to the amendment moved by the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing, Hon. Bill Byrne MP to the Private Members’ Motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lawrence Springborg MP [\[1607\]](#).

What is the government scared of in coming into this House tonight and opposing this motion to establish a select committee of this parliament to investigate issues in relation to rural debt and drought in Queensland? We have a letter from the Palaszczuk government proposing to establish a government task force on rural debt and drought, but nothing has happened since the opposition received that letter proposing to establish a task force. As usual, it is the opposition that needs to drag the government kicking and screaming to do something.


When this government was sworn in in March this year, it made a series of undertakings to the member for Nicklin and, we understand, a series of undertakings to the members of the crossbench in relation to how it would proceed with the government of Queensland. Since then, it has failed comprehensively in its undertaking to the crossbench to establish this rural debt and finance task force. I find it absolutely remarkable that we would be here tonight debating the wisdom of a motion to establish a select committee of this parliament, as the Leader of the Opposition said, with all the powers that this parliament has to undertake a serious investigation into the issue of rural debt and drought in the state of Queensland—absolutely amazing.

It has been the LNP that has brought the issue of drought to this parliament during this session of the House. We have discussed issues and put issues of resource security before the parliament. We have brought the plight of rural women struggling with the drought to this parliament. It has been the LNP that has taken the bull by the horns and made the drought in Queensland, as it deepens and widens, an issue of responsibility in this parliament.

We heard the contribution from the Minister for Agriculture that the task force will be just as effective, if not more effective, than a parliamentary select committee established for this purpose. Why do we not all pack up and go home? We do not need parliament anymore! Task forces, reviews and inquiries established by the Palaszczuk government are more effective than select committees of the parliament with all of their powers and privileges to seek out the truth in relation to major issues of public policy in this state. Why do we not all clear off? That is the modus operandi of this parliament. Since the Palaszczuk government came to power, we have had more than 70 inquiries, task forces and reviews established. The Minister for Agriculture thinks that we should all pack up and go home, because task forces are more effective than select committees of the parliament. It is an extraordinary claim for which he should be embarrassed.

But he could not beat the member for Ipswich West, and that is amazing. The member for Ipswich West ignored completely the fact that, 22 days after the task force was announced, it has not been established. So the task force does not need to start again; it needs to start in the first instance. In the 22 days since the government announced the establishment of this particular task force, it has not gone ahead. The member for Ipswich West criticised the proposal by the opposition to appoint a former treasurer of this state to that particular task force, or indeed to the parliamentary committee, as stated in this motion. Who is the government going to appoint? Who over that side has the credentials to talk about issues of drought and rural finances in the state of Queensland? Who on the member for Ipswich West's side of the House is going to take up the cudgels and be appointed to this task force?

(Time expired)

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.25 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amended motion put forward by the government on this issue. I believe that rural debt, not so much drought, is the big issue facing agriculture out there at the moment. I think the debate gets a little bit hijacked by things that have exacerbated what I would describe as a rural crisis that we have on our hands affecting agriculture. In the four years that I have been here, I can say that it is certainly nothing new to this parliament. I think the arguments against timing pale into insignificance when we reflect on the fact that this issue has not sprung out of nowhere; it has been here for a long time. I think what we are after here is expediency—something that moves swiftly.

I appreciate the virtues of the opposition's motion in that there is some teeth in having a parliamentary committee. I have discussed that matter with the opposition leader. There is some merit to that approach. An issue that I have is that, from my experience in going to departmental briefings and having agricultural lobby groups, when you talk about assistance, intervention—anything like that—that is so far from the consciousness or the acceptability to most of these groups that are out there. To be honest, over the past four years as a state member it makes me sick to listen to people who tell me that the assistance is good, the packages are right and trying to ground truth that to the situation that I see on the ground.

We have a huge problem and the usual suspects have failed to address that problem. To me, going through the usual channels is not something that I am inclined to waste my time on. If it means that we are seeing the same people in the same room to address this problem that has been here for a lot longer than the last 20 days, then I think that I am probably wasting my time and probably this parliament would be wasting its time as well.

The solutions that have been put forward by governments of both persuasions are not doing the job. That is why the problem has become exacerbated. Most people in my electorate would get angry with you if you started talking about the drought assistance and how it has helped them. It is inaccessible out there. Most people out there would say that it is inaccessible to those who need it and accessible to those who do not need it and there is a small wedge in between who may get some benefit from it.

Since this task force was announced, people from lobby groups—a lot of names—have spoken openly against the things that I have been trying to push for, such as a rural reconstruction board and multiperil insurance. People who want to be on the task force or on whatever body is set up to address the problem have been speaking against that.

What is the point in having the same people who have ignored the problem, ignored any of these solutions, as part of the process? They demand to be part of this process to fix it. They have not done their job. That is why we are still here talking about it. People are in trouble out there and are not being helped because the problem is being ignored. I want to be part of the process that helps fix this. It is not going to be all for everyone and it will not be a free-for-all for a lot of these people who have hung around these groups lately and pushed their ideology of no government intervention at all. 'We cannot have people interfering in the market.' Well, it is needed right now or there will be a widespread collapse across agriculture and the western grazing industry. If you fail to acknowledge that then you really do not understand what is going on out there and you should educate yourself on it.

I am part of this task force; I am the chair. I do not want to see the usual suspects at these hearings pushing their views that have led us to the situation we are in. That is why I will not be supporting the motion tonight. The ability is there with the people to make this happen. It would be a wonderful thing if we can do this with both sides of the parliament. I think there are some good people who can make this happen and I hope that it does.

Division: Question put—That the amendment to the amendment be agreed to.

AYES, 41:

LNP, 41—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Weir.

NOES, 44:

ALP, 41—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

KAP, 2—Katter, Knuth.

INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.

Pairs: Pitt, Watts.

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mr Cripps) negated.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): I inform members that future divisions will be for one minute.

Division: Question put—That the amendment be agreed to.

AYES, 44:

ALP, 41—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

KAP, 2—Katter, Knuth.

INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.

NOES, 41:

LNP, 41—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Weir.

Pairs: Pitt, Watts.

Resolved in the affirmative.


Question put—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Motion, as agreed—


1. That this House welcomes the establishment of a government taskforce on rural debt and drought to examine Queensland farm businesses' rural debt issues which have been exacerbated by drought and propose policy responses.
2. The government taskforce, announced publicly on 19 October 2015, is to consider:
 - (a) the nature and extent of financial problems faced by agriculture associated enterprises, local government and supporting communities in Queensland;
 - (b) identify cause of problems and contribution of established policy to their magnitude;
 - (c) the extent of such problems and effect on regional stability;
 - (d) what strategies might be adopted and initiatives undertaken to rectify such problems;
 - (e) the impacts that such strategies and initiatives might have;
 - (f) policy options available to a State Government to coordinate effective remediation;
 - (g) the nature and desirability of some select actions; and
 - (h) adequacy of existing financial system to fund policy solutions.
3. The taskforce is to comprise:
 - i) the member for Mount Isa (Chair)
 - ii) one member appointed by the government, suitable to the chair
 - iii) one member appointed by the opposition, suitable to the chair
 - iv) stakeholders representatives including AgForce, the Queensland Farmers' Federation, LGAQ and other nominees as agreed by the chair.
4. The taskforce will hold public hearings and can call for public submissions.
5. The taskforce will conduct its investigations over a 60-day period, with a report compiled thereafter.

ADJOURNMENT

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (6.39 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Criminal Motorcycle Gangs

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (6.39 pm): I rise to speak about a matter of great importance for the entire Gold Coast community, which is, of course, the VLAD laws that were introduced by the Newman government in 2013. As members of this House would be aware, when criminal motorcycle gangs rioted in Broadbeach, in the electorate of the member for Surfers Paradise, the community called out to those of us in parliament saying that they wanted us to take a tough stand and do something. People were increasingly frustrated with the fact that on the Gold Coast criminal motorcycle gangs felt that they could run the city. The Newman government said enough is enough and the Gold Coast community has thanked us time and time again for taking that tough stand.

Now what the Gold Coast community is saying, not only to myself but also to my nine Gold Coast colleagues, is that they are scared that the Palaszczuk Labor government wants to roll out the red carpet to criminal motorcycle gangs here in Queensland. We have seen that very clearly from the terms of reference for the inquiry—another inquiry; of course, we have had so many inquiries from this government that I have lost track of how many there are—


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Members, please! We are on the adjournment debate. There is far too much noise in the chamber. If members are having conversations, please take them outside. If you are leaving the chamber, could you do it quickly. The member for Broadwater has the call.

Miss BARTON: As I was saying, the Palaszczuk government has made it very clear in its terms of reference into this inquiry—one of many that it has launched—that with the VLAD laws and other laws that are tackling the scourge that is organised crime, not just on the Gold Coast but right across Queensland, its intention is to repeal those laws. We have seen a message coming from the Palaszczuk Labor government that they do not care about the fact that criminal motorcycle gangs intimidate small business. They do not care about the fact that criminal motorcycle gangs intimidate families. They do not care about the fact that criminal motorcycle gangs peddle drugs. They do not care about the fact that criminal motorcycle gangs peddle weapons in communities right across Queensland.

Time and time again the Gold Coast community has come out in force and told us that they want us to keep those laws in place. More than 800 people have signed the petition of the member for Surfers Paradise. The member for Mermaid Beach has a petition on foot that I understand currently has more than 1,000 signatures on it. The member for Burleigh, alongside all members from the Gold Coast, helped launch a postcard campaign that has had amazing success. Gold Coasters have come up to me and many of my colleagues to tell us that they are concerned about the Labor government rolling out the red carpet for criminal motorcycle gangs in this state.

They are soft on crime. They do not care about the Gold Coast. They do not care about criminal motorcycle gangs coming back. They only care about listening to what the unions want to do. Time and time again we have seen that this government does not want to do anything about criminal motorcycle gangs. They do not want to do anything to stop the peddling of drugs and weapons and being a scourge in our community. They are rolling out a red carpet here in Queensland. Shame on them.

Advanced Breast Cancer Group

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (6.43 pm): Shame on the member for Broadwater for that absolutely atrocious diatribe. For the House, I will outline what else those opposite should be ashamed about. They should be ashamed about how they have treated women with advanced breast cancer in Queensland. Today I rise to my feet to talk about the Advanced Breast Cancer Group, located in my electorate.


The Advanced Breast Cancer Group offers counselling and peer support for women with an advanced breast cancer diagnosis. For more than 10 years this group has been going on the smell of an oily rag—I repeat: the smell of an oily rag. The groups give women from right across Queensland, wherever they live, the opportunity to reach out on a weekly basis, and every four to six months they

come together as a group to discuss how they are getting through their terminal diagnoses, to reach out to each other and to share stories and experiences so that those women, their partners and families can have a decent quality of life for as long as they have left.

What did the Newman government do when it came to power? What did the Leader of the Opposition and former health minister do when the LNP came to power? They cut funding to the Advanced Breast Cancer Group, although not only the Advanced Breast Cancer Group but also other groups such as Epilepsy Queensland and the Alzheimer's Association. They cut funding to any community based health organisation. I commend the Minister for Health, who is sitting here tonight, for rapidly moving to secure funding for those important organisations in our electorates.

In 2013 I first attended an Advanced Breast Cancer Group day-long session with a number of women, their daughters, their sons and their partners. They were all incredibly distressed by the fact that they might lose the support network and services provided by the Advanced Breast Cancer Group. On Saturday, I went back and some of the women I first met were no longer there. However, the women who were there, some of whom I had met when I first visited, were all incredibly happy and relieved that a level of anxiety and stress—which was completely unnecessary—had been removed from their lives because the Palaszczuk Labor government and this health minister moved quickly to restore funding and certainty for the important services and support that they get from the Advanced Breast Cancer Group. As the health minister said in October when he announced the restoration of funding, those groups may be small but the impact they have is great. The Advanced Breast Cancer Group has a big impact in Queensland.

Buderim, Urban Food Street


 **Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (6.46 pm): I turn the attention of the House to the Sunshine Coast and, in particular, my electorate of Buderim. On the Sunshine Coast, a quiet revolution has started that recently made national news and was featured in the *Courier-Mail* on the weekend. In a quiet corner on the Sunshine Coast, expanding into 11 streets, a revolution has been taking place where food has left the backyard and has become part of the Buderim streetscape. Over the past seven years, a wonderful example of social cohesion and community spirit has been literally growing in the streets of Buderim. The urban food street has edible plants growing on suburban verges, seemingly poised to take over the world one nature strip at a time.

Last week, my colleagues Tim Mander and John McVeigh joined local Duncan McNaught and me for a tour of Buderim's urban food street. Duncan McNaught, together with 200 householders within the urban garden footprint, is onto something extremely special. It is wonderful to walk those streets and see the kerbside banana trees producing up to 2 tons of bananas for the neighbourhood to share. This is all done with goodwill, trust and neighbourly spirit so often sadly lacking in today's society. I understand that this would not work everywhere, but it would be something if it could happen in 10 per cent of our local communities throughout Queensland. Imagine the difference that it would make in bringing local communities together for a mutual and beneficial outcome. Imagine having home-grown vegetables and fruit available to share with neighbours and friends and being able to take an active interest in a local environment that offers those opportunities to the local community.

The community has taken over public land in Buderim and I think it is great. I think it is wonderful that we have such passionate and committed individuals who have spurred on this movement, which is being warmly embraced by the local community. Over the past two weeks, we have had 120,000 hits on the local Facebook page. Many people are grabbing hold of this idea. Costa has come on board. For members who do not know him, Costa is one of the biggest gardening advocates in this country.

I see this as a great opportunity. I hope that all local authorities in Queensland take it up. There will be issues as far as public liability is concerned, but we have to look to the future. We have people in our local communities who want to get involved, such as old people who are home alone or young people who never get to mix with others. This is about bringing neighbourhoods together; this is about bringing communities together. I think it is the start of a revolution in this state. It is the start of a revolution that we all should back. This is about healthy eating, healthy lifestyles and bringing communities together so that they can achieve great things. I urge all members to look at the website; there is something very special going on.

City of Logan Producer's Lunch; Premier's Sustainability Awards

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (6.49 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker, we both know how fantastic the electorate of Logan is. It is celebrated for so many things that make it the greatest electorate in Queensland. Few recognise that it is amongst the greatest in producing a diverse range of fantastic

food. However, if one were lucky enough to be the Premier's representative, as I was, at the City of Logan Producer's Lunch showcasing the taste of Logan one could not help being amazed at the great quality, fresh, local Logan produce showcased at the event.

Speaking of Costa, member for Buderim, and one ABC television program that celebrates food, the Logan City Council which organised this event invited Poh Ling Yeow of ABC television's *Poh's Kitchen* to sample the food and later use local ingredients to cook a meal at the Croyden Road Markets. We heard from Simon Tang of Kennon Mushrooms in Park Ridge. He spoke of his business producing specialty mushrooms including oyster, enoki, shiitake, shimeji and Swiss brown. The public can also contact Simon to buy shiitake and oyster mushroom growing kits which is a great way to show kids how mushrooms grow or just enjoy the freshest possible mushrooms.

We also heard from very passionate farmer and businessperson Lisa Crooks of Riverview Herbs. Along with her husband, Ray, on their second-generation farm in Logan, they farm parsley, radishes and other herbs to a very high standard. I know that Lisa passionately supports local farmers producing great produce and local jobs.

Also present were Teys Bros., who provided the fantastic steak. They have recently expanded their exports to Indonesia and other places, directly competing with live exports and providing local jobs in Logan. Teys were also, incidentally, the winner of the Premier's Sustainability Award. Logan Village resident Robert McVicker won the Built Environment Award for his owner built home the Vicker Ridge House. I was proud to be present at the Premier's Sustainability Awards and celebrate with the McVicker family Robert's fantastic achievement.


We also heard from John Mulraney, the distillery manager at Beenleigh Rum, where Queensland's finest rum is produced at Queensland's oldest distillery. John invited everyone at the lunch to visit the new tourist centre. That very afternoon I took him up on the offer and received a tour of the distillery. I have not yet sampled the products, but this Christmas seems like the perfect time to tour the visitor centre and take a bottle home to celebrate.

Ms Donaldson interjected.

Mr POWER: They do not have a banana flavour one yet but they do have a honey one. That might be something to take up to Bundaberg.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I invite you and all members to come to Logan to try our great food. Come to the Logan food markets on Sundays and try our great food and pick up a mushroom pack, great strawberries, steak, Beenleigh Rum and so much more. The electorate of Logan truly has so much to offer, especially the great tastes of Logan.

Bowen, Food-Processing Plant

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (6.52 pm): I take this opportunity to inform the House of a major economic development and job creation project in Bowen. I have proposed the construction of a food-processing facility or cannery at Bowen to capitalise on the enormous volume of fruit and vegetables that are produced in this region. This is no ordinary cannery.

What I am proposing is a five-star green facility that will produce products such as tomato paste and powder, vitamin supplements and puree to satisfy the insatiable worldwide demand for these products. Already there is overwhelming interest from local growers and the big Australian supermarket chains which gives added weight to calls for this project to be delivered.

On 21 October I hosted an industry and stakeholder forum in Bowen to discuss the potential development of this facility. This is about looking outside the square. For too long Bowen and Collinsville residents have relied on the resources industry to prop up their economies. This is a project that is financially viable and will provide much needed jobs for the region.

The development of a sustainable agribusiness food-processing plant for the Bowen and Burdekin region is part of a much bigger plan I have for my electorate. I hope it is also high on the agenda of the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland and the Minister for State Development because this is a project that meets all the criteria announced by this government over recent months. It also falls within the ambit of the Australian government's *White paper on developing Northern Australia*.


The Bowen-Gumlu area is the largest winter-growing region in the country, contributing more than \$400 million to the \$9 billion Australian horticulture sector. This region has produced \$412 million worth of fruit and vegetables per year for the past five years. That includes \$183 million worth of tomatoes each year, \$103 million worth of capsicums and \$68 million worth of beans. Other crops which

could be processed at this facility include mangoes, corn, zucchinis and chillies. It beggars belief that Bowen is the largest tomato-producing area in Australia and yet canned tomatoes are being imported from overseas.

There are over 550 canneries in the world, but only three have actually locked in 100 per cent of their local supply. Of all the fruit and vegetables produced in our region, there is a volume of waste products which could ideally be processed for export and also be sold on domestic markets.

Our hardworking growers are actually creating a long-term strategy to expand and secure their industry into the future. This value-adding initiative would make a significant difference to the local economy. If this government is serious about their so-called investment in agriculture and jobs, a food-processing plant in Bowen simply must happen.

Quota International

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (6.54 pm): I rise to speak about the 55th anniversary of Quota International in Ipswich. I recently had the pleasure of attending Quota International of Ipswich's 55th birthday afternoon tea at the Ipswich Turf Club in my electorate. It was tremendous to be given the opportunity to be a part of this celebration and commemoration of the women who came together with a vision and a purpose to serve the Ipswich community 55 years ago.


I am sure that back in 1919, when Wanda Frey Joiner founded Quota in New York as a service club for women, she never envisaged a Quota International in Ipswich, Queensland. I am sure that she never dared to think that her actions would inspire women in 266 clubs, in 14 countries across the world, to work together to make their communities better and to reach out to those less fortunate across the world.

Working with like-minded women around the world must be empowering. In my position as the member for Ipswich, I feel the great joy of seeing so many women in the parliament, and particularly so many Labor women. We are not quite at 50 per cent, but we are getting there. We all need to remember that women are still under-represented in the boardrooms and managerial positions of the world.

That fact was evident to Quota founder Wanda Frey Joiner. But she forged through as a beacon for all women, and almost 100 years later in 2015 it is appropriate that we celebrate her legacy and vision. I congratulate Ipswich's Quotarians for their dedication to Quota's ideals, which can be summed up in the Quota motto 'We share'.

Quota International of Ipswich is an essential part of the fabric that holds our city together. That the club has now been running strong for 55 years is a testament to the commitment of those women who have dedicated themselves to the ideals of advancing righteousness, justice and goodwill in our community. I acknowledge and thank Ipswich's Quotarians for the work they do in our city. I congratulate them on the care and concern that reaches across borders to those who are less fortunate. I wish them well for the next 55 years.

Motor Vehicle Registration

 **Mr EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (6.57 pm): The Treasurer has been caught out again on rego increases. Once again he has been caught out claiming registration is only going up by the inflation rate. If only that were the case. We know that will not be case because he has always used motorists as cash cows. Labor has always used motorists as cash cows.

Let us look at the facts. Queensland's latest inflation rate, confirmed just two weeks ago, is 1.5 per cent. That has been the inflation rate ever since the Palaszczuk government came to power. The inflation rate, the CPI, is 1.5 per cent. What is registration going up under Labor? The Treasurer says rego is only going up by CPI—3.5 per cent. That is almost 2½ times the inflation rate.


What did the Treasurer tell the *Courier-Mail* just two weeks ago? That car drivers are only being sluggish merely CPI increases. He made the claim as he was announcing new tolls on the Gateway and Logan motorways. It is a return to the bad old days of Labor. When they were in office last time rego went up by 30 per cent in just four years. It made Queensland, according to the RACQ, the most expensive state in which to own and run a motor vehicle.

Given those massive hikes in rego under Labor, the LNP froze family car rego during its term in office. We needed to give motorists some relief after the devastating hikes under Labor. We promised ahead of the 2012 election to freeze car rego for our first term in office and we kept that promise. One of Labor's first moves when it came to power again was to increase rego by 3½ per cent. We tried to stop it by moving a disallowance motion.

The LNP moved to stop Labor's 3.5 per cent slug on Queensland motorists. But the disallowance motion was defeated when every Labor MP, the member for Cook, Billy Gordon, and the member for Nicklin voted to keep the 3.5 per cent increase. Labor has always used motorists as cash cows. Nothing has changed.

The LNP has pledged that in its first term in office family car rego will increase no more than inflation. We understand the cost pressures on Queenslanders including the impact of massive rego hikes in urban areas like my seat of Indooroopilly but especially on regional Queenslanders who may not have easy access to public transport. In stark contrast with the Palaszczuk government's rego hike of 3.5 per cent—2½ times the inflation rate—Labor's bad old days are back in Queensland.

Murrumba Infrastructure Forum

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (7.00 pm): I rise to report back to the House about the successful Murrumba Infrastructure Forum.

A government member: Good news.

Mr WHITING: It is very good news, positive news. The first Murrumba Infrastructure Forum was held on Tuesday, 20 October at The Corso at North Lakes. It was a case of perfect timing, coming at the time when Labor launched our infrastructure plan, the first coordinated plan on infrastructure delivery since 2011. It came at a time when we brought in Building Queensland, which will lay out the infrastructure pipeline to support jobs now and jobs into the future. This was an important election commitment of mine and I was proud to make it.

Infrastructure is a matter of intense interest to the residents in Murrumba. The rapid growth of areas such as North Lakes, Griffin and Mango Hill has made the electorate of Murrumba the largest electorate by population in Queensland. More and more people have moved into these areas and the pressure on local infrastructure is being felt by residents. I have been informed that 83 per cent of employed residents head up and down the Bruce Highway each working day, and the travel time between Anzac Avenue and the Pine River has increased by 47 per cent in the past year.

The new Moreton Bay Rail Link will provide great relief for local residents and give some respite for local infrastructure.


A government member interjected.

Mr WHITING: It is another great Labor initiative. But the need for different kinds of transport infrastructure will continue. The aim of the forum was to inform local residents of the future plans for local infrastructure and the progress of projects already underway.

Residents also appreciated the chance to suggest what further infrastructure would be needed. There were representatives there from the Moreton Bay Rail Link who gave a presentation, as did Main Roads as well. Here are some of the suggestions: more bicycle and shared path infrastructure; and more road infrastructure including the Rothwell roundabout, Deception Bay Road, implementing the South Moreton arterial roads strategy, improvements on Anzac Avenue and the Managed Motorways program. There were some very good suggestions on public transport infrastructure; education infrastructure, including the need for more facilities at North Lakes; and digital telecommunications infrastructure. I can tell the House that the residents were very appreciative of the opportunity offered at this forum to hear what was planned and also to make their own suggestions.

I have presented the report to the Deputy Premier and I will be lobbying to implement its recommendations. I think it stands in stark contrast to the negative and regressive policies that we have seen from the LNP in recent times and heard about today. The residents of the Murrumba electorate do need that infrastructure and we will be lobbying for it. But we know that it is only Labor, who have infrastructure in their DNA, who will be able to deliver this infrastructure for what is now the largest electorate by population in Queensland.

Noosa TAFE College

 **Mr ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (7.02 pm): I rise to speak about what was the Noosa TAFE college and wish to express my sincere ongoing concern regarding the current ownership, management and maintenance of this facility. The Noosa TAFE was constructed in 2004 with widespread community support. The government of the day, supported by the then Noosa council and a group of supporters, decided to build the TAFE college on a very environmentally sensitive piece of land. Council and the community also decided that in the main it would be an arts based facility.


In 2014 students at the Noosa campus were undertaking programs in access and equity, entertainment, music, visual arts, spoken and written English, aged care, recreation, fashion and tourism. Unfortunately, even something as basic to Noosa as a hospitality course was never taught in its entirety, with students having to travel for about half of the course to the Mooloolaba TAFE. Following the QTAMA review, TAFE itself decided that the college was no longer viable. Student numbers had fallen from 714 students in 2006-07 to 265 students in 2013-14. Of those students, 40 were from local high schools and did not attend classes on campus.

There is an opportunity now for the government to sell the empty, deserted buildings to the Noosa council. The offer is on the table and it is well known to the Attorney-General and her staff. They also know that this is the only reasonable offer the government will receive. The buildings have now stood empty for approximately 15 months. As a result of no use at all, the state has a decaying asset. There have also been a couple of random vandalism attacks.

I know that the government is conducting a review into TAFE but the report will not be implemented until July 2016. The Noosa buildings are no longer a TAFE college. There is no-one home. The lights are definitely off. I say very sincerely to the Attorney-General that it is time to turn this site into a valuable community asset.

I do not know why there is a reluctance to sell. I certainly hope it is not because of the so-called asset sales debate dragging on from the last election. My community wants this facility back in local hands. The government must realise that the old campus is only worth what is offered, and the current offer is more than realistic. It is time to sell and allow the Noosa community to turn this facility into something it never did successfully as a TAFE college, and that is create jobs.

Sutherland, Mr G

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (7.05 pm): I rise to pay tribute to Greg Sutherland, a valued and respected member of the Mackay community sadly taken from us on Sunday, 1 November. Greg was honest, focused, compassionate, respected and very persuasive. He has been remembered by many as 'Mr Rugby League', but this was only a snippet of our community leader's talents. Greg was a husband, father, Rotarian, volunteer, businessman, educator, visionary and a friend to many. He was awarded the Mackay Regional Council Citizen of the Year in 2012. He was also awarded Rotary's top honour, the Paul Harris Fellow, for his charitable works.

As a member of our strong South Sea islander community, he worked tirelessly for the betterment of the South Sea islander people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and also non-Indigenous people. He believed that all people were deserving and he would never tolerate racism of any kind.

At Skills Training Mackay, Greg supported many students through training courses and into the workforce. Many young Indigenous youth got a start in life with work ready skills that they would never have gained without Greg and his team. When funding was cut by the former state government for training programs, Greg was determined to look after his staff. When things got tough, he did not put his staff off. Instead, he sold office furniture and cars and used personal money to ensure that his team was looked after.

In 2010 Greg was hospitalised for weeks in intensive care in Townsville. A lot of people would have taken the opportunity after recovery to put their feet up and slow down a bit, but not Greg. He took another stint at being the Mackay Rotary Club's president. He organised shipping containers of disused school desks, clothing and toiletries for the disadvantaged in Vanuatu. He put his shoulder to the wheel and raised money for the victims of Cyclone Pam. He supported local scouting groups. He continued to fundraise and do many charitable works.

He got the title 'Mr Rugby League' when he was chair of Mackay Rugby League for 13 years. He also wrote a Rugby League column. Greg had a vision for Mackay—to have a football stadium. Greg persisted until we got it.

The world is a much better place because of Greg Sutherland. He did many kind acts for Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of our community. Many of them we do not know about because he did not look for recognition and he did them because it was the right thing to do. Thank you, Blanche, Kirsty and Tyson, for sharing Greg with us.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.08 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Bailey, Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Crawford, Cripps, D'Ath, Davis, de Brenni, Dick, Dickson, Donaldson, Elmes, Emerson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gilbert, Gordon, Grace, Harper, Hart, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Katter, Kelly, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Miles, Millar, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Perrett, Powell, Power, Pyne, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Trad, Walker, Watts, Weir, Wellington, Whiting, Williams