



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT

### Wednesday, 24 February 2016

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## WEDNESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2016

The Legislative Assembly met at 2.00 pm.



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

### SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

#### Teal Ribbon Day



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise that today is Teal Ribbon Day to raise awareness for ovarian cancer. Ovarian cancer has the lowest survival rate of any women's cancer and there is no early detection test. Ovarian Cancer Australia has invited members to wear a teal ribbon on their lapel today to raise awareness of ovarian cancer.

### PRIVILEGE

#### Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Member



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 1 December 2015, the member for Burleigh wrote to me alleging that the member for Logan deliberately misled parliament in his speech when he referenced an earlier speech of the member for Burleigh. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. I am satisfied with the member for Logan's explanation. Therefore, I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter. I seek leave to have the ruling incorporated.

Leave granted.

#### SPEAKER'S RULING—ALLEGED DELIBERATELY MISLEADING THE HOUSE

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on 1 December 2015, the Member for Burleigh wrote to me alleging that the member for Logan deliberately misled Parliament in his speech when he said:

I further note today that the member for Burleigh in the debate about our ports, as a dutiful MP, put great weight into reading into the parliamentary record the statements of the Maritime Union of Australia, arguing that this House should listen more to the MUA. He praised the opinions of the MUA. Indeed, this morning the member said, 'We need a member from Burleigh to stand up for the people,' such as the MUA.'

In his letter to me, the Member for Burleigh stated that at no time did he 'praise' the MUA nor did he make mention of standing up for the MUA.

I sought further information from the member for Logan about the allegations made against him, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

While it is true that the member for Burleigh did not use the word praise, the member for Logan contends his statement was his interpretation of the member for Burleigh's speech.

The member for Logan's statement could be considered political puffery and exaggeration, made in the cut and thrust of Parliamentary debate.

The member for Logan also contended that he wasn't quoting the member for Burleigh when he mentioned the member for Burleigh supporting the MUA, and contended that when referring to standing up for the people, that would include MUA members.

Standing Order 269(4) requires:

In considering whether the matter should be referred to the committee, the Speaker shall take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter. No matter should be referred to the ethics committee if the matter is technical or trivial and does not warrant the further attention of the House.


I am satisfied with the member for Logan's explanation, and, therefore, I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter.

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 1 December 2015, from the member for Burleigh, Mr Michael Hart MP, to the Speaker, Hon. Peter Wellington, regarding a matter of privilege relating to an alleged deliberate misrepresentation of the words and intention of the member for Burleigh by the member for Logan, Mr Linus Power MP [223].

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 7 January 2016, from the member for Logan, Mr Linus Power MP, to the Speaker, Hon. Peter Wellington, in response to an alleged misrepresentation of the words and intentions of the member for Burleigh, Mr Michael Hart MP [224].

## Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Member

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 10 December 2015 the member for Mansfield wrote to me alleging that the member for Ipswich West deliberately misled parliament in his personal explanation on 3 December 2015 when he said—

I emphasise that at no point did I disclose the contents of the draft committee report referred to in the newspaper article.

In his letter to me, the member for Mansfield contended that this statement to the House appeared to be directly contradicted in a report appearing the following day in the *Queensland Times* which stated—

... the *Queensland Times* was leaked content of the Committee Report and published the exclusive story this week.

On 1 February 2016 the Leader of the Opposition also forwarded me correspondence on the matter, encouraging me to request access to proceedings before the Ethics Committee that would reveal the member's state of knowledge about the rules applying to confidential proceedings. Standing order 269(4) requires—

In considering whether the matter should be referred to the committee, the Speaker shall take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter. No matter should be referred to the ethics committee if the matter is technical or trivial and does not warrant the further attention of the House.

The Ethics Committee wrote to me on 8 December 2015 advising that the committee believed the matter had been dealt with via the member for Ipswich West's personal explanation, apology and request for discharge from the Ethics Committee, and therefore it had resolved to take no further action in relation to the matter. I note that both the article referred to in the member for Mansfield's letter had been published and the proceedings before the Ethics Committee referred to by the Leader of the Opposition had occurred prior to the Ethics Committee's correspondence with me. The Ethics Committee has resolved to take no further action, and I am not going to second-guess the outcome of the Ethics Committee's determination. I have therefore decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter.

Given some of the matters in the Leader of the Opposition's correspondence reveal confidential proceedings of the Ethics Committee, I will table only the correspondence from the member for Mansfield.

*Tabled paper:* Email, dated 10 December 2015, from the member for Mansfield, Mr Ian Walker MP, to the Speaker, Hon. Peter Wellington, regarding a potential breach of standing order 266(12) by the member for Ipswich West, Mr Jim Madden MP [225].

## TABLED PAPER

### MEMBER'S PAPER


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

Member for Nanango (Mrs Frecklington)—

[226](#) Non-conforming petition regarding tick line movement in Wattlecamp/Cherbourg area

## MINISTERIAL PAPER


### Ministerial Expenses

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.05 pm): As required by the Financial Accountability Act 2009, I table the public report of ministerial expenses for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 December 2015. The report also includes some outstanding expenses that have continued to be processed for the former government.

*Tabled paper:* Public report of ministerial expenses for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 December 2015 [227].

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Education


 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.06 pm): Education is a priority for this government. That is why we have 290 new teachers above natural growth starting this year. That is why at the start of this week we announced three new schools as part of seven new schools for Queensland. That is why we have a \$300 million school maintenance program, we are putting more guidance officers in schools, and we have made prep compulsory from next year.

This morning I had the pleasure of joining the education minister to officially open the new \$2 million Autism Hub and Reading Centre at Woolloongabba. This is not just a Queensland first; it is an Australian first. We are leading the way. The new education centre in Woolloongabba will help students with autism and reading difficulties reach their full potential. The autism hub aims to improve educational outcomes for students with autism by providing links with parents, schools and the community, and helping them access services. It will also work with universities and community organisations to hold workshops for parents, involving professionals with expertise in a range of specialist areas including managing complex and challenging behaviours.

Autism hub staff will work with autism coaches and other staff in each education region to coordinate specialist support and advice. This support includes providing online and face-to-face professional programs for teachers and parents. The centre will inspire, encourage and teach young Queenslanders to read, including developing strategies for students who have reading difficulties such as dyslexia. Today Minister Jones and I had the opportunity to meet staff, students and parents at the new centre. It was a magical moment to be able to see firsthand the benefits that this centre will have not just for these kids and their parents but also for thousands of families in the years to come.

The new Autism Hub and Reading Centre is part of my government's Advancing Education action plan for education in Queensland. This government is committed to address potential barriers to learning to ensure students develop as positive and confident learners in a safe, supportive and connected environment. The centre helps parents, teachers, staff and, above all, our kids. I congratulate the education minister on driving this very important reform to Australian education and the hub's director, Chris Lassig.

### World Science Festival

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.08 pm): In only a few days, from 9 to 13 March Brisbane will be in the international spotlight with the opening of the inaugural World Science Festival here in Brisbane. This will be one of the planet's most exciting, prestigious and innovative celebrations of science. In an exclusive three-year agreement between Queensland Museum and the World Science Festival in New York, Brisbane is only the second city in the world and the only city in the Asia-Pacific region to offer this outstanding event.

The festival will excite, inform and inspire people about the wonders of science, bringing some of the world's leading scientific and cultural thought leaders to our door. The 2016 program features more than 50 individual events and activities across the entire cultural precinct. There will be more than 100 big names in science from nine countries in attendance. We will welcome Emmy Award winning actor, author, science enthusiast and World Science Festival board member Alan Alda; Nobel Laureate physicist Brian Schmidt; pioneering marine biologist Sylvia Earle; celebrated astronaut Andy Thomas; and renowned physicist, best-selling author and festival co-founder Brian Greene. The World Science Festival gives Queensland a chance to put the focus on our region's latest research and scientific discoveries—work that is having a global impact and positioning our state as an innovation hub.

Queenslanders in Townsville and Chinchilla have already enjoyed World Science Festival activities, when regional components were presented earlier this month. I know that the Minister for Innovation went to Chinchilla for that very important event. Here in Brisbane, Street Science will present the wonders of science on 12 and 13 March in a family friendly free event with a weekend of activity. The Queensland government invests in the World Science Festival Brisbane to showcase our region and reinforce our reputation as a destination for big events. This is also an opportunity to deliver on the Queensland government's Advance Queensland initiative, putting Queensland at the forefront of innovation in an era of unprecedented global technological change. I encourage all members to attend this world-class event.

### Regional Ageing in Place Strategy

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment) (2.10 pm): Queensland, like the rest of Australia, is facing significant demographic changes through a rapidly ageing population. About 14 per cent of Queensland's population was aged 65 years and over in 2014. This is approximately 660,000 Queenslanders. This is projected to rise to almost 20 per cent by 2036.

As the population ages, it will mean that more Queenslanders will require additional help to stay in their own communities where they can age in a familiar environment close to friends and family. For residents in our more remote or regional towns, this may also involve the difficult decision to move to a bigger centre because of a lack of appropriate accommodation in their own community. To help meet

this challenge, Economic Development Queensland is launching a new Ageing in Place initiative to deliver more adaptable housing in regional communities. This initiative will aim to deliver more housing diversity, providing seniors with the peace of mind that they can downsize and move to more appropriate accommodation without severing local community and social ties.

EDQ will initially target four regional locations in the central west and north-west of Queensland, given these regions have a higher than average proportion of their population aged over 65 and also lack a highly competitive property development sector when compared to metropolitan areas. Economic Development Queensland will soon engage with local governments, the development sector and community organisations to identify candidate towns to pilot this initiative. Already, early discussions with Barcaldine, Winton, Longreach and Cloncurry, for example, have confirmed strong interest in this exciting project.

The Regional Ageing in Place Strategy is about caring for people as they enter their senior years by providing suitable housing so they can stay in their towns, close to friends and family. The strategy will involve the construction of one- and two-bedroom lowset duplex and villa homes featuring wider hallways and doorways to accommodate wheelchairs, kitchen benches set at different heights, reinforced bathrooms for the inclusion of handrails and accessibility equipment, and personal safety switches. These switches can summon immediate assistance and allow care and support services to be provided in the home, delaying the need for aged care. As our ageing population is increasing, it is our duty to support regional Queensland centres to have appropriate sized and accessible dwellings so elderly residents are not forced to move from the town where they have spent their lives.

The government believes these pilot projects, once delivered, can demonstrate to the development and construction industry in regional areas that there is a market for these adaptable and accessible housing types and that it will stimulate further similar developments. This government is committed to ensuring that we provide for the future needs of Queenslanders, proactively responding to demographic changes and achieving smart and sustainable economic growth in our towns and cities.

### **Jobs, Indigenous Queenslanders**



**Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport) (2.13 pm): I am pleased to inform the House of successes achieved through the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships in assisting Indigenous people into jobs. In March 2015, I announced the Youth Employment Program, otherwise known as YEP, as part of the government's election commitment to focus on job creation and youth unemployment. The program, delivered through the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, is helping Indigenous students to define their career goals and encouraging more people to complete their year 12 studies.

I am glad to report that in the first seven months of this financial year to the end of January we have placed over 550 people into jobs. The jobs have been secured in 18 industry sectors across Queensland, including almost 280 in construction, more than 80 in health care, 35 in resources, 36 in retail and 36 in accommodation and food. More than 370 of these jobs are in Northern Queensland, over 50 in Central Queensland and over 130 in southern parts of our state. This is not only about young people getting jobs; it is also about contributing to a stronger economy in Queensland.


We all know it is important for students after year 12 to transition to further study, training or work. We also know that young people are disadvantaged in the labour market because they lack experience, skills or knowledge about opportunities. The Palaszczuk Labor government is overcoming this challenge and is helping young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to find jobs and help them maintain their jobs.

The success of the department's approach is explained by its focus on engaging with young people while they are still in secondary school, helping them define their goals, helping them make informed decisions about job opportunities and linking them to opportunities that will build rewarding and sustainable careers. This focus is part of our broader economic plan that has resulted in more than 71,000 new jobs created in Queensland since the election. Our latest trend unemployment rate of 6.1 per cent for January is still far below the 6.6 per cent we inherited from the LNP. Despite these successes, we still see their ongoing campaign to talk down our state in the hope of implementing its one-point economic plan, otherwise known as asset sales.

Lifting the rate of year 12 attainment is also a key target of Closing the Gap initiatives. The annual *Closing the Gap* report which was recently released by the Prime Minister shows where progress is being made and where a more concerted effort is needed. The report highlights that, nationally, two

targets are on track: to halve the gap in mortality rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and to halve the gap for Indigenous Australians in year 12 attainment. The report shows that Queensland Indigenous students have shown the largest improvements, with significant improvement in seven of the eight national minimum standards tests from 2008 to 2015. There is much more work to be done and we will work with the federal government to make further progress towards closing the gap in education, health and employment.

### **Accelerated Works Program**


 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (2.16 pm): My Department of Transport and Main Roads is playing a leading role in delivering the Palaszczuk government's Accelerated Works Program. As we act to accelerate and generate jobs in North Queensland, Transport and Main Roads is bringing forward 11 important infrastructure projects. This accelerated program of works is worth nearly \$78 million and will deliver an estimated 243 jobs for the region. These are projects already planned under the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program, and it is that advanced planning program that has allowed us to accelerate these works. They include earlier road safety works, such as new overtaking lanes on the Bruce Highway, as well as intersection upgrades, road widening, wide centre line treatments and the construction of a heavy vehicle decoupling facility on the Townsville port road.

The Palaszczuk government also approved acceleration of an upgrade of the Port of Townsville's berth 4—a \$55 million project creating 100 jobs that will boost productivity for the Townsville port and the region. In addition, the \$28 million Vines Creek bridges project in the Mackay region has been incorporated into the Accelerated Works Program following the 1 February announcement where the Premier and the member for Mackay joined me in Mackay at the bridges to say that we would be fast-tracking it in 2016-17, a year ahead of schedule. This project will support 42 jobs, and it will ensure that heavy vehicles can travel direct to the port and it will boost economic activity and jobs in the region.

We have not finished there. We are continuing to identify additional funded projects across the rest of the state which can be brought forward. We are proposing a further nine infrastructure projects for acceleration, and that equates to more than \$174 million. Across the south-east there are several key unfunded priorities where we need the federal government to come on board and commit to funding their fair share, just as they do in other parts of Queensland and just across the border in New South Wales. In particular, the Ipswich Motorway from Darra to Rocklea stage 1 and the Pacific Motorway and Gateway Motorway merge are high priorities. Both of these projects will not only improve road safety but also help lift productivity for industry and jobs across South-East Queensland, to add to the 71,000 jobs already created in the first year of the Palaszczuk government.

The importance of these projects was highlighted in the Palaszczuk government's submission to Infrastructure Australia, and Infrastructure Australia's recently published priority list identifies them as priority initiatives. The Ipswich Motorway is a nationally accredited key freight route connecting interstate and key regional gateways to the Brisbane area, the Australia TradeCoast economic precinct and beyond. The Pacific Highway is the highest trafficked road in Queensland, with 147,000 movements a day and 12,000 heavy vehicles and is an enabling link for long-distance traffic, including tourism, commuter and freight traffic moving between major economic hubs along the east coast of Australia. We need these projects to progress as soon as possible and we need the federal government to get serious about meeting their obligations to Queensland motorists.

### **Cleveland Electorate, Tourism**

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (2.20 pm): I take this opportunity to correct inaccurate assertions in this House made by the member for Cleveland in his question to the Minister for Tourism about the Tangalooma wrecks, alleging that they had been cut down to the waterline without community consultation. Following extensive engineering assessment, I was advised by Maritime Safety Queensland that there was a risk to public safety and that they needed to stabilise the Tangalooma wrecks. These stabilising safety works were completed three months ago, in early November 2015. Before undertaking these works the Palaszczuk government consulted with peak bodies and industry including the Queensland Recreational Boating Council and the Commercial Marine Industry Association.

**Opposition members** interjected.


**Mr BAILEY:** Members opposite do not like to hear the truth. The Tangalooma Island Resort and all Moreton Bay Marine Park tourism operators who hold a permit associated with the wrecks area were also directly consulted. Maritime Safety Queensland clearly has not cut the Tangalooma wrecks down to the waterline. It is clear that the member for Cleveland has not visited the site since the work was done. I take this opportunity to table the photos taken after the stabilising safety works were completed. They clearly show that this is not the case.

*Tabled paper:* Four photographs, undated, of Tangalooma shipwrecks [228].

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. This is not an opportunity for debate across the chamber.

## Jobs

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (2.21 pm): Jobs and job creation are the Palaszczuk government's top priority. A total of 71,700 jobs have been created in Queensland since the state election. While we are proud of this record, we recognise that there is more work to be done when it comes to jobs. That is why this year I am holding a series of employment forums throughout the state including one in Mackay this Friday. I will be joined by the very busy member for Mackay, who has long fought for jobs in her electorate. Employer and industry groups, businesses, local government representatives and other stakeholders will also be attending. This forum is all about job creation and better employment outcomes for the local community.


Queensland's average youth unemployment rate is down by nearly one per cent over the last 12 months, but it is still too high at just over 13 per cent. Some of our major regional centres including Mackay, with its youth unemployment rate of just over 16 per cent, face particular challenges—challenges that we are committed to tackling. Unemployment has adverse effects on the future opportunities for young Queenslanders. That is why job creation initiatives for younger Queenslanders are at the centre of the Palaszczuk government's priorities. The complexity of factors affecting labour market outcomes including youth rates of unemployment will require a combination of approaches and initiatives.

Our \$1.6 billion Working Queensland jobs package is implementing a range of initiatives targeted at supporting young people to find suitable employment. Working Queensland includes the government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, which represents a significant investment of \$240 million over four years to support up to 32,000 Queenslanders into work. Skilling Queenslanders for Work includes the Get Set for Work program, which provides intensive employment and training assistance to Queenslanders aged 15 to 19. Get Set for Work has funded 57 projects worth \$7 million to assist over 2,100 young people. Our Ready for Work program has funded 59 projects worth \$1.6 million to assist over 2,500 young people with job search assistance and training. I am also pleased to inform the House that our Youth Employment Program specifically assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth jobseekers.

Education also has a role to play in assisting young jobseekers. Our Advancing Education action plan targets a rate of 90 per cent of young people being in education, training or employment after completing year 12. It has a specific focus on science, technology, engineering and maths, or STEM, to support young people to be prepared for jobs of the future.

Unlike those opposite, who sacked thousands of hardworking Queenslanders and delivered increases in our unemployment rate, we will never give up on jobs. We will continue to explore new ideas and innovative ways to create employment opportunities for Queenslanders. Young people will always be front and centre of our jobs agenda because we know that they represent Queensland's future.

## Social Housing, Jobs

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (2.25 pm): I rise to update the House on the job creation efforts being undertaken by the Department of Housing and Public Works. During this financial year the Department of Housing and Public Works will be delivering over \$633 million of capital works and maintenance projects for social housing right across the state. This will see 1,900 real jobs right across the state for workers like carpenters, bricklayers and electricians. These jobs do not just provide a pay packet to Queensland workers; these jobs are also about building homes for some of the state's most vulnerable families. They will see upgrades and renovations to older homes, making them safer and more comfortable for ageing Queenslanders and,


as the Deputy Premier referenced earlier, more capable of achieving an 'ageing in place' principle. They deliver important modifications for people requiring greater access such as those with a disability, like the many individuals I spoke with last week at the Griffith University 'a place to call home' symposium, where we discussed adaptable housing. These building projects will be delivered by our department's Building and Asset Services workforce.

These projects are not just Brisbane jobs; they are delivering jobs for thousands of hardworking people in places like Cairns, Mount Isa, Toowoomba, Ipswich—right across Queensland. It means that workers can remain in their regional community. Projects like the refurbishment of the Cairns Convention Centre roof will provide positive economic and social benefits that will be felt in local communities right across the state. A total of 150 workers will be deployed onto the roofing project alone, with two-thirds of those jobs allocated to people living in Cairns or nearby cities and towns. The remaining 50 jobs will include specialists in their field travelling from other parts of our great state.

It is not just through construction and tenancy management, though, that the Department of Housing and Public Works creates opportunity for people to engage in the dignity of work. Recently I visited the Youth Housing Project in the inner north of Brisbane. There, through a partnership with the community, we are assisting young homeless people move their way along not just the housing continuum but also into the world of work. It is these kinds of wraparound services that I want to see delivered in our community partnerships.

I am proud to lead a department that is delivering jobs for Queenslanders by supporting businesses and their hardworking employees and partnering with the community sector.


### Byfield Forest, Jobs

 **Hon. LE DONALDSON** (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries) (2.27 pm): A year ago Tropical Cyclone Marcia tore through the Byfield Forest north of Rockhampton and levelled approximately 80 per cent of the valuable pine plantation. What was once an extensive mature forest is now a virtual wasteland. Earlier this month I toured the forest in the company of the member for Keppel. I must say that it is only when you view it for yourself that you truly appreciate the scale of the destruction. Category 4 and 5 winds flattened tens of thousands of trees as if they were nothing more than matchsticks. Yet out of this devastation, HQPlantations, with the assistance of the Queensland government, has staged a remarkable salvage and recovery operation that has created approximately 200 jobs and generated at least \$100 million worth of economic activity for the regional economy. So far about half a million tonnes of timber have been salvaged. It is a mammoth effort—a race against time to recover the timber before it deteriorates beyond use on the ground. At one stage there were up to 180 round-trip truck movements a day from Byfield, through Yeppoon and Rockhampton to Gladstone, where the timber has been processed and shipped, much of it exported as logs or chips to China. Jobs have been generated for truckers, forestry contractors and woodchip plant and port operators.

I am delighted to inform the House that the bulk of the salvageable timber has already been recovered, although it is likely to take another year before the operation is complete. The best news of all is that HQPlantations has already started to replant and intends to progressively re-establish the Byfield plantation estate in the coming years. So far it has replanted approximately 165 hectares and will plant a further 200 hectares in the near future. It is a massive vote of confidence in the industry and in Central Queensland, and the company is to be congratulated for its contribution to this state's forestry industry. In common with many other food and fibre sectors, forestry has made solid progress in the first year of the Palaszczuk government. The latest AgTrends forecast is that the forest industry sector is expected to add 13 per cent in the current financial year to \$211 million.

Last month I also visited the extensive Tuan forest near Maryborough to see the process from nursery, to harvest, to mill and to end user, on a tour that gave me the opportunity to discuss the timber product industry and the issues that it faces. The timber products industry indirectly employs almost 30,000, predominantly in regional and remote areas, and is a vital part of our food and fibre industry. Mr Speaker, I will continue to work to promote competitive growth and job opportunities in the sector.

### Zika Virus

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.30 pm): Queensland is preparing for the fight against Zika. Members would be aware that the Zika virus is currently spreading in certain tropical regions around the globe. The illness caused by the virus is usually mild, with symptoms including fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis. There are also concerns about the impact that the virus may have on pregnant women.


Zika virus is a mosquito borne disease which is transmitted to humans via a bite by an infected mosquito, including the species *Aedes aegypti*, which is found only in North Queensland. The same mosquito is responsible for the spread of dengue fever. So far there have been seven confirmed cases of Zika in Queensland. In every case the person has brought the virus in from overseas. There is no record of any transmission of the virus anywhere in Australia.

I stress that Zika is not a new virus. In Queensland we had 10 reported cases of the virus in 2014-15. We are expecting a higher number this year, as more people are likely to be tested for the virus. The expert advice remains that Zika virus is not currently circulating in Queensland, and we intend to do what we can, along with other levels of government, to keep it that way.

On 4 February I convened a Zika preparedness round table to discuss what measures were already in place and what new measures we may need to consider. We will spend \$400,000 to increase the capacity of our laboratories, including one in Townsville, to rapidly test for Zika virus in humans. This will be the first time that testing for the Zika virus in humans will occur in North Queensland, and it will be possible from March this year. Queensland Health will also spend around \$1 million to develop a new campaign to educate people on the vital role they can play in reducing the spread of mosquitos and mosquito borne diseases. This campaign will target both dengue and Zika and, by extension, other mosquito borne diseases.

A key message that all members of this place can take back to their electorates concerns people who are returning from travelling in areas affected by Zika around the world. If anyone feels unwell, please tell them to immediately see a GP. Do not leave it to chance; get tested and find out. Although we have solid defences in place against mosquitos and mosquito borne diseases like Zika in Queensland, we are doing what we can to be ready.

## Education

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (2.32 pm): The year 12 class of 2015 have set a new record for achievement and Queensland certificates of education. The Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority year 12 outcomes report just released shows that 94 per cent of year 12 students received a QCE. Of those receiving an OP, 80 per cent achieved an OP between 1 and 15 and more than 21 per cent of Queensland students received a Vocational Education and Training-Certificate III or higher while completing their senior schooling. For all students who applied to the Queensland Tertiary Administration Centre, 96 per cent received an offer of a place.


Queensland has also made significant improvements in closing the gap in year 12 attainment, as the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships has just said. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in state schools recorded a 3.5 per cent rise in year 12 completions on last year, with almost 95 per cent achieving a QCE or Queensland Certificate of Individual Attainment—which is a significant milestone when you consider that last year it was only around 83 per cent—and 55 per cent of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students received an OP between 1 and 15. This is a great achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who have worked really hard and successfully completed year 12 and for all Queensland state schools.

These great results are happening right across Queensland. At Kirwan State High School in Thuringowa, 58 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students graduated, and every single one of these graduating students achieved a QCE.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms JONES:** I take the injection from all of the members for Townsville. I congratulate the teachers and principal at Kirwan State High who helped make this great outcome possible, and I wish the graduating students of 2015 all the very best for this year.

## Advanced Manufacturing Industry

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (2.34 pm): Today I have the pleasure of announcing the latest step in driving growth and generating high-value, highly skilled jobs in Queensland's advanced manufacturing industry. Today the government has released a discussion paper to fuel the development of a 10-year road map and action plan for Queensland's advanced manufacturing industry. I table the discussion paper.


*Tabled paper:* Department of State Development: Queensland Advanced Manufacturing, 10-Year Roadmap, discussion paper for consultation, February 2016 [\[229\]](#).

Agriculture and resources will remain the mainstay of our economy, but we must diversify to buffer the effects of cyclical changes in international markets. One of Queensland's real opportunities lies with advanced manufacturing. The manufacturing sector contributed more than \$10 billion to our economy in 2014-15 and it is the state's third largest employer of full-time workers. This is expected to increase over the medium term. Queensland is the only state to have increased its manufacturing employment in the December quarter. Manufacturing is also one of our largest export industries, with about \$15.9 billion in international exports in the years 2014-15.

The Palaszczuk government wants to boost manufacturing by ensuring that it remains globally competitive and innovative and that it has the agility to respond to emerging opportunities across global value chains. I have already met our election commitment to establish an Industry and Manufacturing Advisory Group with high-level representation from industry, government and unions. The IMAG has already provided expert input to the development of this discussion paper and will continue to guide the road map and action plan. The discussion paper released today identifies the opportunities for Queensland's manufacturing sector, including outbidding cheaper imported products and taking advantage of export opportunities in fields like medical instruments and pharmaceutical products. The paper also identifies challenges including an ageing workforce, strong emerging competition from Asia and our high proportion of small companies.

Consultation will run until 24 March, and I anticipate that the final draft of the road map will be submitted to the IMAG for its consideration at the next meeting in May. I encourage all members of this parliament to download a copy and promote it within their electorates. The Palaszczuk government takes its consultation seriously, and we want real information from business on the issues and the impediments they face in growing their businesses. We will use this to draft a road map that will foster the growth of the advanced manufacturing sector, Advance Queensland and create jobs now and jobs for the future.


### Mount Isa, Police

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (2.37 pm): I am pleased to speak today about the great work being undertaken by police, emergency services and corrective services staff in Mount Isa and Western Queensland. I have been fortunate to spend time in Mount Isa and Western Queensland throughout my time in the ministry. My most recent visit included Mount Isa, Cloncurry, Longreach and Charleville—four fantastic communities with distinct histories and a vibrant future. It is clear that it takes a distinct calibre of person to thrive amid the challenges of Western Queensland. The Mount Isa district stretches from the South Australian border up along the Northern Territory border and into the Cape and Mornington Island. I take this opportunity to commend our hardworking police, State Emergency Service personnel, emergency services generally and correctional services officers and volunteers in this vast area, and I also thank them for their hospitality when they were showing me their 'patch'.

The Mount Isa community will be losing a pillar of their community in the coming weeks with the retirement of Superintendent Russell Miller. Superintendent Miller started his career with the Queensland Police Service in 1976. His lifetime of service has seen him posted across the state from Gympie to being officer in charge of the Brisbane City Station and operating the Pine Rivers District before becoming the district officer in Mount Isa for the last four years.

By all accounts he has become a real community leader and his career demonstrates that. Superintendent Miller has led the community through several tragedies. Members will recall the awful caravan explosion last July that claimed three lives. Instances like this remind us all that policing is not a nine-to-five job. Officers and staff are called upon to embrace challenges that few others would and to see things that other members of the community would never wish to see. I join with other members of the House in thanking him for his service to Queensland, most recently Western Queensland. The challenges of the service are distinct but so are its achievements.

### Public Transport, Tertiary Student Concession

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games) (2.40 pm): As promised, the Palaszczuk government is delivering on our election commitment to make travel easier for students. The Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job. We are getting on with delivering public transport infrastructure and services and solutions to Queenslanders—solutions like

the new student concession system. Since I announced the new solution to student concessions, on 18 January, more than 19,000 students have applied for concession fares on their go cards to take full advantage of the new streamlined process.

Earlier today I visited the University of Queensland's St Lucia campus for market day, to meet the TransLink teams who are doing a wonderful job of talking to students about the new, simpler, technology based solution. Many students I spoke to on campus today were very grateful for the simpler concession solution. The students I spoke to were pleased to see a policy that was fair for both students and the tertiary institutions, taking the burden off both of them in terms of the bureaucratic red-tape minefield that had been established under the previous regime. Now, instead of signing up via myriad forms and approvals under the red-tape mess of the TTCC, they can focus on being students and sign up to the fantastic clubs and societies on campus such as I saw in the Great Court at the University of Queensland O-week today.


Now that we have introduced the simplest, smartest and most integrated student concession travel in the country, Queensland students are definitely at the top of the class. Instead of completing an annual paper based application and waiting—and waiting and waiting, like so many had to with the LNP's TTCC—tertiary and post-secondary students are now able to apply for concession fares on public transport with just the click of a button or a simple phone call.

We expect the number of students signed up to the new technology based system to rise rapidly over the next two weeks as students across the state prepare for semester 1 and indeed O-week celebrations this week. TransLink helpers are onsite at major universities during O-week celebrations to assist students applying for concessional fares. Eligible students can also enter a competition before 31 March to win go card credit, with 30 prizes of between \$50 and \$100 credit. We are encouraging even more students to sign up and access concession fares.

Eligible students in regional Queensland can also take advantage of the scheme. They can apply to their institution for an annual tertiary concession sticker on their student ID using the application form available on the TransLink website. This ensures that they, too, can access concession fares on public transport in regional Queensland.

By scrapping the cumbersome TTCC as students head back to university, the Palaszczuk government is embracing technology to make catching public transport even easier for Queensland students. This is a common-sense step forward and a win for more accessible public transport for Queensland tertiary students now and into the future.

### Domestic and Family Violence

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (2.43 pm): When we announced the government's response to the landmark *Not now, not ever* report we committed to delivering the most comprehensive plan to tackle domestic and family violence this state has ever seen. We pledged to deliver change to our judicial system and the service support systems which help victims and, importantly, change the culture in our society which has allowed this devastating violence to occur. Across the last year we have made changes in all of these areas.

We have just delivered the introduction of respectful relationships education into our curriculum for prep to year 12, but we know that we must also look more broadly at how we influence the next generation and challenge negative ideas. If we are to have any hope of breaking the tragic cycle of domestic violence and violence against women, it has to start with young people.


On Monday I was pleased to join Australia's ambassador for women and Our Watch chair Natasha Stott Despoja and Our Watch CEO Mary Barry to launch The Line's consent campaign at QUT during O-week. The Line's consent campaign, which is running across a number of Australia's universities, is a great way to reach young people and encourage a discussion about sex, consent and respect. This is a national social media campaign that communicates the importance of asking for and giving consent before engaging in safe sex.

The research from Our Watch's new survey, revealed at the launch on Monday, showed some disappointing and shocking attitudes, in particular about boys' attitudes towards consent and respect. Sixty per cent of young people believe that it is up to the woman to make it very clear if she does not want to have sex. The same survey found that more than a third of young people said it is hard to respect a woman when she is drunk and more than a fifth said it is hard to be respectful of a woman who is wearing revealing clothing. These shocking statistics show that still many young people are not being exposed to the right information and guidance about sex, consent and respectful relationships.

It is clear that we must start early to help children and young people learn healthy attitudes about gender equality. There is a clear link between the negative attitudes of ownership and control over women and domestic and family violence, and we need to change these attitudes now. It is vital that we reinforce messages about respectful relationships in our schools, in our universities and in the broader community.

## REPORT


### Office of the Leader of the Opposition

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.46 pm): I table the financial report for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 December 2015.

*Tabled paper:* Public report of the office expenses, Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 December 2015 [\[230\]](#).

## NOTICES OF MOTION


### Vegetation Management Framework

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (2.46 pm): I give notice that I shall move—

That any changes to the Vegetation Management Framework must consider:

- (a) rejecting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to vegetation management on a statewide basis that denies opportunity to parts of North and Western Queensland, these regions being Einasleigh Uplands, Gulf Plains, Cape York, Desert Uplands, North-west Highlands, Mulga Lands, Mitchell Grass Downs and Channel Country;
- (b) properties with the total cleared area of less than 10 per cent be permitted to be cleared up to a maximum of 10 per cent, capped at 5,000 hectares;
- (c) maintaining current self-assessable codes on these properties to ensure opportunity and maintenance of current productivity levels in balance with landscape vegetation retention and connectivity;
- (d) clearing provisions for high-value and irrigated high-value agriculture be extended to include 'high-value land for grazing purposes' such as baled fodder and forage, ensiling and strip grazing;
- (e) that any proposed changes do not impact on previously approved development under the present Vegetation Management Framework.

### Amendment to Standing Rules and Orders

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (2.47 pm): I give notice that I shall move—

That the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended immediately by inserting the following new standing order 87A—


'87A. Substantially the Same Bill

- (1) A Bill that is substantially the same as any other Bill that has already been introduced and read a first time shall not be introduced.
- (2) If the Speaker is of the opinion that a Bill that contravenes (1) has been introduced and read a first time, the Speaker shall at the earliest opportunity order the discharge of the Bill from the Notice Paper and from any committee to which it has been referred.'

**Mr SPEAKER:** There are two notices of motion proposed for the 30-minute debate this evening. I propose to have a discussion with the member for Dalrymple and the Leader of Opposition Business immediately after question time. Then I will make a decision and report back to the House as soon as possible.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance; Member for Mulgrave

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (2.49 pm): There is no doubt that there is a lack of economic direction in Queensland. There is no doubt that Queenslanders and Queenslanders looking for jobs are suffering as a result of the lack of a coherent economic narrative from this government and in particular from this Treasurer. Today's Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that the value of construction work in Queensland—the mainstay of employment and jobs in Queensland—has declined by \$1.4 billion from the March-December quarter in 2015 and that Queensland was the only state in Australia to experience a decline in construction work over that period. Construction work is going south to New South Wales; construction work is going south to Victoria. The jobs are not being created here.


As any member who has any relationship with contractors, constructors and major engineering companies—anyone who employs people—knows, the jobs are not here in Queensland. But we know that there is one job that is going to be going pretty soon here in the state of Queensland and that is job of the member for Mulgrave. We had an audition from the member for Stretton yesterday in the House. He came in here and spoke for three minutes on the economy. He spoke to us all about the economic figures. As much as I hate to say it and as much as any Labor member ever makes any sense about economic numbers, I have to say that the member for Stretton had it all over the member for Mulgrave—had it all over him!

But there is a bit of trouble down pit, because the member for Caloundra's little bird is whispering to me—I have the word—that the Treasurer's job will soon be being advertised for a merit based selection process. We remember when he jumped ship from the AWU in October 2014. I hear the AWU was not too happy about that. He thought the member for Woodridge or perhaps the member for Sandgate was going to get the job. So he jumped ship to the Old Guard, but the Old Guard does not like him because he is keeping out the member for Bulimba and keeping out the member for Stretton. The Left certainly do not want him! He has been in the right in the AWU. Who would want him? So in the caucus and in the party it is 'throw the balls in the air, give us any Treasurer'. That reminded me of *Weekend at Bernie's*, and we know the script where a pair of losers try to pretend that their former employer is really alive, but the reality is they are out to finish him off. He is the life of the party—well, almost!

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. We have all got the message. Before you start, Deputy Premier, I just urge you to be careful in your interjections across the chamber.

### Construction Industry; Liberal National Party, Leadership

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment) (2.52 pm): The hide of those opposite, particularly the former treasurer, to come into this House and talk about construction figures! On 5 March last year when we came into government I had a letter given to me by the major construction companies in Queensland, and let me place on record their concerns about infrastructure spending and construction in this state under those opposite. The letter states—

Following substantial cuts to infrastructure spending over the past three years and declines in private investment, our members' businesses have suffered significant reductions in both turnover and employment levels, particularly in the last 12 months.

That is the Newman government's record—the Newman-Seeney government's record on infrastructure and construction. How dare they come into this place talking about construction figures! They own it. They did not plan for it. They had no care, no responsibility, when it came to jobs in Queensland and their track record proved it.

**Mr SEENEY:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Deputy Premier is renowned for partially quoting documents. I ask that she table the letter instead of—

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

**Ms TRAD:** I rise to a point of order. I find that reference personally offensive and I ask that he withdraw it.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SEENEY:** Mr Speaker, I am happy to withdraw if she tables the letter.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members! Member for Callide, you are aware that the standard procedure is that withdrawals are unconditional. I ask you to withdraw unconditionally, as is the standard procedure.

**Mr SEENEY:** Mr Speaker, I withdraw unconditionally and I move—

That the Deputy Premier table the letter she quoted from.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion moved by the member for Callide be agreed—

**Ms TRAD:** No, I am happy to table it. That is fine.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 5 March 2015, from representatives of the Civil Contractors Federation Queensland Branch, the Australian Asphalt Pavement Association, Consult Australia, the Cement Concrete and Aggregates Australia and Engineers Australia, to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment, Hon. Jackie Trad, regarding getting the state's construction industry back on track [\[231\]](#).

**Mr SPEAKER:** All right. That is not necessary. Did you have a matter of—

**Ms TRAD:** I have actually tabled it before, Jeff. You just did not bother to read it. Further, today marks—

**Mr WATTS:** I rise to a point of order. I think the member for Callide has earned the right to be addressed correctly in this chamber.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order and I would urge members to refer to each other by the appropriate terminology. I now call the Deputy Premier. Do you have something further to add?

**Ms TRAD:** Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker. It is a shame that the honourable member does not live in Callide, because at least Jeff would have one vote! But can I say that today marks—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr HART:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, you just directed the member to refer to the other member by his correct title and she did it once again.

**Mr SPEAKER:** You referred to him as 'Jeff'. I think it is 'the member for Callide'. That is the point of order that has been raised. I note the member for Callide did not raise that point of order.

**Mr SEENEY:** Mr Speaker—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Yes, member for Callide?

**Mr SEENEY:** Mr Speaker, I am so hurt and wounded by that. It has taken me a few moments to regain my—

**Mr SPEAKER:** It is not an opportunity for a speech, member for Callide. What is your point of order?

**Mr SEENEY:** I have to say that I am so offended that I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Okay. Back to business. Will you withdraw and move on?

**Ms TRAD:** Absolutely. I withdraw.

**Ms Jones** interjected.


**Mr SPEAKER:** I do not need your assistance, Minister.

**Ms TRAD:** It has been exactly one week since the Ethics Committee report was handed down in this parliament and of course we know that the Ethics Committee report raised some serious questions about the Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff and his role in relation to the handling of material—

Interruption.

## PRIVILEGE

### Parliamentary Practice and Procedure

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.56 pm): Mr Speaker—

**Mr SPEAKER:** One moment. What is your point of order?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. As the Deputy Premier would know, I asked special leave of this House yesterday to be able to address those matters and set the record straight in relation to circumstances the government would not be very happy about and they—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, thank you. It is not a point of order. You will have an opportunity shortly to address the issue if you choose to.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It was a matter of privilege.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I thought it was a point of order you raised.

**Opposition members:** No.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Okay. Leader of the Opposition, what is your matter of privilege?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** My matter of privilege suddenly arising referred to the matter that I raised in this place yesterday apropos the restrictions that exist on me under 211A to be able to confirm to this House matters that I know that clarify this to the detriment of the government. Yesterday in this place the government voted to restrict me from being able to answer specifically the issues which are being raised today. So, Mr Speaker, I actually ask for your ruling around further references and around this matter being raised in here given the discussions and the decisions of this parliament yesterday.


**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. The advice I have received is that there is no matter of privilege.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Resumed from p. 481.

### Construction Industry; National Liberal Party, Leadership

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment) (2.58 pm), continuing: Serious questions have been raised about the Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff. Did the Leader of the Opposition do the right thing and stand his chief of staff aside pending an investigation? No, he did not. Did he act decisively? No, he did not.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, there are other members who have opportunities to speak during this private members' statements segment. In relation to the member for Hervey Bay, I would urge you, if you have something to interject, to say it so that it can be heard and make it relevant.

**Ms TRAD:** The Leader of the Opposition failed to meet the standards that he expects from others. He failed to meet the standards of a leader, of someone who puts this parliament ahead of their own political ambitions. Why? Because this is LNP form.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, we are not going to have a shouting match.

**Ms TRAD:** This is the form of the LNP and particularly the Leader of the Opposition. We know that they muckrake and they keep dirt files. I table for the benefit of the House media reports from 2011 about secret dirt files being compiled by the LNP.

*Tabled paper:* Article from *Brisbane Times* online, dated 13 October 2011, titled 'LNP's dirty deed docs "belong in the 1950s"' [\[232\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Article from *Courier-Mail* online, dated 12 October 2011, titled 'LNP paid for sex, scandal files on Labor MPs including Anna Bligh' [\[233\]](#).

What did we see yesterday? More dirt. Question time after question time—

Interruption.

## PRIVILEGE

### Parliamentary Practice and Procedure

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (2.59 pm): I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Maroochydore, what is your point of order?

**Ms SIMPSON:** I am rising on a matter of privilege. This is an abuse of process. The government voted to gag the Leader of the Opposition in not allowing him to respond to yesterday's motion—

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, is this a point of order or a matter of privilege? I am unclear.

**Ms SIMPSON:** This is an abuse of process and an abuse of the integrity of this parliament.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members.


**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Mr Speaker, I am confused as to whether this is a point of order or a matter of privilege. The former Speaker seems to have referred to both.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, my ruling is that there is no point of order and there is no matter of privilege.


## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Resumed from p. 482.

### Construction Industry; Liberal National Party, Leadership

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment) (3.00 pm), continuing: Quite clearly, they have come in here today to disrupt. The fact of the matter is that those opposite have failed to meet the standard that they expect from others. They have failed in their leadership.

### Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance


 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.01 pm): Talk about hypocrisy from the Deputy Premier! Yesterday in this House we asked some very clear questions. The Deputy Premier wants to refer to the primacy of parliament and respecting this place and advising the parliament about the things that go on. Yesterday, the Premier came into this place and, in answer to two questions from the Leader of the Opposition, said that she knew nothing about the matters that he raised. Of course, it has now turned out that she did know. I table a copy of that.

*Tabled paper:* Front page of the *Queensland Times*, dated 24 February 2016, with the headline "I know nothing" But former Labor Minister says he told government last year about fraudster in Jo-Ann Miller's office' [\[234\]](#).

Interruption.

## PRIVILEGE

### Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Member

 **Hon. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (3.01 pm): Mr Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. The member is misleading the parliament.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, I will hear the point of order.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The question was clearly about criminal allegations. The member is misleading the parliament and I ask him to withdraw.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, we are not going to have a debate across the chamber. The advice I have received is that the Premier has been referred to. She has asked for a withdrawal. I ask that it be withdrawn unconditionally.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you.


**Mr STEVENS:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Premier rose on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. There was no point of order, no request for a withdrawal.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mermaid Beach, the advice I have received is that the Premier found the words offensive and asked for them to be withdrawn.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Resumed.

### Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.01 pm), continuing: The point is that the Deputy Premier has come in here and said—

**A government member:** Withdraw.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I have already withdrawn. The Deputy Premier has come in here and referred to whether we on this side of the House respect the primacy of parliament. I ask the question: does the Premier actually know anything about anything? That is the question that we on this side of the House are asking. When it comes to the Auditor-General's report, when it comes to the issues raised yesterday as evidenced by newspaper reports that I have just tabled, it is obvious that, when it comes to managing

this economy, getting on with the things that are important for Queensland, we have a Premier who is frozen at the wheel. The economy has stalled. Jobs are on hold. The Premier, along with the Deputy Premier, is supposed to be leading the government and leading the Queensland economy.

My colleague the member for Clayfield referred to infrastructure spending. Today we see that Cardno, an infrastructure consultancy, has shed 660 jobs and has said that their revenue is not as bad as it might have been because there is more public infrastructure spending happening in New South Wales. Those are the facts. Unfortunately, as we saw from the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures that were out today for its construction work done series—its preliminary analysis—the value of construction work has declined by more than 20 per cent on both trend and seasonally adjusted measures. We know that there has been a downturn in the resources sector.

The government is supposedly transitioning our economy. You cannot just magically transition an economy and not take care of those people in outback Queensland who have lost their jobs, or those people in Mackay in the mining sector who have lost their jobs and just say, 'The headline figure is the one that we are going to consider,' especially when that unemployment figure—that headline figure—went up half a per cent last week. We have real concerns about those unemployed people. The government could progress a number of projects to help those people in the mining sector. Whether it is Abbot Point, Acland, Adani, sandmining or uranium mining, the government is turning its back on those projects. The question is whether the government is lazy, incompetent, or ignorant. The important issue is that Queenslanders deserve better from this government. Those three are stuck at the wheel, leaving all of those other people wondering where they are going behind them.


**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr Pitt** interjected.

**Ms Trad** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. Before I call the Minister for Health, I now warn the Treasurer and the Deputy Premier under standing order 253A for their repetitive interjections.

### Liberal National Party, Performance

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (3.05 pm): What an extraordinary week we have seen in Queensland politics. At the centre of this circus and this debacle has been the LNP. We saw a member of the LNP parliamentary team publicly admonished in the Legislative Assembly of Queensland. We see the Leader of the Opposition running a protection racket for his chief of staff. That is exactly what he is doing. We have seen opposition MP after opposition MP jumping ship. They cannot wait to get off the good ship Lawrence Springborg. Why? Because they can smell the way the wind is blowing and they do not like the stench that is coming from the Leader of the Opposition and his office. How could we forget the two greatest strategic minds in the parliament—perhaps the two greatest strategic minds of their generation—the member for Chatsworth and the member for Buderim? We cannot forget their contribution to who should lead the LNP. What a debacle. We have had nothing from them about policy. They are an absolute policy vacuum.

This government is getting on with its legislative program and making Queensland a healthier place through its tobacco legislation, which increases the number of smoke-free zones. There is more of that to come this week. We are getting on with the agenda. But we have heard nothing from those opposite.

Why would that be? Because they cannot even read their own report. What did Borbidge and Sheldon say? They said that the LNP integrity paper should be updated. I, too, was surprised that there was an integrity paper from the LNP. It is as thin as tissue and as small as a postage stamp, but it has to be updated. How should it be updated? Borbidge and Sheldon say it should be updated in this way—

That the LNP in government or opposition be required to adhere to the principles which include ... corruption and lack of accountability will not be tolerated ... the institutions of state must be respected.

We have seen none of that from the opposition.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, we are not going to have a shouting match across the chamber.

**Mr DICK:** We have the protection racket being run by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to his chief of staff. When will he stand up for once and demonstrate some integrity? When will he act to sideline this pernicious force in the LNP? He knows that half of his backbench, half of his parliamentary


room, know the destruction that that individual causes to their political cause. It is about time the Leader of the Opposition stood up for something—stood up for integrity and stood up for respecting this institution.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before I call the Leader of the Opposition, Minister for Health, you used the words 'stench leading from the Leader of the Opposition' or words to that effect. I find those words unparliamentary. Will you withdraw?

**Mr DICK:** I withdraw unreservedly

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you.

### Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.08 pm): Just as yesterday we were lectured by 'Mr Mogadon' over here, the Treasurer of Queensland—

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order. I think we have heard already today a number of protestations about members addressing members by their appropriate titles and I ask that you call the Leader of the Opposition to order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, you are aware of my rulings. Will you kindly withdraw.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I withdraw, Mr Speaker, but now we have to suffer the ignominy—

**Mr SPEAKER:** An unconditional withdrawal.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I withdraw unconditionally. But now we have to suffer the ignominy of being lectured to by the member for Woodridge, the person whose pinnacle of their career was being the attorney-general to Tuvalu.

**An opposition member:** Poor Tuvalu!

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Poor old Tuvalu. I ask the leave of the member for Callide to quote from some of his copy in one of the more outstanding vintage performances from the member for Callide, when he said with regard to the Premier that we have a do-nothing, say-nothing, be-nothing Premier. Now we have a know-nothing Premier, a Premier who knows absolutely nothing about what is happening in her office.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition has tabled the document. The House has access to the document. He does not need to wave the document around. I ask that you remind the Leader of the Opposition of the protocols in this place around props.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Leader of the House. Members, we are aware of the message that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to convey through the placard, sign, prop. I do not think we need to use it any further.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Not only do we have a know-nothing Premier, we also have a government that is prepared to capriciously use its numbers to actually gag the truth being ventilated in this parliament. That is what those opposite did in this place yesterday. They are seeking to hide important information that undermines the propositions that they have been putting forward. Unfortunately this is abuse of power that will continue for the people of Queensland for some time. It will continue under this veil of sanctimonious performance that we are seeing from this Premier in this state.

I rose in this place yesterday and asked the Premier did she have any knowledge of or did she check or did she allow a person previously convicted of serious criminal offences to be employed in the police minister's office. Indeed, as everyone knows, it is the Premier who provides ultimate consent to the employment of people within a ministerial office. The Premier denied any knowledge. The Premier said that she would come into this place and correct the record. We now know, fortunately, because of an honest—and that is very difficult to find in the Labor Party—former Labor Party minister that they did employ within the police minister's office a person who had 263 convictions for stealing. Apparently the Premier knew nothing about this. This Premier apparently knew nothing about Billy Gordon. She was surprised. She knew nothing about the fact that her staff and her ministers were actually deputising Billy Gordon. She knew nothing about the member for Bundamba's false declaration. The poltergeist from Bundamba continues to come back and haunt this government and this parliament. We now have a brave former whistleblowing minister who is prepared to stand up and tell the truth. The truth is out there today. Indeed, we also have a Premier who knew nothing about her office constructing an economic plan. When we revealed it in here she was so outraged that she withdrew it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Question time will conclude at 14 minutes past four.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Ministerial Staff Appointments

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (3.14 pm): My first question without notice is to the Premier. Did the member for Bundamba meet the ministerial standards of ethical behaviour and transparency when she advised the Premier's office to employ a jailed thief with 263 convictions within the minister's office?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for another policy question. We do not get many of those questions here. Those opposite do not want to know what is happening in Queensland in relation to jobs and growing the economy or about autism. No, they are about muckraking. Frankly, Queenslanders are sick of this. It is the same LNP that was in government that is in opposition—the exact same in opposition.

**A government member** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right. They said they were going to be a different opposition.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is exactly the same, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Now, Premier—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The Leader of the Opposition came into this House yesterday and asked me if I had any knowledge of a person being employed with any criminal convictions. The answer to that is no. The answer today is no. The answer yesterday was no. Those people in glass houses should not throw stones. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition can talk to us—

**Mr Langbroek:** I've got one for you. I've got one for you in a minute.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, you can talk to us about your employment history. You can talk to us about who you employed twice—two chiefs of staff.

**Mr STEVENS:** I rise to a point of order. This has no relevance at all.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am not going to cop this lecture on standards from those opposite.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, with respect. Member for Mermaid Beach, what is your point of order?

**Mr STEVENS:** The Premier has delved into serious debate on these other issues that have no relevance to the question asked. I would ask that you bring her back to the question asked.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, I would urge you to make your answer relevant to the question. I am endeavouring not to allow debate on questions. Do you have anything further you would like to add?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No.

### Ministerial Staff Appointments

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** My second question without notice is also to the Premier. Will the Premier tell the House who was the whistleblowing former Labor minister who advised her office that a jailed thief with 263 convictions was working in the police minister's office and who was told?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Once again I thank the Leader of the Opposition for yet another policy question. Once again it is muckraking. The junior administration officer is no longer working in government as a ministerial officer.

**Mr Bleijie:** They do know about it.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No, they are not working. They are no longer working.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, I am endeavouring to listen to the Premier's answer.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am going to make it clear to the House, as I did yesterday, that at no time during the employment process did I or my office know about this person's criminal background. This person was only employed for less than three months. I am advised that during that period a third-hand report of inappropriate behaviour by this person at a local pub was made to a member of my staff who reported it immediately to my chief of staff. My chief of staff then requested the then minister's chief of staff to counsel the employee about standards of conduct. The employee's employment ended soon after. The fact is the person was only employed for a very small period of time ending in the middle of last year.

There is one report that the opposition do not want to talk about and that is the Ethics report. That is the report they do not want to talk about.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, no, this is not appropriate at this time. I have ruled it is not relevant to the questions being asked. I now call the member for Lytton for her question.

### Jobs

**Ms PEASE:** My question is of the Premier. Will the Premier outline any threats to jobs in Queensland posed by federal government actions?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Lytton very much for her important question about what the federal government is doing to people in Queensland. My government has a proud history of creating more than 70,000 jobs since we have come to government—70,000 jobs and growing the economy—when we saw under the former LNP government some 330 full-time jobs lost on average in a month.

What we have heard from the federal government very clearly on the 4th of this month was that CSIRO was to cut 350 jobs across Queensland. This is coming from a Prime Minister who talks about innovation and ideas, who talks about science and innovation. The Minister for Innovation, Leeanne Enoch, has written to her federal counterpart wanting to know exactly where are these Queensland jobs that are being cut because when you cut jobs you actually hurt the families that need this employment. The flow-on effects into regional communities continue. We want to get to the bottom of it because we know that families are hurting.

CSIRO has a lot of work to do in relation to the Great Barrier Reef. We know how important the Great Barrier Reef is to this state and how important it is to our country and the international community. It supports thousands of jobs across our state and employs tens of thousands of people. We know that the federal government is looking very clearly at making cuts to CSIRO and their work with the Great Barrier Reef.

As I said yesterday, and I will say it again today, we will always stand up for jobs in this state. We will stand up to the Turnbull government that has no tax plan, but does have a plan to cut jobs and slow the economy. We will stand there and fight. I hope that if the member for Callide and the member for Toowoomba South go to Canberra, they will actually stand up for Queensland. We are hearing from some people in the LNP that they do not want them to go. They are saying that they should stay here in Queensland and not contest federally. There appears to be a roadblock for the member for Callide and the member for Toowoomba South. I say: we would love them to stay. We want to see them stay here in Queensland. We love to see the member for Callide on the TV. We know how much people love seeing him. We believe that he does have something to contribute to this House. I know that the Leader of the Opposition does not want him around, but we do. Please, member for Callide: stay, stay, stay! Don't go! I know how much the Deputy Premier would miss him as well.

**Ms Jones:** And me!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I know how much the Minister for Education would miss him. We would all miss him. Please stay.

### Ministerial Staff Appointments

**Mr LANGBROEK:** My question without notice is to the Premier. I note that the ministerial handbook states, in relation to ministerial staff—


No salary will be paid to any employee until the Office of the Premier's approval is received.

I ask: can the Premier advised who in her office provided the advice to start paying a convicted and jailed thief to work in the office of the Minister for Police?

Interruption.

## PRIVILEGE

### Parliamentary Practice and Procedure

 **Mrs JR MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (3.20 pm): Mr Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I would like to make it very clear to all members of this parliament that I was unaware of any criminal history in relation to the person concerned. I also want to make it clear to this parliament

that the person had been employed in a state government call centre and she had also gone through, I understand, a merit selection process in relation to that matter. The Premier absolutely did not know anything about this and neither did I. I would also like to state that the Leader of the Opposition may be breaching the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act in talking about any offences in relation to this person.

**Mr STEVENS:** I rise on a point of order. We are in question time and we have a member getting up and debating the matter on behalf of the Premier in relation to a question she has been asked. She should resume her seat and get on with question time.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Bundamba, you are engaging in a debate on the topic. There are appropriate opportunities in the planning for today's session for you to raise that matter. I call the Premier, if she has something she would like to add in answer to the question.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Ministerial Staff Appointments

Resumed from p. 487.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Today I can see very clearly that the Leader of the Opposition and now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition are obsessed about an AO3 position where the person no longer works for the government. My government has tough standards, unlike those opposite.

**Mr Langbroek** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I take that interjection, because now we get to the heart of the matter. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition comes in and attacks an AO3. Let us talk about your chief of staff.

**Mr STEVENS:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Premier is not entitled to debate the matter, move to other subjects or discuss other matters. She has to answer the question.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, my understanding is that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made an interjection and the Premier has taken that interjection and is responding to that. Therefore, it is relevant and the Premier has time on the clock. I wish to hear the Premier's response.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** When the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was education minister, he employed a person who appeared briefly in the Brisbane Magistrates Court on nine counts of stealing and forgery. She pleaded to the charges related to the alleged misuse of prescription drugs. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition employed that person as a chief of staff; not as an AO3, but as a chief of staff. What I have said very clearly—

**Mr Springborg:** But it was known.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, and the point here is that nobody knew.

**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, you have had a pretty good go.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I understand that the person in question who used to work for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is now a Senate candidate. She is vying for Senate preselection. I would have expected higher standards from those opposite. They come in here and muckrake about personalities, when that AO3 person does not even work in government anymore. That was six or eight months ago, but no-one wants to talk about this. No-one wants to talk about the standards that the Leader of the Opposition will not apply to his own chief of staff.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. Premier, I think you have answered the question.

### Taxation Reform

**Mr CRAWFORD:** My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier advise the House of Queensland's position on state-federal tax reform leading into the next COAG meeting? Is she aware of any alternatives?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Barron River for asking about an important policy issue that a lot of Queenslanders are concerned about in relation to the tax proposal that the federal government wants to take to the next election. Hundreds and thousands of families want to know very clearly what Malcolm Turnbull's position is when it comes to tax policy. I want to know and other

premiers from across the nation want to know. Unfortunately, what we have is a very clear situation where \$18 billion of health and education cuts have been ripped out of our forward estimates. We need to know where that money will come from.

If those opposite could have any influence when talking to the federal government and putting Queensland's case, I would say 'thank you', but it appears that only the Labor Party and the Labor government is prepared to stand up to Malcolm Turnbull when it comes to the massive \$18 billion worth of cuts to Queensland. Recently on the federal stage we have seen the Labor Party putting forward a policy in relation to capital gains tax and clear divisions at the federal level with Malcolm Turnbull saying one thing and Kelly O'Dwyer saying completely the other thing. They are not even on the same page when speaking about whether or not they believe that capital gains tax is an area that they can look at.

The Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, and I have clearly put on the table that one way of addressing the massive health cuts into the future is a gradual increase in the Medicare levy, which will mean that the health of our families would be catered for into the future and it is a solution. My government is prepared to put a solution on the table when it comes to tax reform in this state. Unfortunately, those opposite have no ideas. The only idea we saw from the Leader of the Opposition recently, through a YouTube video, was when he opened up the closet and there was a moth. That was his contribution to the ideas debate in this state. They have nothing, they are prepared to do nothing and they are an embarrassment. What we see very clearly is that they are, in fact, no different to the former LNP government. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition sat around the table, but learned absolutely nothing. This minister has had to come and pick up the mess that he left when he sacked over 4,000 health professionals. That is the legacy of the Leader of the Opposition. You are an embarrassment. You are arrogant. You do not have any standards at all.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, I think we have all blotted our copybook a little this afternoon. Premier, do not refer to another person as 'you'. Leader of the Opposition, you have had a pretty good go. I would urge you to be more considered in your interjections.

### **Ministerial Staff Appointments**

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier give a guarantee that no-one in her office has made any contact with a former Labor minister and whistleblower to try to silence them in relation to disclosing the warnings they made about the convicted and jailed thief who worked in the Minister for Police's office?

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. There is an imputation in the member's question which, I think, very clearly rules it out of order. I ask you to consider the matter and rule.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Can you repeat the question, member for Kawana.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier give a guarantee that no-one in her office has made any contact with a former Labor minister and whistleblower to try to silence them in relation to disclosing the warnings they made about the convicted and jailed thief who worked in the office of the Minister for Police?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am unclear what the member for Kawana is alluding to. I made a very clear statement that my office had no knowledge about any criminal allegations.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. I can assist the Premier, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, you have asked the question.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The Premier asked for assistance. I am happy to assist.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The Premier has answered the question.

### **Central Queensland University, Redevelopment**

**Mr BUTCHER:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on work to redevelop the Central Queensland University? How will this create jobs?

**Ms TRAD:** I thank the honourable member for Gladstone for his question. I know that he has a very keen interest in the Central Queensland University, with a campus being located in Gladstone. I am pleased to advise the House that my department, through Economic Development Queensland, continues to work with Central Queensland University to create a new university village at the CQU campus in Rockhampton.

Expressions of interest for this partnership closed in December last year. I am pleased to announce that we have received several strong expressions of interest already from firms interested in partnering with EDQ to deliver this important project. It will transform 80 hectares of the university campus into a mixed use residential/retail community and recreational facility. It will deliver up to 2,000 homes that will provide well-priced housing within walking distance of the university and accommodate up to 4,000 people. Importantly, it will provide new student accommodation and will help unlock the region in terms of being a destination for international students, which is fantastic.

Respondents are now preparing their formal submissions, which are due in late March 2016. Importantly, this development will provide a big impact on local jobs. There will be some 470 jobs over the life of the project, which will be between 10 and 15 years. That is fantastic.

While we are focused on delivering jobs for Queenslanders, particularly regional Queenslanders, those opposite are focused on jobs for themselves. The member for Everton is focused on the Leader of the Opposition's job. The only problem is that he is wanting of courage and he is wanting of numbers. That is the only thing that is keeping him in his place.

Of course we know that the member for Callide is focused on a job in Canberra. He wants to go from being the member for Callide to the member for Wide Bay in the federal parliament. That is where the member for Callide's attention and focus is. We also know that the member for Buderim is also focused on somebody else's job, focused on doing the numbers, but he has got the sack for that.

We also know that the member for Toowoomba South is chasing a job in the federal parliament. As my colleagues have already alluded to, these people are voting with their feet. They are voting on the Leader of the Opposition's leadership with their feet not by what they say.

I was interested in what the member for Callide had to say about the failed coup. He said—

I think some young fellas learnt that ambition is no substitute for experience, and I think over the past week that lesson has been well learnt by some people who will remember it.

What that says is that those LNP members on the back bench who have the ambition to win, who have an ambition for something better from the LNP need to park that ambition because what they have got is—

### Office of the Premier, Staff

**Mr WALKER:** My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's chief of staff and electorate office receiving information relating to the member for Bundamba and the PCCC safes which was subsequently leaked to the media. Can the Premier advise what independent investigation the Premier initiated to ensure her chief of staff, Angela McDonough, did not act improperly by leaking that information to others?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I understand that these issues were before the Ethics Committee and I have no knowledge of what happens in the Ethics Committee.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The advice I have received is that the matter involving the safe was dealt with by the Ethics Committee in its last report, report No. 162. Premier, do you have anything you wish to add in relation to answering the question?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No.

### Queensland Economy

**Mr SAUNDERS:** My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer please advise the House of barriers to economic growth and confidence in Queensland?

**Mr PITT:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The very simple answer is the negativity that we are seeing from those opposite. The former treasurer, the member for Clayfield, used to say constantly that our economic strategy was about having a cup of tea, a Bex and a lie down. I think that is what they should do today. They need to settle down. They have asked the same question in five different ways. They really need to get on with it.

Before I answer the member for Maryborough's question, I take the opportunity to correct the shadow Treasurer. The shadow Treasurer referred to 660 Cardno jobs—

**Ms Trad:** Which one?

**Mr PITT:** Which one? I take that interjection from the Deputy Premier. The 660 Cardno jobs that were referred to are worldwide jobs. Some 60 per cent of them are in the Americas. He does not know what is going on. He is talking about overseas jobs. He cannot focus on any of the jobs here. He should be more worried about his job.

The real shadow treasurer has emerged today—the member for Clayfield. He has been sleeping. He has been in his cocoon for the last year. Maybe that is where the moth came from. He has been in a cocoon for the last year. He has finally emerged. The other Tim has been admonished and rejected. The shadow treasurer sitting next to the current shadow Treasurer wants his job.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Treasure, please make your answer relevant to the question.

**Mr PITT:** It goes absolutely to the heart of the question. What we are now in is the fourth year of the LNP talking down our state. Yesterday the shadow Treasurer made a range of claims in his matter of public interest. All of it I will talk to today.

Yesterday he continued to talk about the LNP and everything that happened when they were in government instead of what is happening under this government. The claim yesterday was that unemployment has not been brought down. Hard data from the ABS says that that is not true.

Let us have a look at job creation in the first year of government. Jobs created under the LNP jobs were 4,700. Jobs created under Labor are 71,700. If we are unable to use hard data to tell those opposite where they are going wrong, we have real problems. He has to start reading the ABS statistics as they come out.

When we look at the job creation situation, we see that 6.6 per cent is where they left unemployment when they left office. It is down to 6.1 per cent now. It is half a per cent lower under Labor. Why? That is because of our economic plan, and it is working.

We know when we start looking more closely to home at the member for Surfers Paradise that we only have to look at things like Jupiters resort and the \$850 million investment by the Star Entertainment Group and the managing director. He said, 'It underscores our confidence on the Gold Coast.' They keep talking the economy down. They keep saying there is no confidence. In the member for Surfers Paradise's backyard they are saying, 'We are full of confidence and we are building \$850 million worth of infrastructure.' He really has to get a grip or he will lose his job to the member for Clayfield.

### **Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply**

**Mr POWELL:** My question is to the Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply. I refer to the minister's answer to a question without notice yesterday where he failed to say what issues he discussed with Maurice Blackburn Lawyers on 21 September 2015, and I ask: can the minister clarify what portfolio issues he discussed with these plaintiff lawyers and will he say whose advice he took to meet with them?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for Glass House for his question. I was very clear yesterday in my answer to the question, and that was that the meeting was about portfolio matters. I was also very clear that the issue around the class action was not discussed at the meeting by any member at the meeting. I was very clear about that, so do not mislead this House. Specifically, we discussed infrastructure. Infrastructure was the topic of the meeting. It was a very good meeting and it was totally unrelated to the matter that the member is raising. If the member has any evidence, he should put it before the House and show us what his evidence is. But I can assure this House that there was no discussion whatsoever at that meeting of anything other than infrastructure issues.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Nanango, if you persist you will join the others on the list with a warning.

### **Mirani Electorate, Power Stations**

**Mr PEARCE:** My question is to the Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply. Minister, how will local businesses in the Mirani electorate benefit from maintenance works at nearby power stations?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the member for Mirani for his question. He is a man who is very supportive of keeping our power assets in public hands. As the member for Mirani knows, our government owned power generators are critical to keeping on the lights throughout this state and to keeping the wheels of industry turning. To do this vital job, power stations need to be very well managed and there needs to be continual investment to make sure they do the job.

In Queensland, we have a very fortuitous situation over the next four years in terms of demand for power in this state. We have a 15 per cent increase in electricity demand in stark contrast to New South Wales and Victoria, where they have a zero per cent or close to plateauing scenario over the next four years. That is very good news for jobs, for industry and for investment in Queensland.

Currently, the South Burnett region is experiencing an economic boost because of an unprecedented series of overhauls to generation units such as the one going on at Tarong Power Station—part of the Palaszczuk government's \$2.4 billion investment in infrastructure in the energy and water sectors across this state. Tarong, of course, is owned by Stanwell—

**Mrs Frecklington:** A planned overhaul.

**Mr BAILEY:** You might be interested, member for Nanango. This is in her electorate. Tarong is owned by the Stanwell Corporation, which, of course, is owned by the people of Queensland only because of the decision they made at the last election.

When we overhaul power stations we buy many goods and services from the local community, and this provides a boost to local economies and jobs. In the past four months alone over \$4 million has gone to motels, to caterers, to transport companies and to other small businesses in the South Burnett, in the member for Nanango's electorate, from the overhauls to unit 4 and unit 2 at Tarong Power Station. This money is in addition to the normal wages and purchases which are an operational necessity of the station.

We have around 380 contractors working on the unit 2 overhaul, which is expected to be completed next week after 42 days. What has this meant for local businesses? It has meant 5,500 bed nights at motels, 160 motel rooms each night, \$150,000 going to local transport services, as well as the usual expenditure. The Tarong Power Station and the neighbouring Meandu Mine will have five overhauls, while Stanwell will have a large overhaul to unit 2 from late June to mid-September.

This government is setting up this state for the growth in electricity demand not only through traditional power but also through renewables. We all know how much the opposition hates renewables. We are expanding supply in the renewable sector with our Solar 60 program and our Ergon EOI for 150 megawatts of power.

### Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply, and I ask: will the minister advise what steps, if any, the minister took to ensure that the class action clients of Maurice Blackburn knew of the minister's relationship with their lawyer given the Integrity Commissioner's advice setting out the conflict of interest issues arising as a result of that relationship?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for her question, and I note the continual direction in terms of my personal life that the opposition seems to be obsessed with. It is a little unfortunate. The member for Maroochy, who has been here since 1992, should understand that my role as the minister is to be accountable for the portfolios and the departments that I administer. It is not my role to speak for groups outside of the government. That is a matter for them. It is not appropriate for me as a minister of the crown to speak on behalf of external groups. That is a matter for them.

What I have done is I have acted appropriately and promptly as the minister. I have outlined that. In fact, yesterday I indicated that I would table the advice from the Integrity Commissioner and I actually forgot to. I have it here and will table that right now for the records of the parliament. I followed the advice of the Integrity Commissioner. I have been appropriate and timely on this matter at all times. It is my role as a minister to speak only in terms of my ministerial duties.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 1 September 2015, from the Integrity Commissioner, Mr Richard Bingham, to the Minister for Main Roads, Roads Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply, Hon. Mark Bailey [\[235\]](#).

### Racing Queensland

**Ms LINARD:** My question is to the Minister for Racing. Will the minister please inform the House about the status of Racing Queensland's Tracking Towards Sustainability initiative?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for her question and I know her interest in racing. I remind the House that it has been a year last week since the sickening acts of animal cruelty were exposed in the greyhound live baiting scandal. In response to a public outcry, the Palaszczuk government immediately moved to put an end to the cruelty and strengthen integrity in the sport. Hot on the heels of the greyhound scandal it emerged that Racing Queensland was in serious financial trouble. As outlined in the report, Racing Queensland recorded an \$11.2 million loss in the financial year 2014-15—a nearly \$13 million loss if you take the consolidated group loss—and was forecast to lost \$28 million this financial year.

The Queensland Audit Office—not our figures; the Queensland Audit Office's figures—required the government to underwrite these losses to avoid a qualified audit report. Racing Queensland was living beyond its means, spending money that had not even come in. It was increasing prize money

levels for some race meets by 50 per cent in the space of two years. At the same time, Queensland's premier racecourse, Eagle Farm, and Townsville racecourse were both off line for refurbishments, leading to reduced wagering turnover and industry returns. I am happy to say that I am looking forward to Eagle Farm coming on line in May.

This was completely an unsustainable situation. The government has now underwritten Racing Queensland to the tune of \$32 million. This is in addition to the \$21 million we have provided for a country racing support package outlined to the member for Dalrymple and the member for Mount Isa earlier today. We have always said that *Tracking towards sustainability* is a living document and that we will consult widely with the racing industry about its implementation, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Since becoming racing minister, I have regularly met with representatives across all of the codes, and there will be some great outcomes from this consultation process. For example, Racing Queensland has retained the key features of the Queensland Thoroughbred Incentive Scheme. The manager of Queensland's largest stud Glenlogan Park, Steve Morley, says that it is the best scheme of its type in Australia. Racing meets continue to occur throughout the state. I was at Doomben racecourse on Saturday, along with thousands of others, enjoying the race meetings. They are continuing. Nothing is stopping them.

I have been to race meets all over the state and I looked forward to them. We heard a lot about chickens yesterday. We have the member for Currumbin running around like Chicken Little, warning the sky is about to fall in when it comes to racing when nothing could be further from the truth. A recent letter from Goondiwindi Race Club treasurer, Graeme Scheu, thanks Racing Queensland for 'a fresh approach and hopefully a better result for country racing'. We support racing in this state.

**Mrs Stuckey** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Currumbin, those interjections are unnecessary.

### **Corrective Services, Milk**

**Mr KNUTH:** My question without notice is to the Premier. In December 2015 the Minister for Corrective Services stopped a government department from purchasing cheap, foreign UHT milk, and as a result local fresh milk is now being consumed in correctional facilities across Queensland. Will the Premier insist that other departments follow suit and ensure that Queensland produced milk is in the fridges of all state government departments and offices?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Dalrymple for that very important question. I am advised that Queensland Corrective Services provides 500 millilitres of milk per prisoner per day in order to meet dietary requirements. I am further advised that Queensland Corrective Services had an agreement with a particular company for the supply of fresh milk and the arrangement expired on 18 July 2015. A new tender process has commenced and is still in progress.

The issue which the member for Dalrymple raises is a very important one, and I know that the issue was addressed very quickly. Where we can purchase produce which is locally based and locally grown, I believe that should be embedded in the way my government does business. I will urge all ministers to see what they can do in their particular areas, but I think it shows great initiative from Queensland Corrective Services in relation to that particular issue. We look forward to seeing what else we can do in relation to other contracts and looking after local products as needed.

In relation to our Accelerated Works Program, we have brought forward over \$400 million of accelerated works projects across this region. When the tenders go out, we make it very clear in that tender process that priority must be given to local people, so local jobs. Another provision of those tenders will include local traineeships. I want to thank the Department of Transport and Main Roads especially, because most of those contracts come under that portfolio. That will mean local people will get that work.

When I have been travelling around the state, what I have been hearing very clearly from people living in Cairns and Mackay is that people were travelling up from Brisbane. I want to see local employment which can sustain those communities and give local people those opportunities. As we roll out the Accelerated Works Program across the state, I want to make sure that we give a very clear priority to local contractors. This is a very important government initiative to ensure that we are delivering locally on the ground. I do not want to see people leave western communities or northern regions because they cannot get work, first and foremost. We will endeavour to do everything that we

possibly can, but I thank the member for asking a very good policy question. It is good to see a policy question being asked by the member for Dalrymple, unlike those opposite who are obsessed with themselves and divisions. We see no clear direction from them when it comes to policy within this state.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Nanango, due to your continuous interjections you now join the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer with your first warning under standing order 253A. I urge you to desist from making unnecessary interjections.

### **Jobs, Indigenous Communities**

**Mr PYNE:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Public Works. Will the minister please outline what steps the Palaszczuk government is taking to create housing and employment opportunities for Indigenous communities?

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for Cairns for the question.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members, the question does not need a whole lot of comment.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I would also like to thank the member for Cairns for the kind invitation to join him in meeting the constituents of Cairns in two weeks time in the electorate. I will be on the ground with the member for Cairns talking to tradies about security of payments—

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those comments have no relevance to the question.

**Mr de BRENNI:** As I said, I will be joining the member for Cairns talking to tradies about security of payments in the construction and building industry. We will be meeting with public housing tenants to discuss our new fairness policies. I know how passionate the member for Cairns is about delivering jobs in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and how they play an integral role in moulding the future of this great state.

The support that we provide in Indigenous communities helps build hope for a future where everyone—no matter where they live and no matter their background—has a safe and secure home. This future should include not only a home for those who need our support but also the opportunity to live and work in their local community. As I reported earlier today, in the 2015-16 financial year the Palaszczuk government is investing over \$633 million in housing across the state. We are constructing over 530 new homes. We are purchasing and upgrading dozens more and building over 260 new homes in Indigenous communities, and we are delivering over \$17.3 million worth of housing for government employees in those remote locations.

I recently joined the Treasurer and the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships along with the police minister to inspect our progress on these projects in both the Torres Strait and Cape York. I am pleased to report to the House that I observed the construction of these building projects and I can report that they are progressing to plan. Even more pleasing is that our staff on the ground are working with local communities to ensure that this construction leads to not only local jobs today but also jobs into the future.

This government is investing in vital infrastructure that will help support the needs of these communities. There are many tangible benefits that cannot be understated. Communities will have safe and secure homes, they will gain access to essential services, and they will be able to access new employment opportunities. Our Capital Works Program in Indigenous communities will directly support over 720 jobs this year. We are committed to partnerships with Indigenous communities in delivering safe homes and local jobs. Creating jobs as well as caring, safe and connected communities are key commitments of the Palaszczuk government.

### **Ethics Committee Report**

**Mr SEENEY:** My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier advise the House where in Ethics Committee report No. 162, which the Premier has been waving around all afternoon, there is any indication that her chief of staff provided any information to the Ethics Committee, or gave any evidence to the Ethics Committee or was cleared in any way by the Ethics Committee of the unauthorised disclosure of the proceedings of the committee?

**Ms Palaszczuk:** Whose chief of staff? Mine?

**Mr SEENEY:** Your chief of staff.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My chief of staff is not mentioned in that report, to the best of my knowledge. No-one in my office is mentioned in the Ethics Committee report, but there is someone mentioned and that is the Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members, we are not going to have a debate. Premier, did you have anything further you wish to add to answer the question?

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. I ask you, Mr Speaker, to reconsider your ruling on the previous question that was asked by the Leader of the Opposition where you ruled a question about the Premier's chief of staff out of order on the basis that it had been considered by the committee. The Premier has just conceded that—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Callide, the advice I have received from the Clerk is that those comments are not accurate. I did not rule the question that you are referring to out of order. Perhaps after we have had a chance to look at *Hansard* I am open to consider rulings I have made if they need to be made. My ruling was that the question could be asked and it was not precluded by the standing orders.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** And I answered it.

**Mr Seeneey** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I am not able to influence how a person chooses to answer the question. Premier, do you have anything further to add?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No.

## Drought

**Mr HARPER:** My question is to the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries. Will the minister advise the House if the recent rains have been sufficient to break the drought? Can the minister give an update on how the Palaszczuk government is assisting producers?

**Ms DONALDSON:** I thank the member for the question. Like him, I am very pleased to note that some producers have received rain since Christmas. Indeed, some have been celebrating full dams for the first time in years, but as we approach the end of the wet season the overall rainfall outlook for much of the state can best be described as touch and go. Overall, much more rain is needed. The next six weeks in particular are critical for summer active pastures and for planting rains. After that, shorter days and cooler temperatures will limit pasture growth and begin to limit cropping options.

Local drought committees will meet in mid-April to make recommendations on the status of drought declarations and revocations. I have to inform the House that at this stage widespread revocations are not expected. Eighty-six per cent of Queensland is still drought declared, but producers can be assured that the Palaszczuk government is honouring our election commitment to support existing drought relief arrangements until 2018. At the same time we are working with industry to develop a suite of measures to assist primary producers to improve climate risk management and long-term preparedness strategies.

In accordance with our election commitment to review assistance levels, we have enhanced and increased support. We increased the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme cap from \$30,000 to \$40,000 for producers in their third and subsequent year of drought. We have streamlined the freight subsidy process for charities. We have made donations to a number of drought charities. And we have provided \$2.9 million specifically for mental health support in drought communities.

The Palaszczuk government's drought assistance package totals over \$52 million over the next four years. In the current financial year alone, \$32.9 million has been allocated to DRAS. Assistance from other Queensland government agencies in 2015-16 includes: \$4 million on social and community support, \$1.5 million on primary mental health support, \$2.5 million on fixed electricity charge relief for irrigators and \$4.1 million on waivers of annual water licences and rebate on land rent.

My department has processed 2,000 freight subsidy claims valued at \$6.7 million and 628 emergency water infrastructure rebate claims worth over \$5 million. This provides producers with practical assistance to maintain their businesses when they need it most. More than \$850,000 has been provided to charities to deliver drought support such as donated fodder. The Palaszczuk government's drought package aims to help producers, their families and rural communities. Wet or dry, we will stand by our primary producers and their communities.

### Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply

**Mr CRIPPS:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply. I refer to the minister's meeting with Maurice Blackburn on 21 September 2015. In the interests of addressing a perceived conflict of interest, will the minister undertake to table both a copy of the minutes of the meeting as well as the attendee list by the end of today's sitting of the House?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Let me be very clear about what the Integrity Commissioner's advice was in relation to my letter to him. He said—

I thus endorse the position which you have taken to date in absenting yourself from any Cabinet or departmental briefing about the class action.

The meeting that the member for Hinchinbrook is referring to was a meeting about infrastructure. There was no person—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, I am trying to hear the minister's answer. It is relevant.

**Mr BAILEY:** The matter for discussion was infrastructure. There was no person present at that meeting who had anything to do with the class action, full stop. There was no discussion of the class action by any person at that meeting, full stop. Just to clarify, the people present at the meeting did not include the person I was seeing at the time. I do not know that I can be any clearer than that.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** Let me just finish. I do not know about the member for Hinchinbrook, but I have a lot of meetings every day. We do not take minutes of every meeting. If we did that, no minister in history would sleep. It is a ridiculous proposition put forward by the member for Hinchinbrook. He should know better. He has been a minister. He knows—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. This is not an opportunity for debate. I think you have answered the question.

**Mr BAILEY:** Certainly. Thank you.

**Mr CRIPPS:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. Can we take it from the minister's answer to the question that he has refused to make such an undertaking?

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

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Hinchinbrook, what was your point of order?

**Mr CRIPPS:** The question was pretty specific.

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, that is not a point of order. Leader of the House, what is your point of order?

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I am calling to your attention that the member for Hinchinbrook is debating the matter, not making a proper point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Leader of the House. Member for Hinchinbrook, I have ruled that there is no point of order. Thank you, Leader of the House.

### Flu Season

**Mr MADDEN:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Will the minister update the House on initiatives to assist staff prepare for the flu season in Ipswich?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the member for Ipswich West for his question. It was a pleasure to visit Ipswich Hospital recently with both the member for Ipswich West and the member for Ipswich and to see the important work that is happening at that hospital as we prepare for the flu season. Obviously, it is always a challenge in our health system every winter when flu strikes Queensland. That has a double impact—it has an impact on the general population who fall ill and it has an impact on our staff who also fall ill and that creates some operational difficulties at hospitals. I have asked all hospital and health services to make appropriate plans through the Department of Health to be prepared for the flu season this year.

I was pleased to visit Ipswich on 3 February with the member for Ipswich and the member for Ipswich West. Obviously, it is a very important and growing part of Queensland. This government increased the budget allocation to the West Moreton Hospital and Health Service by \$12.7 million last year to a record \$420 million. That part of Queensland will grow significantly. It is estimated that the West Moreton Hospital and Health Service will cater for a population that is projected to grow to 637,000 people by 2036—much of that growth being in Springfield and the Ripley Valley. That sort of growth requires new investments.

One of the reasons I went to the hospital with the members for Ipswich and Ipswich West was to see the new ward 6C, a new 26-bed ward that will come on line very soon. We went to see the important work that was being done there. It involves an important capital investment of a million dollars from the hospital and health service and that is being led by the building and asset services manager at the hospital. It is a great local project being driven by the hospital team and involving local contractors as well. It is getting great efficiency because the hospital and health service's local team knows the hospital well and knows how to best develop that 26-bed ward.

This will take pressure off staff. It will provide more services for members of the local community and that will be supported by an increased number of staff. I can say that 33 interns who finished their medical degree last year started work at the hospital this year, as did 89 graduate nurses. We are rebuilding the front line that was reduced under the previous government under the Leader of the Opposition. More staff, more nurses and more people at the front line—that is one of the things the Premier has asked me to do. I will deliver that for this government but, more importantly, for the people of Queensland.

### Country Racing, Funding

**Mrs STUCKEY:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Racing. Can the minister outline where the government's country racing package is contained in the Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review that was published in December? If not, can the minister guarantee that it has been approved by the CBRC?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The country racing package starts from 1 July next financial year. It is a \$21 million package which is guaranteed by this government to cover any shortfalls for country racing in regards to Tracking Towards Sustainability. That is a guarantee that this government gives to country racing and it is a guarantee that we will be ensuring we meet.

From 1 July the country racing package will ensure that they will have full prize money entitlements preserved for at least two years. There is an extension over the four-year period for additional funds in relation to prize money plus there is money there in the budget that will assist country racing to look at ways that they can build capacity, put good governance structures in place and use those funds for other types of equipment and needs over the four-year term. That money is there in the budget. That money has been guaranteed to them. Country racing is safe in the hands of Labor. Labor will deliver for those country racing meets. They are very happy when I speak with them, and I have met with many of them. In particular, I notice the letter we received recently from the Goondiwindi Race Club thanking us for listening and consulting with them. They can see a very bright future for country racing as well.

If there is anybody in this House who has the interests of country racing at heart, it is this Labor government. We want to see country racing prosper. We know of the benefits that it brings to the local community. We know that it brings them all out to the race days. I had a meeting in the lift this morning with the member for—I cannot remember which one it was.

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** With the assistance of my colleagues, it was the member for Gregory. I often refer to him as a term of endearment that I know cannot be used in the House. It was the member for Gregory. They were very keen to know that there is two years of guaranteed funding there for them. We will deliver for country racing. They know that we are on their side. We know the benefits that it delivers, and I will continue to consult, visit and work with them to make sure that country racing survives in this state, unlike the misinformation being peddled by the member for Currumbin. If she ever wants a briefing on what we are doing she can ring me any time and I will be happy to provide that full briefing to her so that misinformation can stop.

### Students, Disability

**Mr POWER:** My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the minister explain to the House how the Palaszczuk government is supporting students with a disability?

**Ms JONES:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I know this is something that is very close to his heart as I believe his father worked in the education of children with hearing impairment for more than 40 years. Our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that every child in Queensland has the opportunity to achieve to their potential. As honourable members heard this morning from the honourable Premier, today we announce an Australian first, with the first autism hub being built right

here in Queensland. It has opened its doors and it is providing support to families and schools right across Queensland. Indeed, we are already getting interest from people interstate about coming up to Queensland to see how this autism hub is working. Really excitingly, I imagine for all members of parliament—and we can be bipartisan on this today—there will be eight autism coaches who will be travelling right across Queensland based in all education regions providing support on the ground to schools and school communities. I encourage all members of parliament to work with these coaches and their school communities to provide that support.

Not only are we providing support through the autism hub but also, as honourable members would know as they have heard me speak about many times in this parliament, we are delivering a record \$9 billion investment in education in Queensland because we will always put education first. As part of that, almost \$1 billion is going towards the support of students with disability. This year we have seen an increase of 1,300—

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Ms JONES:** I thought this is something on which we could be bipartisan. I do not know what the member is calling out, but I want to talk about how we are boosting support for children with disabilities in our schools. I thought this was something on which we could get agreement this afternoon because, quite frankly, question time has been pretty boring if you ask me. I am excited that I have some exciting news to talk about here today.

There are 1,300 additional students. I am very pleased that, because of the allocation we have delivered in our budget, we will have the same teacher-to-student ratio this year, even with the additional 1,300 students. This means that we will have 2,896 full-time-equivalent teachers working and supporting our students with disability. This can only happen because of the investment we are making in education, like the Cairns special school—and I understand that the minister will be going up to Cairns in two weeks. However, I will be there next week and I will be looking forward to delivering on our election commitment when it comes to the Cairns special school.


When it comes to education, there is a clear contrast between the LNP government that spent their time cutting the number of teachers in Queensland schools and our government that is boosting teacher numbers and teacher supporters, addressing class sizes, addressing the curriculum and listening to the people of our workforce. Instead of shutting the door on teachers like they did for three years, we listen to teachers, and that means that we are now delivering an Australian first with our autism hub and record funding for students with disability.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Question time has concluded.

## FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TRAINING OMBUDSMAN) AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 1 December 2015 (see p. 2974).

### Second Reading

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (4.15 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am proud to rise to speak in support of the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. This government supports training opportunities for Queenslanders that are accessible, affordable and provide the quality training that Queenslanders deserve. On 1 December 2015, the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015 was introduced into the Queensland parliament. It was initially referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, but the Committee of the Legislative Assembly varied the referral of the bill to the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee for consideration. The committee tabled its report on 12 February 2016. I now table a copy of the Queensland government's response to the report.

*Tabled paper:* Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee: Report No. 10, 55th Parliament—Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015, government response [\[236\]](#).

I would first like to thank the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee for its thorough consideration of the bill. I note that before preparing its report, the committee received a briefing from the Department of Education and Training and considered written submissions from stakeholders. I

thank the chair, the member for Townsville, for his guardianship of the legislation and all committee members from both sides of the House. Of course, I thank the committee for the recommendation that the bill be passed. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of stakeholders and their valuable input into the committee's consideration of the bill.

The government is committed to creating a sector-specific Training Ombudsman. This bill delivers on our election commitment by amending the Further Education and Training Act 2014 to establish the Queensland Training Ombudsman. The purpose of the Training Ombudsman's role is to: receive complaints about the provision or quality of vocational education and training; help people make a complaint to another entity, such as Australian Standards Quality Authority; refer a complaint to another relevant entity; give complainants information or advice; monitor the outcome of complaints; make recommendations to the Department of Education and Training chief executive about apprentices and trainees; identify and report to the Minister for Training and Skills about issues in the provision of VET and its quality; and make recommendations to the minister about ways to improve the department's systems, policies and processes to enhance the quality of Queensland's pre-qualified VET suppliers and supervising registered training organisations; matters related to apprentices and trainees; strategies to improve the quality of VET; carry out promotional and educational activities for the training sector; undertake or promote reviews and research by the Training Ombudsman; and carry out any other functions conferred on the Training Ombudsman under the FET Act or another act. The committee has prepared a comprehensive report on the bill. I am pleased that the committee unanimously recommends that the bill be passed.

I turn now to the two additional recommendations that the committee has suggested. Recommendation 2 suggests that proposed section 112D of the bill be amended to include a function for the Training Ombudsman of promotion and education about the Training Ombudsman's role. The government supports this recommendation. Section 112D(1)(i) currently provides that a function of the Training Ombudsman is to 'carry out promotional and educational activities relating to vocational education and training in Queensland'. In its submission to the committee, the Queensland Teachers' Union suggested that the promotional and educational function of the Training Ombudsman should focus on carrying out 'promotional and educational activities relating to the role of the ombudsman, especially with regard to the provision of vocational education and training in Queensland and its quality'. I intend to move amendments to give effect to the committee's recommendation during consideration in detail.

Recommendation 3 of the committee suggests that the bill be amended to correct a numbering error in proposed section 112D. I thank the QTU for identifying in its submission a minor error in the clause numbering of section 112D in that it contains sections 112D(1) and 112D(3), but no section 112D(2). The government supports this recommendation, and I will move amendments to give effect to the committee's recommendation during consideration in detail.

We are taking these steps because we are committed to a strong training and vocational education sector. Queensland consumers do not currently have access to a sector-specific independent complaints mechanism to deal with the wide range of issues that may arise in the VET sector. The Queensland government provides significant funding through the purchasing of training from prequalified suppliers. In addition, apprenticeships and traineeships continue to be regulated in Queensland through the Further Education and Training Act 2014.

We have all witnessed the recent proliferation of complaints about the practices of certain providers in the VET marketplace. I do not doubt that just about every member could share their own concerns about the marketing and quality of training being provided, the approach to those most vulnerable in communities in relation to how these courses are promoted and how people are signed up to potentially thousands of dollars' worth of fees under these courses. The Training Ombudsman can play an important role in addressing these issues by identifying risks early, by receiving complaints and by addressing systemic issues. The Training Ombudsman will be able to provide support for consumers to navigate the VET system, make complaints and be assisted to resolve disputes, whether informally or through a formal complaint to the relevant regulatory body. This can be important support for students, teachers, businesses, employers and family members who, even with the best of intentions, can struggle to navigate the complexities of the VET sector and the various mechanisms of regulation across state and federal jurisdictions. I know that training providers themselves are already bringing these issues to the attention of our interim Training Ombudsman relating to other training providers regarding the quality and marketing of products.

I am committed to Queensland having the best VET system in Australia. Although measures for improving training quality and the revision of standards for providers have recently been implemented at the national level, the establishment of the Training Ombudsman aims to assist the Queensland

government to improve the quality of VET in this state. As I have said previously, I do not believe that the responsibility and oversight of the quality of training in Queensland should be left solely to the national government and ASQA to oversee. Queensland has a responsibility to ensure that we have a mechanism where people can easily find information, know how to progress complaints and have those complaints investigated to ensure that we do have the best system in Queensland. On behalf of the government I will continue to play an active role at the national level through cooperation through ministerial councils, but I am also determined that Queensland will play its part in delivering the training opportunities that Queenslanders deserve. A Queensland based Training Ombudsman will help consumers navigate the complexities of making a complaint and help to resolve those complaints. It will also have a role in identifying systemic issues with the quality and provision of VET and advise on strategies for my consideration to resolve these issues.

There is a wide range of stakeholders across the VET sector: providers, clients, employers and regulatory bodies. The Training Ombudsman will provide complete wraparound support for students, apprentices and trainees to assist them to address issues in relation to the VET services that they are being provided. The Training Ombudsman will be tasked to identify systemic issues about the provision and quality of VET in Queensland—which may be identified via complaints—and report to the Minister for Training and Skills on strategies to resolve these issues.

Importantly, the bill establishes the Training Ombudsman as an independent statutory position. The key functions of the Training Ombudsman include receiving complaints about the quality and provision of VET by RTOs and assisting complainants to have their issues addressed by the most appropriate agency. Under the bill, the Training Ombudsman will be able to assess complaints regarding prequalified supplier RTOs and make recommendations to the chief executive of the Department of Education and Training about RTOs who have a funding contract with DET or who supervise apprentices and trainees. The Training Ombudsman will also assess complaints in relation to the provision of apprenticeships and traineeships and make recommendations to the DET chief executive.

For matters that fall within the jurisdiction of the Australian Skills Quality Authority, ASQA, or another agency such as the Office of Fair Trading, the Training Ombudsman, with the consent of the parties, can attempt to mediate a resolution in the first instance. Where a resolution cannot be mediated, the Training Ombudsman can refer a complaint to ASQA or another relevant regulatory agency to progress the complainant's concerns. The Training Ombudsman will also be responsible for monitoring the outcomes of complaints, identifying systemic issues arising out of complaints and reporting to the Minister for Training and Skills on strategies to resolve these issues.

The bill provides that the Office of the Training Ombudsman is a public service office, and the Training Ombudsman is the head of the office. Providing that the Office of the Training Ombudsman is a public service office ensures the independence of the office. As the head of the office, in relation to the staff of the office the Training Ombudsman has all of a chief executive's functions and powers. In addition, the bill states that the Training Ombudsman controls the office. The bill enshrines the independence of the Training Ombudsman by providing that the Training Ombudsman is not subject to direction about the way the Training Ombudsman performs his or her functions.

While the Training Ombudsman is independent, the bill provides that the minister may refer a matter to the Training Ombudsman to review or research the matter and provide advice or make a recommendation. For example, the minister could ask the Training Ombudsman to review school based apprenticeship arrangements in Queensland to highlight best practice examples and identify impediments to growth or outcomes; however, the minister cannot direct the nature of the advice that the Training Ombudsman provides. The bill also provides that the minister may issue a written statement of expectations to the Training Ombudsman stating the minister's expectations for the performance of the Training Ombudsman's functions and, by written notice, ask the Training Ombudsman for information or documents about a stated matter relevant to the Training Ombudsman's functions.

The Department of Education and Training conducted targeted consultation on the draft bill with the following key stakeholders: Queensland Industrial Relations Commission; Energy Skills Queensland; Queensland Ombudsman; TAFE Queensland; ASQA; Australian Council of Private Education and Training; East Coast Group Apprenticeships; Apprenticeships Queensland; Queensland Fitness, Sport & Recreation Skills Alliance; Motor Trades Association Queensland; Office of Fair Trading; Queensland Council of Unions; Together union; and Careers Australia. There was general support for the bill and the introduction of an independent statutory position to assist VET stakeholders.

In July last year I also hosted a stakeholder round table to discuss the reinstatement of the Queensland Training Ombudsman, inviting participants from right across the sector. Participants included CEOs from the Queensland branch of the Australian Council of Private Education Training, Apprenticeships Queensland and TAFE Queensland. The chief commissioner of ASQA, the executive director of the Office of Fair Trading and a number of other significant industry representatives participated. I would like to sincerely thank those who attended and offered their perspectives to help shape the role of the Training Ombudsman. Their ideas and vision for the sector were welcomed. I certainly do appreciate ASQA, being the federal body overseeing registered training organisations, for their support of the establishment of a Queensland Training Ombudsman. The diverse insights helped ensure that the new Training Ombudsman will address the needs of the sector.

On 14 September 2015 a ministerial charter established an interim Training Ombudsman role as part of operational requirements. The interim Training Ombudsman has established an online and telephone presence. A number of discussions have been held by the interim Training Ombudsman with related stakeholders and agencies regarding future memoranda of understanding. I am heartened by the response to the interim ombudsman, with MPs already embracing the office as a useful tool to support constituents. I know that a number of issues and complaints have already been brought forward, not just by apprentices and trainees but also by RTOs, employers and other people in the general community raising issues about training.

I thank the interim Training Ombudsman, Mr Geoff Favell, and his team for the enthusiasm they have brought to the role, as well as their extensive experience and the industry knowledge they have to contribute and set up the Office of the Training Ombudsman. Following the passage of and assent to the bill, a significant appointment process will be undertaken to appoint the Training Ombudsman.


This bill delivers on the government's commitment to drive jobs and highlights the need to focus on training and skills because to grow our economy, deliver new industries and foster innovation Queensland needs a workforce that is up to the challenge. That is why quality training and skills are so important to future job creation and innovation.

The establishment of the Queensland Training Ombudsman's office and the Queensland Training Ombudsman was already allocated funding in the 2015-16 budget. A commitment of \$4 million to deliver on our election commitment to establish the Queensland Training Ombudsman has already been made.

This is just the latest example of this government delivering for jobs for Queenslanders. We have repealed the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Act so that Queensland's public training assets are rightly back in the hands of Queensland people. We have delivered our Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, which is already seeing thousands of Queenslanders being given the opportunity to get the skills and experience they need to get back into the workforce and build a career. We are delivering on our commitment to rescuing TAFE because we, like most Queenslanders, recognise the need for a strong public provider of vocational education and training that is accessible, affordable and of high quality. Our \$34 million over three years will deliver up to 100 new staff, increase support services in rural areas and see further investment in foundation skills.

The Training Ombudsman will play an important role in maintaining and improving the quality of the training provided to Queenslanders to strive for better outcomes. We do all of this because we are committed to jobs, jobs creation and quality training and skills development for our current and future workforce because, to grow our economy, deliver new industries and foster innovation, as I say, Queensland needs a workforce that is up to the challenge.

This bill is a timely reminder of our priority to work with industry and public providers to develop jobs for the future and ensure we have the skilled workforce our economic growth depends on. We do this because we are delivering on our election commitment to Queenslanders. We do this because that is what Labor governments believe in: providing the opportunity for all Queenslanders to access training and skills to get into the workforce and contribute, to give Queenslanders security that they or their sons and daughters will have the chance to be trained and build a career and that when they enter into training they get the quality service they deserve. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (4.32 pm): I rise to speak to the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. If there is a bureaucracy to be found, this Labor government will find it. If there is a way to waste taxpayers' money, this Labor government will find it. If people wonder why we have a debt of \$76 billion, getting closer to \$80 billion, for the answer they need go no further than the initiative this minister has brought to the House tonight. This

initiative will cost \$5 million over three years—\$5 million that will be poured down the drain because there is absolutely no need whatsoever for a training ombudsman. For this reason, the opposition will be opposing the bill.

We need to go through the history of the Training Ombudsman to actually understand where we have got to today and why the Labor Party is bringing this bill to the House. The previous Labor government established a training ombudsman which was aimed at providing an independent office for resolving complaints pertaining to apprenticeships and traineeships. This was at a time when the state had jurisdiction and full responsibility for the regulation of the VET sector. Then in 2009 the former Queensland government commissioned a wideranging independent review of state government boards, committees and statutory authorities. The Brokering Balance report, known as the Weller review, assessed 459 organisations to establish which organisations were still necessary and which could be abolished. The report recommended dismantling the office of the training ombudsman in Queensland as it was seen as being unnecessary red tape and regulation, but the previous Labor government ignored that report.

Then major changes occurred with regard to the jurisdiction of the VET sector. In 2012 the former federal Labor government undertook reforms of the vocational education and training sector including the establishment of a national VET regulator responsible for the regulation of registered training organisations, known as the Australian Skills Quality Authority, ASQA. Following the establishment of ASQA, responsibility for the registration and regulation of RTOs was of course transferred to the federal government. Therefore, a training ombudsman was no longer relevant as the position had no control of issues outside of their jurisdiction. So the previous LNP government ceased the training ombudsman in 2012 as it was considered a duplication of service that was already provided through many agencies including ASQA and the Department of Education and Training.

This bill claims to form a single point of contact for complaints about the vocational education and training sector. The role of the ombudsman will include receiving complaints about the VET sector, helping people make complaints to or refer complaints to another entity, giving complainants information or advice, monitoring the outcome of complaints, undertaking reviews and research and making recommendations to the minister about the VET sector. I will come back to those roles shortly.

The Training Ombudsman is about adding red tape and additional cost to the VET sector. There are already independent bodies capable of dealing with complaints: the Office of Fair Trading, the Queensland Ombudsman, the Overseas Students Ombudsman, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commissioner, Fair Work Australia, QCAT, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and, of course, ASQA itself.


The Training Ombudsman that is being proposed by the minister will attempt to deal with complaints that fall outside its jurisdiction. The ombudsman will have no power to make binding decisions in relation to the registration or regulation of training organisations. To enforce any decisions the ombudsman will have to refer complaints to the relevant organisations for investigation and possible action. The ombudsman will essentially act as a complaints management and referral agency at the cost of \$5 million over three years.

I return to the bill to look at the functions of the Training Ombudsman. If colleagues have this bill in front of them, I recommend that they have a look at it because it is something to behold. The Training Ombudsman has the following functions: to receive complaints—and the bill talks about what types of complaints they might be; to help people in making complaints; to refer complaints to a referral entity; to give information or advice to complainants; and to monitor the outcome of complaints. This is nothing at all about resolving these complaints. This bill and the objectives of the ombudsman are vague, nebulous, bureaucratic and a total waste of money.

This is a Clayton's ombudsman—the ombudsman you have when you are not having an ombudsman. The government has a responsibility to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent responsibly. The department has reported that 25 complaints were made to the ombudsman between 14 September and 4 December. I am not a great mathematician, but that rate of complaints—

**A government member:** We know that!

**Mr MANDER:** I entirely admit that. I could count to six; that was about it during football. Given the rate of complaint—that is, 25 complaints in that period of time—that means that each complaint made to the Training Ombudsman will cost at least \$15,000 each. Is that good value for money? Is that good value for taxpayers' money? I think not. The establishment of a Training Ombudsman is totally unnecessary, a complete duplication of services already offered by many other agencies and an absolute total waste of taxpayers' money. That is why the opposition will be opposing the bill.

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (4.39 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. As the committee chair, I firstly want to thank the work and efforts of the committee and of course the secretariat for their work associated with this bill. I also want to recognise two members of that committee who have since left that committee, not because of the bill but because of the reshuffle. I want to acknowledge the member for Lytton, Joan Pease, for her work on this bill and also the member for Toowoomba South, John McVeigh, as the former deputy chair. It is interesting to hear that those opposite are not supporting this bill, because when the committee discussed this bill it was unanimously approved and supported by the committee. Perhaps one faction was not talking to the other faction and has since decided to change its mind, so it was interesting to hear the member for Everton say that the opposition is not going to support it now.

The vocational education and training, or VET, sector plays an important role in creating training opportunities that lead to career paths for many Queenslanders across the state. I have firsthand knowledge of this, considering that I worked in the education sector for many years and worked with those in the vocational education and training sector, particularly those in TAFE, who do a sensational job of vocational education and training right across Queensland. The VET sector can be complex as training is provided by both public sector and private sector organisations and the regulation of VET spans both Australian and state government agencies.

Prior to the introduction of the interim VET Training Ombudsman by the Minister for Training and Skills in September 2015, any concerns and complaints about apprenticeships and registered training organisations, or RTOs as they are referred to, were dealt with by a number of state and national agencies. The nature of the complaint or the entity providing the training determined which agency to lodge the complaint with. Of course, this meant that complainants often endured the magic roundabout of bureaucratic bouncing from one department to the other until the complainant lost faith and gave up. Often complainants were referred between the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the Office of Fair Trading, the Queensland Ombudsman, the Overseas Students Ombudsman or the Tuition Protection Service, just to name a few.

The Australian Skills Quality Authority received 1,512 complaints about VET providers in 2014-15. The most common categories of complaints were training, marketing and assessment, trainers and assessors, dishonest conduct and behaviour. Those complaint categories made up just over 60 per cent of complaints received. Common issues identified by complainants in 2014 included the marketing of providers and courses to vulnerable individuals—and members will hear quite a bit of that from a number of speakers this evening as we address this bill—including courses paid for through government funding and courses where the student incurs a debt; courses where the amount of training delivered to achieve the qualification did not allow the student to gain the necessary skills and knowledge; training relating to child care, which is quite a big issue; and the marketing practices of third parties such as brokers, recruitment agencies and non-registered training organisations.

We have all no doubt heard of various dodgy RTOs offering incentives to sign up to VET courses which have included reduction of training costs, cashback offers after enrolment, fast-tracking of courses and, of course, we have all heard of those offering laptops or iPads and even overseas trips. The problem is that these incentives come with a catch: either the incentive does not appear or the fine print of committing to the training course or subjects incurs hefty costs. Those dodgy RTOs prey on those people who have low levels of English literacy levels or proficiencies and those who are most vulnerable to scams. This bill establishes a single point for complaints about the VET sector in a complex system where complaints about specific matters are dealt with by one of a number of agencies. As the department advised the committee, it can be difficult for consumers to know where to direct complaints and seek resolution of issues. The interim Training Ombudsman explained the complexity for consumers who have a complaint that might involve more than one of the existing complaint agencies. He said—

One of the issues with complaints about the VET sector is that it invariably covers a number of areas. So the Ombudsman, and certainly the interim Ombudsman at the moment, is providing that conduit for people to monitor their complaints and refer parts of it to the various centres but keep an eye on how it is tracking.

He went on to say—

Quite often it is not just an ASQA issue, or it is not just a Commonwealth government issue or an Office of Fair Trading issue; it covers everything. So that is part of the benefit of the Training Ombudsman.

The functions of the Training Ombudsman are broader than those of the former training ombudsman and include functions relevant to a role in identifying issues about the quality of VET, undertaking reviews and research and providing advice to the minister and include specifically the

following functions: receiving complaints about the provision of or quality of vocational education and training by an RTO, a supervising RTO or an employer of an apprenticeship or trainee; a matter relating to an apprenticeship or traineeship, including decisions by the director-general of the department about a training contract or the declaration of a nominal term for an apprenticeship; compliance with the FET Act by an apprentice, trainee, employer or supervising registered training organisation; a prescribed decision under the act by the director-general of the department; and matters involving a prequalified provider.

Other functions include to help people in making complaints to a referral entity, for example ASQA; refer a complaint to a referral entity or deal with it under the FET Act; give complainants information or advice; monitor the outcomes of those complaints; make recommendations to the chief executive about apprenticeships and traineeships, including the declaration of or nominal term for an apprenticeship or traineeship; identify and report to the minister about issues in the provision of VET and its quality; and make recommendations to the minister about ways to improve the department's systems, policies and processes regarding prequalified suppliers and supervising RTOs, matters relating to apprenticeships and traineeships, and strategies to improve the quality of VET. The Training Ombudsman will also carry out promotional and educational activities relating to VET; undertake or promote reviews of or research into matters relating to the Training Ombudsman's functions, including reviews or research requested by the minister; and other functions conferred on the Training Ombudsman by the FET Act or another act.

The bill does not specify who may complain, which enables any interested person or organisation to use the Training Ombudsman's services. A brochure about the Training Ombudsman states that assistance, information or advice about any aspect of the VET system may be sought by students enrolled with RTOs, apprentices and trainees, employers, trainers, other government agencies, training providers, industry bodies, parents and/or guardians. The bill provides the Training Ombudsman with the discretion to decline to deal with a complaint if he or she reasonably believes that the complainant does not have sufficient interest in the matter or that the complaint lacks substance, is frivolous or vexatious, or that dealing with the complaint is unnecessary or unjustifiable. As stated, the functions of the Training Ombudsman include receiving complaints, helping people make complaints to another body, and giving information and advice to a complainant about their complaint.

The bill does not specify explicitly that complaints may be resolved informally or mediated. However, the policy intent is that the Training Ombudsman will formally resolve any complaints, therefore, answering that question asked by the member for Everton. The explanatory notes state—

For matters that fall within the jurisdiction of another agency, such as the Australian Skills Quality Authority or the Office of Fair Trading, the training ombudsman can assist the parties to attempt to resolve the matter in the first instance.

Again, that answers the question asked by the member for Everton. The explanatory notes state further—

Where a resolution cannot be reached, the training ombudsman can refer the complaint to the relevant agency to progress the complainant's concerns or assist the complainant to make the complaint to the other agency.

The function of the Training Ombudsman may not permit him or her to deal with a complaint regarding a decision that QCAT has reviewed or there is an application for review, or an appeal is started in the Industrial Relations Commission, or Industrial Court, or a decision has been made on appeal by one of those bodies. With the reintroduction of the Training Ombudsman, after receiving feedback from the Queensland Teachers' Union, the committee has recommended that a further function necessary for them to undertake is to promote and educate consumers about the role of the Training Ombudsman. That would provide consumers with a complaints and resolution pathway from the point of initial enrolment, thereby engaging them in further protecting themselves against a dodgy RTO.


Finally, it is necessary to ensure that the Training Ombudsman remains independent and has a high level of accountability to perform their role. Therefore, the Training Ombudsman is not subject to direction from the minister or any other person other than the Training Ombudsman's obligation to comply with a request to review or research a matter. In addition, staff are not subject to direction from outside the office of the Training Ombudsman about the way in which complaints are dealt with.

I believe that this bill is about protecting the rights of those engaged in vocational education and training in Queensland so that they will be able to make complaints about practices that are not just. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Stewart, adjourned.

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### Private Members' Motion


 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, a short time ago I was presented with two motions, one from the member for Dalrymple and the other from the member for Mermaid Beach. I have discussed the matter with both the member for Dalrymple and the member for Mermaid Beach and the decision I have made is that the motion proposed by the member for Dalrymple will be debated tonight during the half-hour segment. The motion put forward by the Leader of Opposition Business will be placed on the *Notice Paper* for consideration tomorrow night.

## FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TRAINING OMBUDSMAN) AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 504, on motion of Mrs D'Ath—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (4.52 pm): I rise to speak to the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. I would like to begin by thanking the chair, my fellow committee members, the committee secretariat and stakeholders who made a submission. I would also like to acknowledge that the recommendations were unanimously supported by all members of the committee. I would like to reinforce the comments that the chair made about the member for Everton and that this is no longer the LNP's position. I find that of great interest.

The establishment of the Training Ombudsman supports the Palaszczuk government's commitment to making the Queensland VET sector the strongest and most productive in the nation. It ensures that industry has access to an appropriately skilled workforce. Through Jobs Queensland, consultation with industry and stakeholders will ensure that these future growth areas can be identified. Already the Palaszczuk government is acting on its commitment to develop an appropriately skilled workforce to meet future industry growth through the reintroduction of the successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative. We have enacted components of our Rescuing TAFE plan, which incorporates a repeal of the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Act 2014 and the establishment of Jobs Queensland. All of these initiatives have been very well received by the community.

Currently, Queensland's consumers of VET do not have access to a sector-specific independent complaints mechanism for VET matters. Given the broad and diverse range of stakeholders within the sector, it can be challenging for VET consumers to identify the most appropriate avenue for lodging concerns, as there is no clear pathway to raise concerns about systemic issues in the VET sector. The VET sector does a great job and the sector wants and needs someone to advocate for them.

**Miss BARTON:** I rise to a point of order. Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek your guidance and your ruling with respect to the time on the clock for the member for Lytton. I appreciate that she was a member of the committee at the time of the inquiry. However, she has been discharged from the education committee. My understanding of the standing orders is that current members of the committee are allocated a period of 20 minutes, not former members of the committee. I am concerned that this sets a precedent when we have had recent changes of committee membership.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Linard): Thank you, member. I will seek some further advice. In the meantime, member for Lytton, if you would like to continue.

**Ms PEASE:** I certainly will. As I have said, the VET sector does a great job and the sector wants and needs someone to advocate for them. An independent Training Ombudsman will improve consumer and stakeholder awareness and strengthen the quality of VET in Queensland.

ASQA and other key industry stakeholders support us in establishing a Queensland Training Ombudsman. Funding of up to \$5 million over three years has been allocated to establish and operate an independent Training Ombudsman in Queensland.


The interim Training Ombudsman has already been providing Queenslanders with immediate assistance and has established an online and telephone presence to support complainants and has begun the important work of developing relationships with other regulatory agencies. The interim Training Ombudsman has already been involved in resolving issues raised by Queenslanders in relation to the VET sector, including issues referred by members opposite.

One of the key functions of the Training Ombudsman will be to receive complaints about the provision and quality of VET by registered training organisations and assist complainants to have their issues addressed by the most appropriate agency. The Training Ombudsman is available to apprentices and trainees and also employers, trainers and other significant stakeholders. The Training Ombudsman will be able to support complainants to seek a resolution of their issues by mediating the matter with other relevant parties. That will also help to get real outcomes for students and providers alike.

Where a resolution cannot be reached, the Training Ombudsman will be able to assist complainants to take the matter up with the appropriate agencies. Those agencies may include the Department of Education and Training and other Queensland agencies such as the Office of Fair Trading as well as the national VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority. The Training Ombudsman can investigate claims regarding the quality of training provided by an RTO that receives government funding under the Certificate 3 Guarantee or User Choice programs and make recommendations to DET about whether to continue the arrangements or to take action under the funding arrangements to address these concerns.

Although DET has strict requirements on prequalified supplier RTOs and closely monitors the provision of VET by funded prequalified suppliers, having oversight from the Training Ombudsman will be a significant measure in ensuring that Queensland government funding is targeted to only quality VET providers into the future. The Training Ombudsman can make recommendations to the minister about systemic issues relating to the quality of VET in Queensland, which may include ways to improve DET's systems, policies and processes in relation to prequalified suppliers, matters relating to apprenticeships and traineeships and strategies to improve the quality of VET in Queensland.

The Training Ombudsman will be supported by the Office of the Training Ombudsman and its independence from government control is enshrined in the bill. The bill ensures that the Training Ombudsman and no-one else controls the staff of the office. The Palaszczuk government continues to deliver on its promise for the VET sector in Queensland. The Training Ombudsman will provide a dedicated and, importantly, independent one-stop shop for the VET sector and VET sector related issues with a high level of individual support to VET stakeholders. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (4.59 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. I would like to thank the chair of the committee, the deputy chair, the member for Townsville, the member for Toowoomba South and all the members of the committee. The committee put a lot of work into its consideration of this bill. There was unanimous support for the bill, unlike some of the decisions of the member for Everton many years ago. It looks like he is out of touch again.

Education and training is the future of Queensland. A skilled workforce is a strong workforce. That is what the Palaszczuk government is committed to. We rely on well trained and skilled tradespeople—builders, electricians, concreters, locksmiths et cetera—to keep this great state going. Our community services rely on trained professionals in the aged-care sector, the disability sector and the healthcare sector. These are just a few of the professions that require the services of the VET system across this great state of ours. The member for Everton talks about up to \$5 million. It is heartbreaking to see people come into your office who have signed up for courses and have been hoodwinked into getting free things such as overseas trips and then they find out they are left with a huge bill and the training course is absolutely nothing. They have had nowhere to turn, nowhere to go, they were confused. They signed up and they were left with a legacy. In my electorate we have so many warehouse managers that we do not know what to do with them. They were signed up by dodgy RTOs. There are about four warehouses in the electorate. We have a lot more warehouse managers than warehouses. I am glad this bill has come before the House and that we are implementing it. It was an election promise. People now have somewhere to go.

Education has transformed over the last decade with online studying and private providers and TAFE moving into a competitive market. Flexibility for those who need to study is vital. Many of our hardworking Queenslanders must work and study at the same time, often holding down a full-time job or shiftwork. There are a lot of single mothers who are looking after children and studying, which puts a real stress on them. Over the three years of the LNP government in Queensland the VET sector was pushed aside, drastically underfunded and severely underresourced.


When I stand here today to talk about this bill, I am talking about the TAFE in Maryborough and what a wonderful thing has happened to TAFE in Maryborough. On the night that I got up and thanked the minister and the member for Redcliffe, who has done a marvellous job in resurrecting TAFE in

Maryborough, the member for Everton had a few comments about it. The LNP does not look to the future and understand that this is part of the future of this great state. This is upskilling people and getting them into the jobs of the future. That is why I am glad that we have a minister who is committed to making sure that we have a great VET system in this state and that people have a chance to further their education. I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government. I am proud to be part of the Labor Party that always delivers in education. We will make sure that every child and every worker has a chance, no matter where they are from in this great state, to further their education.

The establishment of the independent Training Ombudsman is an important part of the commitment of this government to complement the return of TAFE assets to the government, employing an extra 100 teachers and support staff and spending \$34 million to restore TAFE's status as Queensland's premier public provider of VET. The Training Ombudsman will be a one-stop shop to which students, parents, providers and others can turn to navigate the very complex VET system, make complaints and be assisted to resolve disputes. As I said earlier, there has to be somewhere where people can go. If we listen to the member for Everton, there is nowhere they can go; they hang around and look into space. There has to be someone they can get help from. We are not talking about a minor matter; we are talking about the ability of people to further their education and job prospects in the future. Not only that, it is a commitment to look after Queensland so that we have workers for the jobs of the future.

Another key component of the ombudsman role will be to monitor the quality of vocational education and training provided by relevant training entities in Queensland. This is vital to ensure that all Queenslanders are receiving quality education and support from their providers. I was talking to the client of a job provider the other day. There are certain people in my electorate who, when they turn up and they have a certificate from some known RTOs, are not even looked at for the job because employers know that the quality of training from that RTO has been shonky and that it is not up to standard. We do not want that. This bill ensures that we are not only getting bang for our buck but we are getting outcomes—we are getting people trained for their profession or upgrading their skills to make sure that we have the best people for the jobs in Queensland.

I am pleased to be part of a government that is committed to supporting Queenslanders in our VET sector. This bill is part of an ongoing movement to ensure that all Queenslanders have access to affordable and quality education. I am proud to be on the committee. It is a good committee. Since being elected, the minister from Redcliffe has really looked after the VET system in Queensland. I see the differences in my electorate. I am happy that this bill is before the House. I urge the LNP to support it. You cannot keep knocking working Queenslanders, you sometimes have to give them a helping hand. I urge those opposite to support the bill so that when people come into my office—or anyone's office—we can point them in the right direction where they will get a fair hearing. On behalf of the constituents of the Maryborough electorate I ask the LNP to support this bill so they have somewhere to go so that we can get on with the job of educating Queenslanders. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (5.07 pm): I rise to make a reasonably short contribution to the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill. Firstly, I would like to thank my fellow committee members and the committee secretariat. I thank the member for Toowoomba South for his role as the deputy chair of the committee. I also wish the member for Lytton all the best. We cannot understand why you left us. We are such a lovely committee. We also welcome the new members to the committee, the members for Cleveland and Pine Rivers.

Vocational education and training is a very diverse sector which is made up of public and private training providers. Under the previous LNP government we saw a major revolution with the diversification of courses and the amount of providers in the marketplace. Back in 2014 when I was at an event celebrating the diversification of courses and different providers, I was speaking to some young people who said how great it was that we have all these different courses. Educational outcomes in certain areas that they never imagined a few years ago are now available. It is certainly something that the previous minister, Mr John-Paul Langbroek, can be proud of.


As we all know, education is an expanding industry. It is a focal point of the Queensland economy, especially when it comes to the domestic and international markets. The previous LNP government had a five-year action plan—Great skills. Real opportunities.—which concentrated on enhancing participation and productivity to give greater real-world employment outcomes for those completing vocational education and training. However, under a previous bill before the House it was dismantled. It is like groundhog day and we all had to start again. We are spending \$40 million. It is like a big blank cheque. That leads me to my problem with this bill: it is a \$5 million blank cheque when this

could be done in the federal sphere. This is a simple bill. It is a simple piece of legislation, designed to give all Queensland vocational education students, employers and other stakeholders a pathway for complaints. It is like having a complaints desk that duplicates the work of other services. In 2009, Labor's own Weller review into reducing bureaucracy and unnecessary red tape recommended that the Training Ombudsman be abolished. In 2012, the Training Ombudsman was abolished.

**Mr Power:** Shame!

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** I take the interjection from the member for Logan. The Labor Party's own Weller review stated that it should be abolished. I would like the member to remember that. Currently, complaints are dealt with through a number of agencies that are certainly capable of dealing with those complaints, for example, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the Office of Fair Trading, the Queensland Ombudsman, the Overseas Students Ombudsman, QCAT, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and so on. During the committee's inquiry, the Consumer Action Law Centre made a very valid point, which I would like to stress. The centre stated that we should have an Australian ombudsman to cover this, because we signed this over to the federal government. Why don't we have an Australian ombudsman?

As I just stated, the current set-up for the Queensland Ombudsman is a toothless tiger. It has no powers to make any binding decisions in relation to the registration and regulation of training organisations. Therefore, to enforce any decision the Ombudsman must refer the complaint to the relevant organisation for investigation and potential action. As I stated, this is a straightforward bill. I feel it would be far more prudent to have an overarching Australian ombudsman for vocational education and training, because it is a far simpler method and, as we have sent it to the federal sphere to administer, it is far more prudent.

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (5.12 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. I am pleased to say that this is a government that is committed to jobs and training. This government recognises that a durable and effective vocational education and training sector is vital to a durable and effective jobs market. As our economy grows and opportunities for employment increase, we need to respond by providing pathways for people who may want to upskill or change their career. We need to bring confidence to business that our VET sector is able to deliver the skills it needs to stimulate the economy and growth. I am a strong advocate for vocational education and training. I believe it is vital to a healthy economy that we provide every opportunity to our citizens to get the right education so that they can make a valuable contribution to our society.


I went to TAFE at one stage in my life. It was one of the highlights of my life. I had two small children. When my youngest started school, I was so excited to be able to go to TAFE. My daughter has a PhD and a medicine degree, yet she still laments the fact that her husband, who 'only' went to TAFE for three years and did an IT degree, earns twice as much as she does. TAFEs are a very important part of our society. In my electorate, TAFE Queensland South West provides those very opportunities to thousands of students every year: students from multicultural backgrounds, refugees, young people, the long-term unemployed, early school leavers and the many people who wish to change careers.

I applaud the minister for her dedication to education in this state. This bill seeks to establish a Training Ombudsman in Queensland. Currently, Queensland consumers in the VET sector do not have access to a complaints mechanism that is specific to the sector. A sector-specific and independent mechanism to deal with the wide range of issues that may arise in the VET sector is vital to ensuring transparency, responsiveness and regard for all interested parties. This government recognises that VET consumers can face challenges in identifying the most appropriate avenue to direct concerns or complaints. As I said earlier, TAFE Queensland South West provides training and education to many students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, refugees and people with limited formal education. Those students need to know where they can go for advice and information if there is a problem and for assistance in resolving any potential dispute that may arise. An independent and unbiased system to provide that support for consumers is an essential component of an effective VET program.

We on this side of the House recognise that consumers and governments invest significant resources in VET and, although measures for improving training quality have recently been implemented at the national level, a Queensland Training Ombudsman will help the government improve the quality of VET in this state. The Training Ombudsman will have a number of roles. Predominantly, it will be responsible for receiving complaints about a range of matters, including those related to the provision and quality of services provided by TAFEs or registered training organisations.

We have all heard of RTOs that pop up overnight and promise the world to their students and then sadly either do not deliver high-quality education or worse disappear with the students' money. In my own electorate, only last month a group of students from an RTO in Ipswich advised me that they turned up for class one day to find a sticker on the door saying that the school was closed. Those students have little recourse. Their money has been taken and they have nothing to show for it. They even discovered that the course they were enrolled in is no longer current, so even if they had completed their education they would not be competitive employees in the market. This attitude to training is appalling. Those students are seen as nothing more than a cash cow for the RTO. I am pleased to say that the Queensland Training Ombudsman will be able to hear those complaints and act accordingly. If the matter falls within the jurisdiction of another agency such as the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the Training Ombudsman can help resolve the problem and even progress the complaint to the other agency.

Before the last election, the Palaszczuk government made a promise to the Queensland public. We said we would look after the VET sector in Queensland. We said we would not tinker with its operations and that we would provide it with the necessary programs and facilities so it can continue to deliver exemplary training and education. I am proud to say that on Saturday I will attend the graduation ceremony of TAFE Queensland South West, and I believe the Attorney-General is also attending. Last year I went to this event as a fairly newly elected member of parliament. It was an extraordinary event. There were people from so many different backgrounds and the looks on their family's faces as they went up to receive their certificates was very heartwarming. It was great to see the way it brings the community together. It embraces diversity and changes the nature of my electorate of Ipswich, which is very important to me. I am proud to say that this legislation helped deliver on the promises of the Palaszczuk government. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (5.19 pm): I am very pleased to support the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015 which is yet another step by the Palaszczuk Labor government to restore TAFE. Our government is committed to rescuing TAFE and restoring its status as the premier provider of vocational education and training in the state. We committed to reinvigorating the VET sector—full stop. We promised it during the election campaign and we have consistently set about honouring that commitment since the day we came to government.

Our election promise on this critical policy area was quite aptly called rescuing TAFE because, boy, did it need rescuing. Of all the savage cuts made by the LNP government, under Campbell Newman, its attack on our VET system was probably the most widespread. It jeopardised the very future of our training sector. By doing that, it jeopardised the opportunity for our young people and the many others who use the VET system as a foundation or a pathway to employment to find a job. What is our priority? It is jobs now and jobs for the future. That priority is imperative for the future of Queensland.

When the LNP came to power in 2012 one of the first things they did was start attacking TAFE in Queensland by reducing its ability to compete with private training providers. They wanted to price TAFE out of the market. They cut staff, they cut funding, they cut independent oversight, they cut courses and they sold many of Queensland's training assets. The cuts to TAFE funding and subsidies meant that TAFE Queensland had to reduce the number of courses it delivered and close down campuses because it became simply too expensive for students to enrol. They abolished the position of independent Training Ombudsman, the very position that we hope to restore through this bill. By doing so they reduced accountability in the training sector with terrible ramifications.

Although training people for employment is a top priority, it is not the only priority for the VET system. While it is important to train to enter the workforce, it is not the only reason people wish to participate in vocational education and training. In fact, there is a huge range of benefits to be gained by individuals participating in education beyond attaining employment.

Participation in education allows individuals to improve social and communication skills as well as provide a chance to interact with other students. Disadvantaged students, for instance, are dependent on foundations to bridge the gaps to further studies. I think particularly of students with disabilities who rely on VET courses to further their education in mainstream environments.

The importance of these opportunities cannot be overstated. But the LNP chose to ignore their community service obligations to some of the most disadvantaged individuals in Queensland. They refused to subsidise courses in foundation skills, claiming that if a course did not lead directly to a job it was not essential. That is how much they understand the needs of Queenslanders.

These are the reasons the Palaszczuk Labor government had to rescue TAFE and the VET sector. It is why we made the election commitment we did towards reinvigorating the VET sector. That is why this bill is so important.

In the last 12 months, in working to fulfil our election commitment, the Attorney-General has introduced two bills. This bill is the third. I congratulate her for the enthusiasm, passion and commitment she has shown to assiduously work through all of the issues. Already the Attorney-General has introduced: the Jobs Queensland Bill, establishing an independent statutory authority to improve job matching across the economy and lift productivity by developing workforce planning by industry sector and economic catchment; and the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Repeal Bill, returning control of Queensland's training assets to the department and requiring an audit of all training.

The establishment, through the bill we are considering today, of the independent Training Ombudsman is a critical part of our election commitment. With the other bills I have just mentioned, it will complement the return of TAFE assets to the government, employing 100 extra teachers and support staff and spending \$23 million to restore TAFE's status as Queensland's premier public provider of VET.

The Training Ombudsman will be a one-stop shop to which students, parents, providers and others can turn to navigate the varied and complex VET system, make complaints and be assisted to resolve disputes and address many of the issues I have just raised. He or she will provide complete wraparound support for students, apprentices and trainees to assist them to address issues for the VET services they are being provided. He or she will identify systemic issues about the provision and quality of VET in Queensland, which may be identified via complaints, and will report to the Minister for Training and Skills on strategies to resolve these issues.

Not only do I believe that every Queenslander has the right to access a high-quality vocational education system, regardless of who they are and where they live, but residents of the Bulimba electorate clearly also believe this as well. Of all of the issues that people spoke to me about during the election campaign and have spoken to me about since, the right and the need for everyone to be able to access an affordable and high-quality VET system and the problems that people had during the time of the LNP government and the ensuing period while the Palaszczuk government has been unravelling their mess were raised as some of the most consistent issues.

The impact on students and their families was that hopes and opportunities were lost, dreams were smashed and money was squandered. These are some of the things that people can talk to the ombudsman about. I will never forget one of the stories that I heard. A father of an adult son who has severe disabilities had been doing a foundation course in literacy and numeracy. His son finished one semester. I think the course cost \$150. These people are on a pension. The next semester they came back and without notice it cost \$1,000. That child had to be withdrawn from that course because they could not afford it. At the same time, unfortunately, the clinic he was attending at the local hospital also had funds cut. Thanks to the former LNP government, this family was turned upside down. The examples such as course fees exploding and teachers losing their jobs midway through a course, leaving students with no way of completing the course, were common causes of anguish for families that were just trying to give their children an opportunity in life.

I do not blame all of the issues in the VET system on the LNP, of course. One only needs to read some of the newspapers over the last year or two to know that there are huge problems in the VET sector and we need an avenue to address these. I will read out some of the headlines. They include: 'Stop the rorts: \$30 million crackdown looms for vocational sector's dodgy training providers', 'External exams to help fight college cheats', 'Training provider collapses into voluntary administration as concerns over vocational education system grow', 'Education experts warn vocational students to suffer unless industry tightened up', 'College under investigation by the Australian Skills Quality Authority after reports of low graduation rates', 'Vocational education, the biggest get-rich quick scheme in Australia'.


These are shocking headlines. Unfortunately, they reflect a very worrying trend in the VET sector. That is why this bill is so important. People need an independent avenue to address their issues and provide opportunities for Queenslanders in a fair and equitable manner. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Ms Farmer, adjourned.

## FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (DOMESTIC SMOKE ALARMS) AMENDMENT BILL

### FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (SMOKE ALARMS) AMENDMENT BILL

#### Cognate Debate

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (5.27 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee consider and report on the Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016 and the Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2015 together;
2. under the provisions of standing order 136, the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report to the House on the Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016 and the Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2015 by 23 May 2016;
3. in accordance with standing order 172, the bills be treated as cognate for their remaining stages in the House as follows:
  - (a) second reading debate, with separate questions being put in regard to the second readings;
  - (b) the consideration of the bills in detail together; and
  - (c) separate questions being put for the third readings and long titles;
4. notwithstanding anything contained in the standing and sessional orders:
  - (a) the time limits and order for moving the second readings shall be: the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services—60 minutes, followed by the member for Kawana—60 minutes; and
  - (b) the time limits and order for reply to the second readings debate shall be: member for Kawana—30 minutes, followed by the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services—30 minutes;
5. standing order 136(6) be suspended for the Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2015 to allow the commencement of the second reading debate if three calendar months has not elapsed since the tabling of the portfolio committee report.

**Mr STEVENS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of the House that this motion is out of order under standing order 231 in terms of anticipating discussion. We have before the House a notice of motion—and I will read the notice of motion—which clearly this proposed motion breaches in terms of content and outcome. The notice of motion before the House states—

That the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended immediately by inserting the following new Standing Order 87A—

‘87A. Substantially the Same Bill

Quite clearly the bills that are being discussed in this motion are substantially the same bills. By way of background, this matter has been discussed at the CLA. That is why it is back here in the House. Standing order 87A ‘Substantially the Same Bill’, as proposed under the motion, states—

- (1) A Bill that is substantially the same as any other Bill that has already been introduced and read a first time shall not be introduced.
- (2) If the Speaker is of the opinion that a Bill that contravenes (1) has been introduced and read a first time, the Speaker shall at the earliest opportunity order the discharge of the Bill from the Notice Paper and from any committee to which it has been referred.’

This motion quite directly subverts that motion to be debated in this House not today, as Mr Speaker has recommended, but probably tomorrow evening. Clearly, we have a motion that is in anticipation of a motion before the House.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Recognising the contribution from the Leader of Opposition Business, I support that in this point of order. I am not debating the motion that the Leader of the House has moved at this juncture. The standing order clearly indicates that we have a notice of motion on the *Notice Paper* for tomorrow evening—

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. We can have points of order all day as forms of debate in order to debate the ruling that is before the chair. I suggest that we allow the chair to rule as opposed to having these continual points of order by way of debate.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Elmes): We are starting to enter into debate. The member for Kawana will come to his point very quickly.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, my point of order is that I would urge you to rule the motion moved by the Leader of the House out of order because it does anticipate the debate as we have a notice of motion on the *Notice Paper* for tomorrow evening.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Kawana continued with what was, in effect, a debate of the matter. I ask that you be given the opportunity to rule.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will seek advice from the Clerk. My advice is that it does not anticipate the bill, in which case the motion will proceed.

**Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (5.34 pm): I will speak to the motion then. Quite clearly, what we have here is almost a double jeopardy in the House with this particular grab for political headlines in terms of dealing with a bill that has already been introduced by the member for Kawana. Quite clearly, this is the government's poor attempt to politically grab the high ground over the introduction of this bill. The member for Kawana, as the parliament knows, as the parliamentary portfolio committee—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Mermaid Beach, I think you have already spoken to the motion.

**Mr STEVENS:** No. I spoke on a point of order. Quite clearly, this is a sad and sorry attempt by the government in trying to grab a headline in terms of overcoming their lack of previously addressing the matter of fire alarms in this state which has cost lives. We have had submissions on the member for Kawana's bill. The portfolio committee is now addressing the initial bill that was introduced to this House by the member for Kawana. Quite clearly, the matters in that bill have to be rightly and properly discussed and debated.

Now the government have decided that they would like to lead the debate on this matter and for them to be seen to be leading the debate for purely political reasons—for no other reason than a self-serving reason, because they are not adding in any way, shape or form to the matter of substance in the bill. They are replicating the bill, as they know and as they have mentioned at the CLA they are doing. They could amend the member's bill. They know very well that, if there were amendments that were right and proper to address this very serious social problem out there, the member for Kawana would agree to their amendments—no question. If members on the opposite side can come up with some sensible, reasonable and thought out conclusions to add to the efficacy of this legislation, then I am sure the member for Kawana would most definitely add those amendments to get a better outcome to his bill. But, no, that is not what is proposed by this motion.

The motion before us now basically says, 'We want the government to take the high moral ground. We had not thought of it but, hey, the member for Kawana has a great bill. We don't want him to get any credit for the matter. Therefore, we shall take it over and call it a government bill.' Mr Speaker, as I raised with you yesterday, we saw exactly the same scenario in relation to the member for Caloundra's tobacco bill, which was very well received in terms of it being a great thing to happen. The member for Caloundra put forward a matter to this House, and members from the minor parties such as Katter's Australian Party and Independents will put forward good bills to this House. Sadly, this government deems it necessary for its own promotion, because there is nothing else promoting the government out there in the community, to put forward its own bills. We had 33 pieces of legislation in one year—almost 20 pieces of legislation below the norm of the last 20 years—and most of that legislation was just reversing Newman government legislation. Now the government wants to say, 'We've actually done something. We've done something credible. We have grabbed the member for Kawana's bill. We have rebadged it, and we think we are fantastic about smoke alarms.'

Quite clearly, this motion should not be allowed. The CLA dealt with it, as you are aware, Mr Speaker, as chair of that particular committee. Quite clearly, the CLA dealt with the fact that it should go forward. We had a parliamentary committee that met this morning and they were not to be disturbed in relation to the CLA intervention on the matter—

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Leader of Opposition Business is making an assertion which I think misrepresents discussions of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. I would counsel him to rephrase.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Mermaid Beach.

**Mr STEVENS:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the House will have the opportunity to debate the matter when it is his turn to speak. I look forward to the reasons why he cannot add to the member for Kawana's bill rather than seeking to subvert the bill by calling it a government bill on smoke

alarms. That is basically the intent of this. I will explain it again for the benefit of the Leader of the House, because sometimes I have to explain things a couple of times for him. The CLA did deal with this matter yesterday and the CLA could not agree on this matter—

**Mr Hinchliffe** interjected.


**Mr STEVENS:**—and I will keep repeating myself until the Leader of the House understands the matter—because half of the committee members saw no benefit and they said that the House would have to deal with it. We have a recommendation by the House to go forward with the member for Kawana's bill. It is quite clear that the only way it would be changed would be by directions from this House. The full House agreed, including the Labor side of the House, with the portfolio committee dealing with it in the appropriate times, and it was going to come forward in a right and proper manner.

Unfortunately, there are some geniuses on the other side who said, 'No, we can't let the opposition come up with a good idea or a good process, the member for Kawana particularly.' They do not want him in charge of a matter that will look good in the eyes of the public for the safety of people throughout Queensland including fires and all the people who are supporting photoelectric fire alarms. That matter should be rightly and properly dealt with, as it is now by the portfolio committee and by people presenting to the portfolio committee. It should go forward on that basis and not be interfered with by the process projected by the Leader of the House.

There is no reason to change the portfolio committee hearings on the member for Kawana's bill before the House. Quite clearly, the presenters at the portfolio committee today who took time out of their busy schedules were rightfully concerned. I do not know how many presented today, but I am sure quite a number were very keen to present on the matter. They rightfully will wonder what is going wrong when government members want to drag them back in to talk about the same bill but with the government's fingerprints all over it—with minor additions or changes which could be achieved by amendments. It is substantially the same bill. I find it incredible that the government is stooping to overcome the fact that other members have good bills and good matters before the House. This applies to the Independents, Katter's Australian Party and to us.

In relation to the other matter, that is specifically why the motion we brought forward today was put into the House so that this matter would not be gazumped. I will not talk about that; we will talk about that motion in a debate at another time. I certainly will not be anticipating debate in that area. Quite clearly, this is a sordid, sorry attempt by the government to claim credit for what is an outstanding piece of work by the member for Kawana. The member for Caloundra's tobacco bill was treated in the same manner: 'We came up with this.' It is a very sad indictment of a government lacking any of its own ideas. Only 33 pieces of legislation were introduced into the House last year. Normally it is between 40 and 60 for most governments, even in an election year. There are no excuses. Most of that legislation was just backflipping on legislation which the previous government had passed.

There is no credit to the government in trying to bully its way over the top of this bill. Quite clearly, it is a matter for the House, but the House has already made a decision on the matter: the matter should be dealt with with appropriate time frames, which the House agreed to; portfolio committees were put in place; and presenters had the ability to come forward at those particular times. This matter should be dealt with in an appropriate manner, with the member for Kawana's bill dealt with first in a timely way. Then we can deal with the other matter: the bill which the government has brought in. The government felt such drastic change was needed that it had to bring in its own bill to address the matter.

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (5.45 pm): This motion is about good public policy for Queensland. There are a number of matters that need to be put to the final product on which this House decides about the various bills that are before the House. The private member's bill that has been presented is in many ways different from the government bill before the House. The difficulty is that those differences will not be fully interrogated by committee prior to that bill coming forward. If there are any political motives that are evident, the motion moved by the opposition this morning deliberately intended to spear this motion. This motion is a purely political motive to try to subvert the prospects of the House determining what is best for Queensland.

What is best for Queensland is a fully ventilated and understood set of circumstances. There are three pieces in play here. There is the private member's bill, there is a substantively different government bill, and over the top of that there is a federal Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee that will report subsequent to the tabling of the report on the private member's


bill. That Senate committee will have substantial influence over how the nation approaches these issues and would certainly be a very worthwhile contribution to discussions by our own committee going forward.

I am not questioning the motives about this. We can stand here and say there is political advantage being taken one way or another. I do not ascribe to that. What I do ascribe to is that we need to have properly informed debate on bills. We need those bills to be well prepared through the committee process and committees need to have the full opportunity to ventilate all of the issues. If our motion is defeated, I fear that that will not be the case. I do not think it is a very sensible thing for this House, and the determination of this House, to be moving forward in the absence of a federal Senate committee report which I believe will be very influential in terms of the final report that should be provided by this committee. I put the point that the merits of the two bills need to be considered together because it is a much more holistic outcome, one that will drive the sentiment of this debate when it is brought forward to the House. Secondly, the Senate review that is being undertaken needs to be considered by the committee. It should be of influence inside the committee before it reports back to the House.

In terms of developing good, robust, sensible policy that ends up in legislation in this House, it defies logic that that is not the sentiment or the will of the opposition. The opposition have clearly been running a political game with this from day one. If there is an allegation of wanting to have fingerprints on it, the actions of the opposition have all been about fingerprints. If they were not worried about fingerprints on it, they would not have moved the motion earlier today to try to gazump—which was the word used—this discussion. It is the will of the House that should prevail, and that will should reflect what is best for Queenslanders.

At the end of the day, regardless of where we sit in this House, the idea is to have the very best policy and the very best piece of legislation that has got all of the information available to the House in order to have an informed debate. That is all that our motion is about. Our motion is making sure that all of the information is available, that it is properly ventilated, that substantive differences that exist between the bills are understood by the committee and that we get a fulsome, accurate and up-to-date report back from the committee. There is nothing more to it than that. I urge the House to support this motion.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. I now call the member for Kawana. The scheduled speaker after the member for Kawana will be the member for Springwood and Minister for Housing. If other members want to get on the speaking list, please let me know. Otherwise we will then go to the Leader of the House to close the debate.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (5.50 pm): The Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services talks about motivation. He said that this is all political motivation and that is why this bill is in the House and that is why this motion was moved this morning. I will tell the minister what motivates me on this issue—the 11 Queenslanders who died at Slacks Creek. I will tell the minister what motivates me on this issue—the Golinski family and those three young children and their mother who died at Yandina on the Sunshine Coast. So do not come in here and tell me that I am politically motivated by this. I am motivated by young Queenslanders who died on the Sunshine Coast. I am motivated by two coronial investigations that said that your government has sat on its hands for 12 months and not dealt with this issue. That is what motivates me in this House—not the political grandstanding that the minister wants to do. The minister got up in here just now and said—

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Lockyer, you are warned under standing order 253A. Those interjections are not appropriate. The member for Kawana has the call. If you want to speak, I have already invited you to contribute in the appropriate way and that is to let the Speaker or the Temporary Speaker know you want to speak before the mover of the motion is called to close the debate.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** The minister also wants to know what our motivation is. I sat in the committee hearing this morning with Mr Golinski, the grandfather of those three young children, and he did not say this was a political motivation. He wants legislation in the House. He said that if the type of photoelectric smoke alarms that our bill deals with were used his three grandchildren might have survived.

The minister has come in here with his grandstanding and said that I am politically motivated by this; I am not. I am motivated to save young Queenslanders' lives. I am motivated to make sure people have smoke alarms in their homes—the same smoke alarms that could have saved 11 people's lives at Slacks Creek. This is not a political issue. What is political is the minister coming in here yesterday and moving his own piece of legislation and not just looking at our piece of legislation.

The minister goes on with this furphy because he said, 'It's good that we've got legislation in the committee as well because then the committee can have a look at all the issues.' If that is the case, then the 89 members of this House should introduce their own legislation because I guarantee there would be 89 different pieces of legislation because we would all know how to deal with the issues of photoelectric smoke alarms. The committee would have 89 different recommendations because all of us in this House would come up with different ways to address this issue of photoelectric smoke alarms in this state. The minister then said that we should wait for the Senate inquiry. If that is the case, then why did he introduce his own bill yesterday? If he was going to draft legislation—

**Mr Byrne** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection—before time. Not knowing what the Senate is going to say, the minister has legislation drafted with a policy position that he now refers off to the committee, but now he says, 'Let's wait to see what the Senate committee says'—after he has already introduced the legislation. It is a furphy. We know why he introduced the legislation. It is because they have sat on their hands for 12 months. Only a few weeks ago, the Golinski coronial investigation was handed down and the coroner said, 'The recommendations that I made 12 months ago stand today. There is nothing different.' The coroner also said in the report, 'The only thing I would like to add is nothing has changed in 12 months, no action.'

What the coroner was saying is that the government has had 12 months to implement the coronial recommendations from the Slacks Creek fire and the government has not done that. And who was the minister? The member for Bundamba. When asked why she did not have legislation in this place, the member for Bundamba said, 'We should wait for the Senate inquiry.' What changed in the process? The LNP met with the stakeholders, the LNP consulted with the stakeholders and the LNP introduced legislation. I sat down with Louie, Christine, Mr Golinski and those volunteers at the Logan House Fire Support Network. I sat down with them with the opposition leader, Lawrence Springborg, and we said, 'Tell us about the issue. Tell us how we can assist.' Within 30 days of that meeting, we had legislation in this place dealing with that very safety issue.

So, again, what motivates me? Kids' safety and family safety. What motivates me, Minister? My three kids at home. After having the meeting with Mr Golinski and the Logan House Fire Support Network, I changed the smoke alarms in my house. I no longer have ionisation smoke alarms because I know the risks associated with them. That is what motivates me, Minister—not political grandstanding in this place, not coming in here like the Leader of the House is and moving a motion to expand my private member's bill out so the government can come in. The government does that under the guise that it is all so the committee can have a look at it and so it can go through a proper process. It is not because of that. We know why they do it—because we put the legislation in first but they cannot stand up and say, 'We will support the LNP's legislation.' That is the issue. They cannot just say, 'We think you should make some amendments.' If they did that, we would tell them to come to us with the amendments and I would consider them. We could get good legislation out of this place with a private member's bill that was amended if they want it amended. I would be happy to consider those amendments.

This notion that we are now continually getting into is concerning and it should be concerning for all people in this place. Lots of good private members' bills are being introduced and the government are just gazumping them with their own bill and putting their stamp on it, and the only difference is whether it says 'LNP', 'Labor' or 'Independent'.

**A government member:** That's not true.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection. Some Labor member yelled out that it is not true. Let me refer them to the mental health bills that went through not long ago. I believe there were 400 pages in the Mental Health Bill and the only difference was five pages out of 400 pages. We then had the smoking bills, and the planning bills are currently being debated. There is a growing record of private members' bills—whether it be LNP, Independent, crossbenchers—being introduced into this place because the government do not have their own ideas. That is the issue. The government have no ideas. They are frozen at the wheel, and they have to rely on the opposition to come up with all the ideas. I have never seen a government that has become so frozen at the wheel that it has to rely on the opposition to come up with all the plans and all the ideas, and then it says, 'That's a great idea. Let's just rebadge it and put "Labor" on it.'

That is why we moved the motion that is on the *Notice Paper*—because we want to make sure that good legislation is debated in this place. If they want to amend the private member's bill that I introduced, let us do it. If the minister wants to talk about the committee meeting this morning and why

we will not support this motion, I can tell him it is because Mr Golinski and Louie from the Logan House Fire Support Network said that the difference is the Labor Party's bill has a 10-year phase-in and ours has a three-year phase-in. How many lives can be saved if the private member's bill goes through this parliament? If this motion gets up, this will be delayed. There will be over seven years delay if this motion gets up tonight.

I encourage the Independents and the crossbenchers to look at this and oppose this motion of a cognate debate. We can save Queenslanders' lives. If we can get this legislation in and get photoelectric smoke alarms in people's lives, then we can prevent the issues of Slacks Creek and we can prevent the issues of the Golinski house fire at Yandina. We have the opportunity to save lives in a far greater speed than under the government's bill.

I would implore the crossbenchers and Independents in this place to not support this motion of a cognate debate. Let the LNP private member's bill go through as it ordinarily should. I introduced it months ago. The committee has had plenty of time. It was a great meeting this morning. It had support from the technical experts and the people from the Logan House Fire Support Network. It had the support there because the bill saves lives.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjections from those opposite—it is substantially different, it is substantially similar. As I said when I started my contribution, the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services thinks I am politically motivated in this. No, I am not. I am motivated by 11 people who lost their lives at Slacks Creek. I am motivated by the Golinski family and Mr Golinski, the grandfather of the three children who lost their lives at Yandina. No family should ever have to go through that.

The members opposite should hang their heads in shame if they are interjecting that this is politically motivated legislation. This legislation is designed to save lives. That is why the legislation is so important. That is why it is important that the motion regarding the cognate debate of the private member's bill and the government bill gets voted down, because we need the private member's bill to go through. I would be happy to sit down with the government. If they want to come to me and amend my legislation, I would be happy to sit down with them and do that so we can get to a situation where this legislation is passed in this House sooner rather than later. We cannot wait any longer for the legislation. That is why I implore the House and the crossbenchers to think seriously about this matter so we can fix the smoke alarms issue in this state. The committee dealt with this bill this morning. In terms of position, we can go forward as one in a bipartisan way. That is why I implore everyone to vote against the motion for a cognate debate so we can get on with the job and save Queenslanders' lives.

Debate, on motion of Mr Bleijie, adjourned.

## MOTION

### Vegetation Management Framework



**Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (6.00 pm): I move—

That any changes to the Vegetation Management Framework must consider:

- (a) rejecting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to vegetation management on a statewide basis that denies opportunity to parts of North and Western Queensland, these regions being Einasleigh Uplands, Gulf Plains, Cape York, Desert Uplands, North-west Highlands, Mulga Lands, Mitchell Grass Downs and Channel Country;
- (b) properties with the total cleared area of less than 10 per cent be permitted to be cleared up to a maximum of 10 per cent, capped at 5,000 hectares;
- (c) maintaining current self-assessable codes on these properties to ensure opportunity and maintenance of current productivity levels in balance with landscape vegetation retention and connectivity;
- (d) clearing provisions for high-value and irrigated high-value agriculture be extended to include 'high-value land for grazing purposes' such as baled fodder and forage, ensiling and strip grazing;
- (e) that any proposed changes do not impact on previously approved development under the present Vegetation Management Framework.

These bioregions are still more than 90 per cent remnant. We see a lot of development right across the state. However, these areas have not had the opportunity to develop. When we see any changes being made to the Vegetation Management Act or framework, the last thing we want to do is to give these regions another belting. There are many Indigenous communities in these areas that are looking for sustainable management, development and jobs because there is absolutely nothing for those regions to do.

This is a very important issue. In this motion we seek to enable properties with a total cleared area of land of less than 10 per cent to be cleared up to a maximum of 10 per cent, capped at 5,000 hectares. We are saying that we would allow for 10 per cent for those regions—and we are not talking about outside those regions. We are talking about those regions that have not had the opportunity to develop. As you fly over them in a plane, all you see is trees. There has not been that opportunity for development. We do not have the cities, the trains and the houses; we have the bush and yet we have triple the unemployment.


The motion also states—

- (c) maintaining current self-assessable codes on these properties to ensure opportunity and maintenance of current productivity levels in balance with landscape vegetation retention and connectivity;
- (d) clearing provisions for high-value and irrigated high-value agriculture be extended to include 'high-value land for grazing purposes' such as baled fodder and forage, ensiling and strip grazing;
- (e) that any proposed changes do not impact on previously approved development under the present Vegetation Management Framework.

In other words, in relation to those areas we are not asking for any changes to the current Vegetation Management Act but improvements to it. The Indigenous people in those bioregions and the Cape York Peninsula are crying out for development, for sustainability and for jobs. This has been a political football since time began. Peter Beattie introduced the changes to land clearing back in 2004 and that legislation was debated for two days solid. I believe that that was an end to sustainable management right across Queensland. When the Bligh government came in it introduced the ERMPs, which is one of the most diabolical policies enforced upon law-abiding citizens ever seen in our time in the Queensland parliament. Its introduction meant that all landowners were required to fill out ERMP forms, have a look at the areas that have been washed out and inform the government how they are going to review that process. If they did not fill it out, there was a \$75,000 fine or a jail sentence.

These issues are very important and it is very disappointing that the Deputy Premier has been given the responsibility of taking over the vegetation management process. Those landowners are in fear and are trembling. I do commend the LNP for introducing high-value agriculture as a policy. I am not saying they were a great government; it is probably one of the only good things they did because it supports my region. I fully support this motion. I commend this motion to the House.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I am pleased to acknowledge the presence in our public gallery this evening of a number of former members of parliament. First, we have a former member for Stafford, Mr Terry Geiger, who is accompanied by political students from the Bond University. We also have Robert Cavallucci, the former member for Brisbane Central, in the gallery.

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment) (6.05 pm): The Palaszczuk government committed at the election to reinstate Labor's vegetation protection and management laws, dismantled by the LNP government, and we will be keeping that commitment, unlike the former Newman government, who promised when they were in opposition and in the lead-up to the 2012 state election that there would be no reduction in the statutory protections for native vegetation and then turned around when in government and gutted the Vegetation Management Act.

In November last year I announced that I planned to introduce legislation to parliament in the first quarter of this year to implement the government's election commitment. Given this, the motion before the House pre-empts community and stakeholder consultation on the government's proposed legislation. Our legislation will reinstate proper vegetation protections to save the reef, conserve biodiversity and reduce Queensland's carbon emissions. The fact is that under the Newman government tree clearing went unchecked. The Statewide Landcover and Tree Study, the SLATS report, released last year outlines an alarming clearing and emissions trend in Queensland. The report shows that between 2011-12 and 2013-14 clearing almost doubled, from 153,638 hectares to 296,324 hectares.

We are a government that believes in science, and the science on this is clear. The loss of native vegetation is a major threat to biodiversity, is one of the major drivers of declining water quality in the Great Barrier Reef and leads to the release of stored carbon into the atmosphere. It is important to remember that we have been here before, as the member for Dalrymple has said. The detrimental effects of land clearing have been here for some time. That is why Labor in 2006 introduced legislation to end broadscale land clearing. It was recognised then that action needed to be taken to protect native vegetation in Queensland and at the time landholders affected by the phase-out of broadscale land clearing were compensated to the tune of \$150 million.

Since 2012 Queensland has gone backwards in terms of protection of native vegetation and carbon emissions, and Queensland will continue to go backwards if the existing LNP laws stay in place. The same can be said for implementing the changes proposed by the member for Dalrymple tonight. The proposal to allow clearing of 10 per cent of a property up to 5,000 hectares is not based on science and would have significant adverse ecological impacts. Our election commitment was to reverse the damage of the LNP vegetation management amendments—not to build on them, which is what the member for Dalrymple wants to do. The member has proposed an expansion of high-value agriculture and high-value irrigated agriculture.

It should be noted that the loss of vegetation reported in SLATS, released last year, does not include the high-value agricultural clearing permitted by the former government of nearly 900 square kilometres at two properties, Olive Vale and Strathmore, which commenced in 2015. It was only after my action instructing my department to investigate claims regarding vegetation clearing on Olive Vale-Fairview Station and writing to the federal environment minister Greg Hunt under section 69 of the EPBC Act that the proponent agreed to stop further clearing and seek EPBC approvals. If the LNP's high-value agriculture and high-value irrigated agriculture laws were left in place, we would see even more broadscale clearing over the next few years.

Worse still, this motion suggests that we go one step further and allow permits for grazing purposes. We cannot afford to continue to destroy habitats, degrade landscapes, release stored carbon into the atmosphere and allow sediment to flow into the Great Barrier Reef. I know that those opposite do not understand because they do not believe in the science, but I would appeal to them: just pick up the Great Barrier Reef report card and read it!

At the election we committed to strengthen our tree-clearing laws and we made a commitment to save the reef and reduce Queensland's carbon emissions, and we will stick to that commitment. We will see it through. We will not abandon our commitment like those opposite did in 2012.



**Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (6.10 pm): Mr Speaker, I move the following amendment—

Omit all words after 'consider' and replace with:

- (a) rejecting a one-size-fits-all approach to vegetation management on a statewide basis that denies opportunity to Queensland landholders;
- (b) maintaining current self-assessable codes;
- (c) maintaining clearing provisions for high-value and irrigated high-value agriculture; and
- (d) maintaining existing property rights and development opportunities of Queensland landholders.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock for a moment, please. Before you proceed, member for Hinchinbrook, can you please make a copy available to the Table Office and members, as we do need to have those amendments so that members are aware.

**Mr CRIPPS:** The LNP opposition is unable to support the motion moved in the House tonight by Katter's Australian Party because the motion that has been moved by Katter's Australian Party actually weakens the property rights and development opportunities for Queensland landowners outside of those specific bioregions that are named in the motion moved by the member for Dalrymple. The LNP opposition finds it totally unacceptable that Katter's Australian Party would come into this parliament tonight under the guise of being supporters of the vegetation management framework currently in place in Queensland and specifically exclude those areas of Queensland outside of the electorates of Dalrymple and Mount Isa.

There are a lot of members on both sides of the House whose constituents want the opportunity to be able to sustainably expand their agricultural and farming businesses in Queensland. The motion moved by the member for Dalrymple tonight will exclude those landowners in Queensland who have properties in the Wet Tropics bioregion, the Brigalow Belt bioregion, the Central Queensland coast bioregion, the New England Tablelands bioregion and the South-East Queensland bioregion. Those property owners will be disadvantaged if the Katter's Australian Party motion is successfully supported in this House tonight. I will not support a motion that excludes a very large number of significant agricultural production areas in Queensland.


The changes made by the LNP in 2013 to the Vegetation Management Act were significant and wideranging and they provide an adequate, sensible and balanced set of arrangements for the sustainable expansion of rural industries in Queensland while maintaining adequate protections for Queensland's native vegetation. The LNP tonight will not be party to a stunt by the Katter's Australian Party which plays to their constituents in the electorates of Dalrymple and Mount Isa. The people in the

electorates of Mount Isa and Dalrymple deserve the opportunity to be able to sustainably expand their agricultural and farming businesses into the future, and they will have that opportunity if they support the LNP's vegetation management framework that was put in place in 2013.

It is incredible that a party that seeks support outside of those two electorates would seek to put in place arrangements that would curtail opportunities for landowners outside of the vegetation bioregions nominated in their motion tonight. This side of the House is supportive of rural industries and wants to see them have opportunities to expand sustainably into the future. We do not want to participate in a cheap political stunt by the member for Mount Isa and the member for Dalrymple which seeks to exclude the rest of Queensland outside of their two electorates from opportunities to sustainably expand their farm businesses.

The LNP will not be supporting this motion. We have moved an amendment that seeks to maintain the existing provisions of the vegetation management framework in place; that will provide pathways for the sustainable expansion of agriculture and rural industry in Queensland; that protects the property rights of landowners in Queensland; that does not go back to the 'bad old days' when you had the reversal of the onus of proof under Labor where you could not plead mistake of fact as a defence and when you were compelled to give evidence against yourself—all breaches of civil liberties that were put in place under those people opposite. That was a disgraceful regime. It was a punitive regime. It treated Queensland's landowners and farmers like criminals.

The changes put in place in 2013 by the LNP are sensible and balanced. They provide excellent opportunities for agricultural growth in Queensland. LNP members from the regions will be able to go back to their electorates and say that they stood up for their communities and they were not subject to a ridiculous political stunt by the member for Dalrymple and the member for Mount Isa.

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (6.16 pm): I rise to speak both against the motion from the member for Dalrymple and the amendment from the member for Hinchinbrook. I oppose both as Queensland's environment minister and as the person who is currently charged with the responsibility to care for and protect Queensland's environment.

Of all of the fronts on which those opposite sought to trash Queensland's environment, the worst was what they did on vegetation management. They did not just allow more tree clearing; they actively encouraged it. This was after they inherited good laws that had seen land clearing drop to around 80,000 hectares at great expense to taxpayers. Taxpayers had compensated landholders for the impact of their laws, but then barely a day after the member for Hinchinbrook was elected he backflipped on the promise they made to the people of Queensland. He said that existing laws would not be enforced, existing investigations would be canned and that any existing charges would be dropped.

**An opposition member:** Be careful what you say because it is on *Hansard*.

**Dr MILES:** It was in *Country Life*.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Hinchinbrook, if you want to rise on a point of order you are able to. This is not an opportunity for a debate across the chamber.

**Dr MILES:** I do not know why he hates trees so much! Barely a moment after that statement, you could hear the tractors and bulldozers start. By the time they had finished, land clearing had almost tripled—300,000 hectares every year. To put that into perspective, that is 360,000 Rugby League football fields every single year.

Why do we think it matters? There are three main reasons. The first is that our forests and our trees provide habitat for our native Australian species. A report released last week showed that that clearing had included 40,000 hectares of habitat for the vulnerable koala species. So while those opposite were running around claiming to be protecting koalas, they were overseeing the destruction of koala habitat, putting extra pressure on our koalas.

**Opposition members** interjected.


**Dr MILES:** They do not just hate trees; they also hate koalas!

The second reason it matters is the Great Barrier Reef and the very many Queenslanders who love the reef and rely on it for their livelihoods. It is riparian vegetation that holds riverbanks together, that keeps sediment on land and out of the Great Barrier Reef. A third of the clearing was in reef catchments. There is a 50 per cent increase.

The third reason it matters is that trees and forests keep the air that we breathe clean. One of the things they take out of the air is carbon dioxide. I know that those opposite like to deny it, but Queensland is now responsible for 90 per cent of the country's emissions from land use. Some

36 million tonnes of emissions every year are caused by land clearing. That more than wipes out the Commonwealth government's very expensive and very ineffective direct action fund—billions of taxpayers' dollars. It puts in doubt our ability to meet our international targets. At a time when the rest of the world is reducing their emissions, Queensland is driving Australia's emissions up thanks to the LNP's land-clearing laws.

Labor committed to return to sound protections for habitat in Queensland for the sake of the Great Barrier Reef, for the sake of our native flora and fauna and for the sake of our climate. We will implement our promise. We will bring back laws, regardless of this motion from the member for Dalrymple and the even more reckless amendment from the member for Hinchinbrook.

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.22 pm): This motion is really about trying to stop any changes to vegetation management. That is what we are arguing about here tonight. I think there is a strong consensus about that here tonight. We have tried to do that in a constructive way for North Queensland, focusing on the lack of development in the north and how to facilitate further development.

**Mr Seeney:** What about my constituents, Robbie?

**Mr KATTER:** Member for Callide, I am happy to consider the people in your electorate. Let us have a constructive conversation about this. The member for Hinchinbrook wants to play politics with this—

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

**Mr KATTER:** We are happy to talk to him. We can look at any amendment, decide whether it makes things better and, if so, vote for it. We are not going to argue and play games about it. We are happy to do something productive.

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

**Mr KATTER:** We are happy to include it. We are happy to listen to the member for Hinchinbrook. That is how it should work, but the member for Hinchinbrook wants to play games with this issue.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr KATTER:** We want to combine to stop changes to vegetation management—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Mount Isa, resume your seat. You know the procedures of this chamber. You have been here long enough. Member for Hinchinbrook, you do as well. That is inappropriate. If you have something to say, you know how to express it. This is not an opportunity for a debate across the chamber.

**Mr KATTER:** We have had discussions with the Leader of the Opposition, who has made some good points. We are happy to consider those.

I will talk about some of the issues. The point is that development is being stifled all across the state. Nowhere is that more evident than in the north. Some terrific ground has been made in the north with the changes made a couple of years ago. There is a wonderful example of this up in the gulf, near Croydon. Thousands of hectares have been cleared, but it is merely a speck on the map that is barely discernible on these places. I think there are a lot of members who think that once you allow 10 per cent clearing of a place there will be a free-for-all. Whilst there is economic benefit in it, people are not going to jump at this or start clearing trees tomorrow. At best, we will end up with a patchwork or mosaic of clearing activities that enhance the productivity of these stations.


As much as we try to develop, if you allow for 10 per cent it will end up being only two per cent over the bioregion. On some stations you do not have the country or the ability or it just does not work with the style of that station or the production system of that station. Quite often, only a very small portion is viable to clear. I think people have images of big, significant portions being cleared in the north.

The point we are trying to make with this motion is that throughout Queensland's history a lot of Queenslanders had a long time to develop, but the north is in its infancy in terms of development. There needs to be special recognition of the fact that the state was developed. We have made a lot of money and there has been enhanced productivity in many other areas of the state—the Brigalow belt and places like that—because they were allowed to develop in a political climate that did not have the influence of the Greens. Now we are looking at the north.

We can deliver great things to the state with very limited impact on the bioregion. You will never exceed what is considered an acceptable impact tolerance of, say, 10 per cent on those bioregions. Science says that bioregions will tolerate 10 per cent clearing, but with the 10 per cent we are advocating you would be hard-pressed to reach three per cent. In terms of reef run-off, tree cover versus grass cover and so on, the science is out. There are actually some great benefits that would come from that small amount of clearing.

A lot of people in the chamber who have opinions on this will rarely set foot on that country in their lifetime, if at all. People need to understand the enormous size of these places. They are denying the opportunity to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to develop this land.

We thought it was a good concept to focus on an area of Australia that is largely undeveloped. That is not to exclude other areas of the state. We will be happy to consider amendments because the main message that we would like to get agreement on is that there should not be changes as there are other ways to advance the productivity of the state without impacting on the environmental virtues that we all care about. I think it is a very reasonable proposition. We hope that the House supports it.

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (6.28 pm): I rise to speak against the motion moved by the member for Dalrymple and against the amendment moved by the member for Hinchinbrook. I understand why we are revisiting this issue as it is an emotionally charged issue—I can hear people across the chamber interrupting—but emotion should not interfere with the consideration of evidence. Complex issues with many competing, interrelated factors need calm, measured consideration based on the latest science.

Any decent policy development must include consultation. I will happily put up my record of consultation on this matter against the record of those opposite, who were very selective about who they even allowed through their doors let alone who they listened to. It is very easy to say that you have heard no contrary views when you are locked in a room with your mates.

I have spoken to landholders, peak rural bodies, representatives of the conservation sector and constituents. I engaged a highly respected expert on natural resource management, Professor Allan Dale of James Cook University. His brief was to liaise with key stakeholders to develop a package of proposals that would help the government reduce tree clearing rates whilst minimising the effect on the rural sector. This government was elected on the fundamental principle that we would be a consultative government, and that is precisely how we have operated. I have only had a small amount of time to consider this motion tonight but not near enough time to examine the proposals in detail. This is too important an issue to have a definitive debate over 30 minutes and this debate does not appear to be backed by science. We simply do not have enough time to do that.

I understand how important self-assessable codes are to the rural sector. Our commitment explicitly stated that no changes would occur to self-assessable codes, provided that they offered appropriate protection. I welcome the opportunity to outline to the House what we as a government have done to ensure healthy self-assessable codes. An independent review of self-assessable codes was undertaken to determine whether they were achieving the required outcomes. The review found that amendments were necessary to ensure activities were confined to low-risk activities based on the latest scientific literature and consistent with the Vegetation Management Act. This was conducted at arm's lengths of the government. The findings of the review were presented to key stakeholders such as AgForce, WWF and Queensland Regional Groups Collective on 30 November 2015. They were all provided with the opportunity to provide submissions to the findings. Let me contrast that with the modus operandi of those opposite, who did not allow my department, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, to even consult with conservation groups—not even to consult with them! My department—

**Mr Seeney:** How were they a stakeholder?

**Dr LYNHAM:** Oh my God! Mr Speaker! My department is now incorporating submissions received with the findings of the independent review and is consulting across government to ensure the latest, most accurate science is reflected in the draft updated self-assessable codes. The latest SLATS data shows that almost 300,000 hectares of woody vegetation was cleared in 2013-14. This is simply unacceptable to the majority of the Queensland population. I challenge those opposite to answer the question: do they also believe that this figure is acceptable? Yes, a significant proportion that was cleared was category X, but even this clearing was stimulated by irresponsible and provocative attitudes such as the public declarations of those opposite that the tree police are dead. I believe that most landholders and most farmers are responsible people and care for their land, but the member for Hinchinbrook practically begged them to bring out the D9s. As with so many issues, there is a balance. I want Queensland's natural treasures to be around for my grandchildren. I also know that we need a strong, sustainable agricultural sector to support our population, and the Palaszczuk government is committed to both.

Division: Question put—That the amendment be agreed to.

**AYES, 43:**

**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.

**KAP, 2**—Katter, Knuth.

**NOES, 42:**

**ALP, 42**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D’Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O’Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

Pair: Lauga, Watts.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Non-government amendment (Mr Cripps) agreed to.

Division: Question put—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

**AYES, 43:**

**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.

**KAP, 2**—Katter, Knuth.

**NOES, 42:**

**ALP, 42**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D’Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O’Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

Pair: Lauga, Watts.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as agreed—

That any changes to the Vegetation Management Framework must consider:

- (a) rejecting a one-size-fits-all approach to vegetation management on a statewide basis that denies opportunity to Queensland landholders;
- (b) maintaining current self-assessable codes;
- (c) maintaining clearing provisions for high-value and irrigated high-value agriculture; and
- (d) maintaining existing property rights and development opportunities of Queensland landholders.

Sitting suspended from 6.43 pm to 7.43 pm.

## HEALTH LEGISLATION (WAITING LIST INTEGRITY) AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 19 May 2015 (see p. 617).

### Second Reading



**Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (7.44 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is threefold. It is to establish the Health Ombudsman as an independent reviewer of clinical waiting time for Queensland patients in the public health system; to ensure that the Health Ombudsman manages the auditing of wait-time matters in a transparent, accountable and public way; and to provide certainty in clinical waiting times for Queensland public hospital patients. The latter will also help allay concerns as a result of being on a waiting list longer than required.

It has long been a claim of the government and the opposition that the waiting list data made available to the public has been manipulated, or is inaccurate, or is a combination of both. In June 2007, the then Queensland government’s Specialist Outpatient Review Committee issued a report titled *A report on access to specialist outpatient services in Queensland public hospitals*. The report at page 3 provides the executive summary. One of the comments is as follows—

Current information management systems do not comprehensively support the business needs of specialist outpatient services.

At page 15 of the report there is a damning assessment of specialist outpatient services. I will not read the full contents of page 15 of the report but, basically, it says that at that point there was no understanding of the number of patients who existed in the public health system; inadequate recording of such data; and, more importantly, a risk to patients, by not being on a waiting list or not knowing when they would come to treatment, of adverse clinical outcomes for them.

As far back as 2007 issues were raised by the then government's own review that the information management systems were inadequate. The report also said at page 3—

Access to specialist outpatient services had not been a priority for government. Subsequently Queensland Health has focused attention on other health sets of priorities, such as elective surgery.

Although the report dealt only with outpatient services, in my opinion it was a report on the endemic position that Queensland Health faced at that time in relation to the proper and adequate reporting of data.

Fast-forward to the Hunter review in 2015 which was put in place by the current government to assess whether Queensland Health needed to change the way it looked at data and recorded it. At page 47, under the heading, 'Strategy—evidence-based choices' this comment is made—

The Department holds considerable data across the organisation to inform strategy and policy activities. However, knowledge of and access to information remains an issue. As reported throughout the consultations, there have been considerable issues with the integrity of data, which led to the establishment of the Office of Data Integrity Patient Safety in late 2014.

At page 47 of the report this comment appears—

Feedback throughout the review indicated that the absence of access to data to inform strategy and strategic policy decisions impacted critical functions such as purchasing activity and performance management.

On the same page the following appears—

There is a clear need to develop a Department-wide knowledge management system to underpin robust, evidence-based strategy.

It is quite clear that, regardless of who is in government, there are disputes as to whether the data that is collected is correct, is adequate and reflects the true situation that exists within the Queensland health system. Whether it is the ALP or the LNP, this toing-and-froing is simply not good enough to establish what is needed to drive our health system in this state and, equally, to provide the information that is required to inform patients throughout the state.

It is this issue that the bill tries to deal with. Irrespective of which party is in government, the Queensland Health monolith collects, collates and releases data. We need to have in place a system whereby we have an independent party who can achieve that and who can be seen to be independent and above politics.


The bill achieves that by putting in place the Health Ombudsman as an independent person to assess, review, audit and publish the data. He will have the power to order audit data within 30 days of the end of each quarter to which the data relates and then provide a report within a period of 14 days of conducting the audit. The audit must contain the following: a copy of the wait-time data for each HHS and each hospital operated by a HHS and the ombudsman's finding in relation to the accuracy of that data. Other information may be included in the report, including observations and recommendations that the ombudsman considers appropriate. In addition to that, the ombudsman, under section 80 of his own act, has the power to investigate matters that he believes require investigation. That means that the data comes to the ombudsman, he makes the assessment, he issues a report, he then has the power under his own act, section 80, to investigate further matters that he believes warranted.

There have been issues raised in relation to the cost of undertaking this and how it will be funded in the future. In my opinion there is little doubt that the Health budget could, in fact, fund the ombudsman in relation to this on an ongoing basis—that is, the data could be collected, forwarded to the ombudsman and he would then undertake the assessment and that funding could occur from the current Health budget. In fact, that is what happened back when the new Health Ombudsman was put into place back in 2014-15 when \$4.5 million was transferred to assist the ombudsman to activate the office, put in place staff and then get the program rolling. There is no doubt that the ombudsman could be funded from the current Health budget. There is also no doubt that the funding given to the ombudsman would, in fact, allow him to acquire staff in the private sector and/or second staff from Queensland Health to assist him.

The committee, in recommendation 1, asks that I clarify the scope of the audit. It is envisaged the role of the Office of the Health Ombudsman will be one of oversight and the truthing of the waitlist data. The scope will be a high-level audit to give Queenslanders confidence in their health system. The

scope would include any areas of concern or simply the number of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for their surgery. It would not be that he would physically have to enter each hospital, although he could perform site visits if he wished. In recommendation 2 I am asked to advise and clarify the issues relating to the duplication of resources of CARU and the new independent audit function of the Health Ombudsman. The role of the Clinical Access Redesign Unit will be largely unchanged. There will be no change. All HHSs would supply their data to CARU in their current manner. The office of the ombudsman would then be able to review this data and undertake spot checks in hospitals on the accuracy and integrity of the data. The collection of a single set of data supplied to CARU would then be used by the OHO as a method of undertaking the audit.

The time frames contained in the bill are certainly, in my opinion, reasonable and we would certainly undertake a review thereof if required by the office of the ombudsman. The intention of this bill is to remove the game that is played in this House by all sides of politics—remove the concept of us blaming them, them blaming us—and putting control of what is important data in regard to health but also the long-term planning of this state into an independent person who can then make a proper assessment and provide the relevant audit to the government and also the public. That data could then be published in a broader and wider form than is currently undertaken by this government. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (7.54 pm): I rise to make a contribution in this debate on the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015 and make it clear to the House that the government will be opposing this private member's bill primarily because it is unnecessary. At a time when the pressures on our health system in Queensland are increasing through the double whammy of cuts to federal funding of the health system, both in Queensland and across the Commonwealth—I remind all honourable members that there will be \$11.8 billion less—

**Ms Farmer:** Shame!

**Mr DICK:** I take the interjection from the member for Bulimba. It is a shame. It is a disgrace, as a matter of fact. There will be \$11.8 million less in the period 2017-18 to 2024-25 than we thought, as well as an ageing population which means we have to be smarter about how we run the health system. We have to put money into the front line not into more bureaucracy. I find it deeply ironic that the LNP, which professes to be the party of smaller government, seeks to create an additional bureaucracy within the bureaucracy as set out in this legislation. It does not seek to improve the performance of the current public sector. There is no desire to improve the current system. It is just that we create another burden on our health system.

**Ms Farmer:** They're the ones who talk about red tape.

**Mr DICK:** I take the interjection from the member for Bulimba. They talk about red-tape reduction all the time. I will not have our health system bound up in red tape. The members opposite lecture to the Australian Labor Party and other political parties about reducing red tape when they want to create another bureaucracy in the largest and most complex department and system in the state, being Queensland Health. This proposal would create duplication, increase costs and reduce efficiency, all without improving the quality, integrity or transparency of data. It comes from people who have had at the very best a cavalier attitude towards waiting lists. The signature policy of those members opposite when in government about waiting lists was centred around a public relations campaign designed to convince people that they were getting their surgery on time.

**Mr McArdle:** How dare Lawrence reduce the waiting list!

**Mr DICK:** I will take the interjection from the member for Caloundra. I have been saying it for a year, but it does not matter how long you say it or how often you say it, they refuse to listen. The reason that the waiting lists came down was because of the money that came through from the federal Labor government. National partnership agreements poured money into the public health system in Queensland. Quite disingenuously and dishonestly the signature reduction in waiting lists that the member for Southern Downs uses is the reduction in dental long waits. I have tabled in the parliament not just the national partnership agreement but the implementation plan. Lawrence Springborg did not even have to work out how to do it. It was done by the Commonwealth. Money came in from the Commonwealth and then he was told how to do it.

Even the Leader of the Opposition when he was health minister could read the implementation plan and do that. Of course, their strategy focused on getting surgery on time to people who had already been accurately diagnosed. The 100,000 people waiting longer than the clinically recommended time

for an outpatient appointment were simply ignored under the wait-time gimmick. It was a sleight of hand designed purely for public relations purposes. Yet those opposite want to come into the House tonight and lecture us about integrity in public waiting lists.

We have acted: \$361 million in our first budget over four years directly focused on the long waits in the public health system. I will not support a legislative measure that will tie up our public health system and not free it up to do the important work that it is required to do. It will create an extra layer of bureaucracy that will take money away from front-line services. Front-line services are the priority of this government. At the moment Queensland Health is a national leader in health performance reporting and is transparent in its activities, publishing timely, accurate—

**Mr McArdle:** Thanks to Lawrence Springborg!

**Mr DICK:** I will take the interjection. The member for Caloundra says, 'Thanks to Lawrence Springborg!' If they are a leader in transparency why on earth would they apply another bureaucratic machine over the top of it? If he wants to take credit for it, good on him. It is not true, but if he does why put in more bureaucracy? It is a stunt.

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Ms Enoch** interjected.

**Mr DICK:** I take the interjections from the member for Waterford and the member for Algester. They know it is a stunt. Every member on this side of the House knows it is a stunt. It is designed as a fig leaf to try to cover over their failure when they administered the Health portfolio. Under this bill, each of the hospital and health services would be required to develop, test and implement new data extracts. So here we go: another workload for the 16 hospital and health services.

**Ms Farmer** interjected.

**Mr DICK:** I take the interjection from the member for Bulimba. What about the patients? The patients get nothing out of this. There will be new bureaucracy on the hospital and health services through what would have to be provided to the Health Ombudsman. If the member for Caloundra does not think this is going to cost money, he has no idea how the health system runs. Of course the hospital and health services would have to properly resource this with extra staff, funding and other resources that would be better directed towards patient care.

There are already well-established processes for independent auditing of hospital and health service activities relating to the reporting of waiting times. The collection and reporting of performance information is undertaken by the Department of Health, which is independent of the hospital and health services as statutory bodies. What the opposition fails to recognise is that the system has changed. We have 16 hospital and health services that now deliver health services. As the Minister for Health, I do not run hospitals anymore. They are run by a board and an executive of hospital and health services. As the Minister for Health, I am part of the system management. That is how the system works.

The central department has very close oversight of what happens. Why? Because each year the department provides funding to the hospital and health services through a service level agreement and then expects that money, delivered under agreement, to be used for the purposes of that agreement to deliver front-line services. The way we monitor it is through reporting through waiting lists. That is what we do in the department: central oversight. The strong centre helps hospital and health services to deliver better health outcomes. Of course, there is a further check on the independence of the evaluation of what we do through the Queensland Audit Office, which also provides parliament with an independent auditing function through its reporting on the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector finances and administration.

It is appropriate that in this regard any changes to the Health Ombudsman's functions are considered before we do anything. The government will be opposing this bill because it is duplicative and would increase the administrative burden on our hospital and health services. As I have said, under the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011, the department is responsible for the overall management of the public sector health system. The collection and validation of waiting-time data and other forms of performance data is a management tool and that function is appropriately performed by the department as the system manager. In my view, it would not be feasible or appropriate for the department, as the system manager, to rely on the data published by another agency. Accordingly, the department would need to continue to require hospital and health services to provide data, including that relating to elective surgery and specialist outpatient appointments.

The bill demonstrates a lack of understanding of the current environment with regard to waiting-list reporting and Queensland Health's activities and initiatives in this area. The creation of hospital and health services as statutory bodies, legally independent from the Department of Health,

has eliminated potential conflicts of interest. In addition, the coverage of elective surgery and specialist outpatient performance reporting on the hospital performance website has increased significantly. You can go to the hospital performance website and see the data already. That is what all members of parliament and all members of the Queensland community can do.


The department has a leading role in improving healthcare services provided in Queensland public hospitals, a role that is central to its function as system manager. Data collections are used by the department to harness information to deliver systems-wide improvement across the patient journey. That is what we are focused on: the patient journey, from a patient going to a GP all the way through the system, including outpatient appointments. We are not ignoring 100,000 people waiting in the waiting room, left behind by Lawrence Springborg, but are deeply engaging in that process, all the way through outpatient appointments, diagnostic testing, surgery if necessary and then recovery and return to the community. That is what this government will do. We will focus on the front line with data that is already reported—

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Ms Enoch** interjected.

**Mr DICK:** I take the interjections from the member for Waterford and the member for Algester and I thank them for their support. They know that this is the wrong bill for Queensland and it should be opposed by the House.

*(Time expired)*

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (8.04 pm): I am very glad to speak on this bill, particularly as I follow the minister's diatribe of absolute rubbish. The previous LNP government was delivering absolute dividends when it came to health. It delivered productivity, efficiency and value for money. It drove down waiting lists at that stage and delivered great outcomes for Queenslanders. I congratulate the former minister, the Leader of the Opposition, Lawrence Springborg, for the great goals that he was kicking in health, ensuring that Queenslanders got their surgery on time and that those Queenslanders who needed dental work got it in the recommended clinical time frames. The Newman government was certainly delivering some great outcomes for the people of Queensland in relation to health.

I rise to support the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Bill 2015. This legislation aims to amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 and the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011. Committing to excellence for Queenslanders by ensuring that patients get care within clinically recommended time frames is what responsible governments do with respect to delivering quality public health policy. Waiting list integrity is all about fairness, equity, enhanced quality of life metrics and improved wellbeing for Queensland patients. During its tenure in office, the Newman government set about delivering productivity, efficiency and transparency of health system outcomes via open independent public reporting. The importance of evidence based wait-time policy and associated accountability with transparency and wait-time data reporting should never be in dispute. I call on the Palaszczuk government to commit to this principle on behalf of my constituents in Moggill and also the people of Queensland.

Establishing the Health Ombudsman as the independent reviewer of clinical wait times for Queensland patients in the public hospital system would potentially resolve one of the key issues of data integrity, as auditing by the Office of the Health Ombudsman would signal an enhanced requirement by the Department of Health to achieve and ensure further improvements in health data integrity. The Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015 proposes that hospital and health services provide quality wait-time data to the Health Ombudsman within 14 days of the end of each quarter. The explanatory notes to the bill state—

Wait time data means each of the following

- (a) data on the number of patients of each Hospital and Health Service waiting longer than a clinically appropriate period for surgery, by type of surgery, reported separately;
- (b) data on the number of patients of a Hospital and Health Service waiting longer than 2 years for general dental care, by type of dental care;
- (c) data on the time an outpatient of a Hospital and Health Service waits for an initial consultation with a specialist health practitioner, by type of specialist health practitioner;
- (d) other data, prescribed by regulation, about waiting times for a Hospital and Health Service.

In the submissions to the now former health and ambulance services committee of the 55th Parliament, the Queensland Nurses' Union was concerned that reporting on just one function of the public health system was a waste of time. I think most Queenslanders believe that wait-time data,


associated integrity and transparency are pretty important when it comes to patients getting their care within clinically recommended time frames. The QNU's notion of a bureau of health information really has connotations of a large additional bureaucracy in and of itself, further exacerbating this state's growth in debt and deficit via uncontrolled public sector job growth. Really, it could be thought of as payback to unions, which we all know are the dominant influence within the Palaszczuk government.

There is no doubt that public waiting list information audited by the Health Ombudsman would provide confidence and enhance clarity of referral decision making by doctors with respect to making informed choices on what is the most appropriate hospital or service to refer a patient to at any particular time. It has to be said that health performance and health system complaints are not mutually exclusive. In my view, the remit of the Office of the Health Ombudsman could incorporate the proposed auditing function with the consideration of potentially not significant growth in appropriate resourcing. As I indicated earlier, the Health Ombudsman is the most appropriate entity to undertake such a task, as it is already an existing statutory body. By utilising the Office of the Health Ombudsman there are economies of scale in respect to the costs and any potential additional resource implications which were identified by the committee in its report.

Unfortunately, I suspect that when we vote on this bill I will be left waiting just like both Queenslanders and public patients in my electorate have been left waiting by this inexperienced Labor government. This is not that surprising given the Palaszczuk government is frozen at the wheel and has no infrastructure plans for my electorate of Moggill, let alone a credible economic plan to deal with Queensland's growing debt and deficit problems. I take this opportunity to call on the Palaszczuk government to deliver road and public transport infrastructure as well as an additional high school for my electorate of Moggill.

The Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015 has been developed on a platform of sound, evidence based principles with the potential to deliver real benefits for Queenslanders. I support the bill. By opposing this legislation the Palaszczuk government is avoiding scrutiny and accountability in government.

The previous Newman government's wait-time guarantee was an Australian first in order to deliver surgery on time. I congratulate the former LNP government health minister, Lawrence Springborg, for his great work in the Health portfolio. I congratulate our shadow minister, the member for Caloundra, Mark McArdle MP, on bringing this important piece of legislation before the parliament this evening. I certainly call on the Labor government to support this bill as it is comprehensive and positive for the people of Queensland.

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (8.11 pm): I do not support the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015. I start by expressing some frustrations that are often expressed to me by other healthcare professionals and ones that I express myself. The services that we provide and the jobs that we do are incredibly complex. Measuring efficiency and effectiveness is an incredibly difficult task.

To have the entirety of one's efforts, whether one is in psychiatric care, in community health services, a midwife, a rehabilitation nurse, in aged care, boiled down to a single number of a waiting list and for that to be the sole measure that people attempt to use to measure the efficiency and the effectiveness of the healthcare system is quite frankly frustrating in the extreme. There are so many numbers to think about in health. We are wise to consider them all.

I will not go through them all. There is a unit in Queensland Health, CARU, which collects over a thousand pieces of data. There are many ways to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of our public health systems. The length of stay of rehab patients and the numbers who return or do not return is one way. Life expectancy would be a good way to think about the effectiveness of our health system. We have seen a steady increase in that. The average age of people when they need to go into high-level care would be another way to look at this. The average age of the workforce is very important to how we are managing our health system. The number of people with diabetes and the infant mortality rates at age five are others. The list could go on and on and on.

I am glad that we have a minister who understands that health is more than just one single number. He understands the entire health journey. He understands the role preventive health plays. He has restored funding for it. He understands rehabilitation and community services and the role those services play in rehabilitating people and keeping people in their own communities. He understands the role of community organisations in playing an invaluable part in health education and preventative health services. That is why he restored the funding to many of those organisations.

I fully support having sound wait-time policy. I certainly think it has to be done in a manner that is transparent and accountable. I also support having access to sound data. As I have said already, I think there is a lot more data than just this one number that we seem to be wanting to chase.

This bill really does nothing to assist in achieving these things. To accuse the government of having no plan and then to stand in here and say that our plan is to simply create a bureaucracy which replicates a service that is already being delivered and replicate functions that are already being delivered and to pass it off to somebody who does not want it and has admitted they do not have the expertise to do it and does not have the resource to do it seems the height of ludicrousness to me.

This bill is poorly thought out. It was extremely clear from the hearings that there was a lack of consultation with key stakeholders. We had all of four submissions. Three out of the four rejected this as an approach. The third sent us a one line email in support. I was not quite able to gauge the level of support there.

As I said, this legislation proposes to take on a function that is already performed by a body within Queensland Health. That body is CARU. As we learned in the committee hearings they are frequently audited by external and independent bodies. The bill proposes to shift this to another body.

**Mr Butcher:** Why would you double up?

**Mr KELLY:** Why would you double up? I will take that interjection. I could not give the member an answer to that, particularly when the other body has said they do not have the resources, they do not have the expertise and they certainly do not have it within their current scope and charter to perform these functions.

CARU, the current body in Queensland Health, was acknowledged by the submitters and witnesses as being efficient at their job. They do not just simply report one single number so that we can race off and use that to denigrate the good work of the many, many people who work in our health system. They actually use that information to drive clinical decision-making in the organisation. So they are not merely gathering data they are actually using that data to make decisions to improve the efficiency of the delivery of services in our public health sector.

That body is extensively audited for accuracy and usefulness of the information. That body has said and Queensland Health has said that even if this legislation were to pass they would continue their current role because that data is used for clinical decision-making. That results in improved outcomes for patients.

So why would we go down this path of pointless duplication? In the committee hearings the member for Caloundra could not adequately outline either the scope or the reasons for the audit. The proposal seemed to be that we have some sort of open-ended audit that can be added to at any time. There really is no indication why we need more monitoring when the current systems of reporting involve health and hospital services, Queensland Health and several federal bodies monitoring this data and all being externally audited.

There seems to be little thought given to the mechanics of this process, as was evident by the time frames proposed. Given that the scope was poorly defined, the Health Ombudsman said in evidence that he could not even give an indication of the capacity of his office to meet the stated time frames.

This legislation, in my opinion, is about politics and not sound wait-time policy. CARU and several other bodies that currently perform this role do a very sound and professional job in an open and accountable manner. In fact, any member of the House, with their computers and phones buzzing away in front of them, can go to the Queensland Health website and access this information. It is there.

**Mr Butcher:** It's not that hard, is it?

**Mr KELLY:** It is not that hard at all, member for Gladstone. I will take that interjection. Even I can do it.

This bill, at its heart, is about trying to make it easier for those opposite who are not that good at maths, know very little about managing health care to grab a number and use it to make the community feel as though our entire healthcare system is failing. As I have already said, healthcare professionals are sick and tired of the good work that they do across the entire spectrum of health care being boiled down to one single number.

**A government member** interjected.


**Mr KELLY:** Absolutely. Here is a number that we should remind the community of which demonstrates that those opposite are not serious about sound wait times or any other health policy—the 100,000 people we found on the waiting list for the waiting list when the Palaszczuk government was elected.

Managing our healthcare facilities and monitoring and improving performance are incredibly complex. The health system should not be judged on one performance measure. I know how important it is to have sound waiting list data, but I know there are many other ways to measure health outcomes. As I have already said, CARU collects over 1,000 pieces of data and actually uses it to improve our healthcare system.

There are many numbers, as I have said, in health care, and we as healthcare professionals often get caught up in our numbers. We love our systematic reviews. We love our research articles. But we have to always bear in mind that at the end of every number is a real live human being.

Returning to the issue of the waiting list for the waiting list, I am pleased that we have a minister who understands the entire journey. I am pleased that he has taken real action to bring the waiting lists down.

This bill is poorly constructed. There was clearly no consultation with stakeholders. There was no understanding of our current system. In fact, there was no understanding of the problem that they were trying to solve because, quite frankly, it did not exist. What did exist was a desire to play political games. What this government is doing is tackling the serious and challenging issues of promoting, maintaining and restoring health. I will not be supporting this bill. This bill does nothing to achieve its stated objectives.

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (8.21 pm): I rise to speak in opposition to the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015. The main objectives of the bill as set out in the explanatory notes are to establish the Health Ombudsman as the independent reviewer of the clinical waiting times for Queensland patients in the public health system and to provide certainty in clinical waiting times for Queensland public hospital patients and allay concerns as a result of being on a waiting list longer than necessary.

To achieve its objectives, the bill proposes to establish the Office of the Health Ombudsman as the independent body to review and publish waiting time data. The committee sought written submissions on the bill and held a public hearing. Four submissions were received from the Department of Health, the Queensland Nurses' Union, the Directors of Physiotherapy Services and Together Queensland. The Health Ombudsman also provided verbal evidence before the committee hearing. The committee was unable to reach agreement on whether the bill should be passed.

I would like to say from the outset that the importance of sound wait-time policy and transparency and accountability in wait-time data reporting is not in dispute. It is imperative that the people of Queensland have confidence in the public health system and the accountability of its reporting and data processes. What is in dispute is whether the bill is based on sound policy, whether the bill achieves its stated objectives and whether the bill serves the best interests of Queenslanders. I believe genuinely that the bill fails all of these tests.

The Department of Health is the custodian for elective surgery and specialist outpatient waiting list information in Queensland. The department manages these key statewide data collections to ensure that appropriate data is captured to fulfil clinical and business needs across the 16 hospital and health services and the department. Elective surgery data is collected in accordance with the national minimum data set, agreed upon for mandatory collection and reporting at a national level. Specialist outpatient data is collected in accordance with data parameters set in Queensland as no such national data set or standard is currently in operation.

Waitlist data, used primarily by hospital and health services to deliver clinical treatment and care, is similarly collated and stored centrally by the Department of Health. Each HHS has dedicated staff, including business practice improvement officers, surgery coordinators and clinicians to input and oversee the quality of this data. This collected and validated data is provided to external organisations such as the Productivity Commission for use in its annual report on government services and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare for use in its annual report on elective surgery waiting times. There is no argument as to the imperative nature of this data. This data, in the form of more than 1,000 measures of the activity and performance of Queensland Health's 62 reporting hospitals, is also published on the Queensland Health Hospital Performance website by the department, making the information publicly available and readily accessible.

The stated objective of the bill before the House is to provide for the independent review of waiting time data, but there are already well-established processes currently for independent auditing of hospital and health services' activities relating to reporting of waiting times. The Department of Health's collection and reporting of performance information is independent of the hospital and health services as the services are independent statutory bodies. These data collection measures are subject to robust assurance processes within the hospital and health services and the department, made more so by the implementation of recommendations contained in the Hunter Review.

It should also not be forgotten that the Queensland Audit Office provides an independent auditing function through its reporting to the parliament on the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector finances and administration. The bill before the House proposes to give the Queensland Health Ombudsman the power to audit and report on waiting time data. This not only has the potential to duplicate the department's role as system manager but also is inconsistent with the functions of the Office of the Health Ombudsman. In response to the question from my colleague the member for Thuringowa: 'Do you consider this function aligns with your existing functions under the act?' Mr Atkinson-MacEwen, the Queensland Health Ombudsman, who was not consulted during the development of the private member's bill, stated—

I do not see it sitting comfortably with the existing functions, because the existing functions are around managing health complaints and, fundamentally, protecting the health and safety of the public. Waiting lists are an important management tool for elective surgery, for specialist services and dental services ... they are a management tool to allow HHSs and the department as well, and others, to look at how best to use the ... resources they have in the best possible way ... That is not my jurisdiction. My jurisdiction is health complaints ...

The department's management of data collections supports its role in improving health services. It enables meaningful analysis to inform decision-making and the delivery of system-wide improvements across the patient journey. It informs purchasing decisions based on best practice approaches. The department's role in collecting and validating elective surgery and specialist outpatient data is appropriate in light of the department's understanding of elective surgery and specialist outpatient service delivery and departmental activities and projects relating to service improvement.

My colleague the member for Moggill and deputy chair of the committee stated that this bill is premised on a sound evidence base. At no time has the case been made during the member for Caloundra's introductory speech, in the explanatory notes, in submissions provided to the committee or during evidence provided to the committee during its public hearing that there is an issue with the transparency, accountability or integrity of waitlist data and a desire or need to duplicate this function in the Office of the Health Ombudsman.

The member for Caloundra during his introductory speech advised that the bill arose as a result of AMAQ policy submissions prior to the 2012 Queensland election. Of the four submissions this bill elicited, the AMAQ made no submission to the committee. Of the four submissions received, three opposed the bill. The member further advised that a key objective of the bill is to provide certainty in clinical waiting times for Queensland public hospital patients and allay concerns as a result of being on a waiting list longer than necessary. But the bill does not seek to amend any current waitlist policies. It does not address waitlist performance. It does not require that any new waitlist data be collected. In fact, owing to the lack of specificity in the bill, including the format of the data, how the data should be provided and the scope of the data to be provided, the bill suggests a scheme where a far more limited overview of waiting time performance would be provided. The time frames contained in the bill were also of serious concern as even the most basic auditing of wait-time data of the 16 HHSs could not be satisfactorily completed within the time proposed.

It is ironic to me that the government that spent millions of dollars on advertising and spin about the waitlist is now the opposition proposing to ensure and guard its integrity. It would appear that this bill is once again the LNP playing politics with the waiting list, rather than making a genuine effort to deliver improved services or accountability on behalf of the people of my electorate and across Queensland.

What we do agree on is that Queenslanders deserve the very best health care in times of sickness and injury. What we do agree on is that we need to work with health professionals to develop a genuine and realistic approach to wait times at all points in the patient journey. And what we should agree on is that we need to engage in honest dialogue with the people of Queensland regarding these services.


This government is committed to those ends. In our first budget we provided additional funding of \$361 million over four years to tackle the significant number of specialist outpatient long waits. In March last year, the health minister announced an extra \$30 million funding which has delivered more

than 10,000 additional specialist outpatient appointments. In April and October last year, the Minister for Health convened wait-time summits which brought together health professionals from all parts of the state who deal with waiting lists on a daily basis to discuss and build consensus on how to address the challenge of wait times at all points in a patient's journey.

On 4 May 2015 the government announced that an additional \$30 million in funding would be provided from existing resources over the next two years to clear the backlog of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for an outpatient appointment with an ear, nose and throat specialist by June 2017.

Regardless of our divergent views, I acknowledge the robust debate the committee had on issues surrounding this bill. I would like to convey my appreciation to the department and three additional submitters to the bill for their input and to the committee secretariat for their assistance in the committee's consideration of the bill.

To return to where I started, the importance of sound wait-time policy and transparency and accountability in wait-time data reporting is not in dispute. The people of Queensland must have confidence in the public health system that serves them and the accountability of its reporting and data processes, but I do not believe that this bill in its current form serves that public interest. It duplicates existing functions, seeks to address an issue that the case has not been made for, and it seeks to divert the Office of the Health Ombudsman from its original purpose. I cannot support the bill.

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (8.31 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate this evening on the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015. In doing so, I commend the chair of the Health and Ambulance Services Committee and all the other committee members for their deliberations on their report on this bill. I turn to some of the outcomes in the bill. I look at the objectives initially to establish the Health Ombudsman as the independent reviewer of the clinical waiting times for Queensland public patients in the public health system—hopefully, I will have time to get to that in a moment in the report—ensuring the Health Ombudsman manages auditing for wait-time matters in a transparent, accountable and public way; to provide certainty in clinical waiting times for Queensland public hospital patients; and allay concerns as a result of being on a waiting list longer than necessary.

Interestingly—and it has been canvassed in the contributions of other speakers this evening—there were only four submissions provided to the committee. Of those, three opposed the bill. They were the Queensland Nurses' Union—a very professional organisation that my wife is a member of—the Together union; and the Director-General of the Department of Health. I also note that the member for Caloundra referenced support by the Australian Medical Association in 2012, yet the AMA made no submissions in support of it so I am not certain where that evidence came from.

I note, however, in the contributions and the appearance by the Health Ombudsman before the committee, that he gave testimony to the committee. He was asked by the member for Thuringowa whether he considers the functions align with the existing functions under the act. He responded by saying—

I do not see it sitting comfortably with existing functions, because the existing functions are around managing health complaints and, fundamentally, protecting the health and safety of the public.

He also indicated that he did not have the resources to fill that part of a function should the bill be accepted.

I recently had the opportunity to attend a hospital with my wife, who was injured a few weeks ago and had to have five stitches in the tip of her index finger. We went to the local hospital—the Prince Charles Hospital public emergency department—and I was overwhelmed by the attendance and the professionalism. As we all should do in this chamber, we should recognise the professionalism and the support that our doctors, nurses and healthcare workers right across the jurisdiction of the wonderful state of Queensland provide people at the time of emergency. She was only there approximately 10 to 15 minutes before she was attended to and within about an hour to two hours we were out of the hospital. It gives you an indication firsthand when I was there, as her husband and comforting her, working through the process of making sure she got home in a reasonable time and with her finger bandaged up and repaired.

**Mr Ryan:** Good Labor public hospitals.

**Mr FURNER:** Absolutely. I will take that interjection: good Labor public hospitals. There has been, however, steady improvement in elective surgery wait times over recent years. That has been delivered by increased federal funding. That increase in federal funding has been through federal Labor

governments. In my time down there, we had an initiative dealing with GP super clinics. That was an initiative of the Rudd Labor government. That reduced the strain on and visitations to public hospitals, but actually—

**Mr Ryan:** It made a huge difference.

**Mr FURNER:** It absolutely made a wonderful difference. It made opportunities for people to be treated immediately in many cases, and I draw on my experience based on a GP super clinic not far from where I reside, the GP super clinic at Strathpine.

**Mr Ryan:** Which they opposed.

**Mr FURNER:** I will get to that in a minute. I refer to that GP super clinic at Strathpine. It was the first in Queensland and the second in Australia. You go there and you get treated just about immediately. I go there to get acupuncture on my back—as I have a bad back—and they do an amazing job as they do in other locations. I have been to Gladstone and seen the member for Gladstone's GP's super clinic. I am sure he would attest to the fact that the assistance—

**Mr Butcher** interjected.

**Mr FURNER:** I am sure you go there by yourself. Other people in Gladstone no doubt will get amazing assistance as a result of the treatment in the Gladstone Super Clinic. The member for Mackay and I were talking about this this evening, and she relayed her experiences and the satisfaction of the constituents in Mackay and the treatment they get from their super clinic. It was a real shame to see the incumbent coalition federal government cut resources to that initiative.

We came in and it was the policy that was going to commit \$650 million and earmarked 60 clinics. Overnight they cut \$90 million from that meaning people were lacking access in places like Brisbane, Rocky and Darwin. No doubt that has put strain and pressure back onto the public hospital system as a result of the way a coalition government handles health for people in our country.

Another example is when we came to government we discovered more than 100,000 Queenslanders had been waiting longer than clinically recommended to see a specialist at an outpatient facility. This is the legacy of the member for Southern Downs, who left Queenslanders in waiting rooms. The wait-time gimmick has a number of flaws and we know that. First, it failed to take account of the entire patient journey, relegating about 100,000 people to waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment. Secondly, the expectations provided under the wait-time gimmick made the program effectively meaningless for many Queenslanders. Thirdly, the program provided \$77 million over three years for advertising, consultants and bureaucracy but did not provide a single cent for the provision of additional services to any Queensland hospital.


It had nothing to do with the wait-time gimmick which was announced on 23 November and which was due to commence on 1 February last year. The Palaszczuk Labor government is working with health professionals to develop a genuine and realistic approach to wait times at all points in the patient's journey. In our first budget we provided additional funding of \$361.2 million over four years to tackle the significant number of specialist outpatient long waits.

I referred earlier to what I experienced at the Prince Charles Hospital emergency department only a few weeks ago. There is no doubt that anyone who presents themselves to a hospital will get the same professional level of experience and assistance that we see from our doctors and nurses. Patients can now experience those amazing Labor initiatives that we have brought into the state of Queensland.

The number of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment had fallen to 85,795 as of 1 January 2016. On coming to office, the Palaszczuk government discovered that more than 100,000 Queenslanders had been waiting longer than clinically recommended. What a disgraceful time to be waiting that long for a specialist outpatient appointment as of 1 January 2015.

On 10 March 2015 the government announced that an extra \$30 million funding would be made available to hospital and health services from existing resources to deliver additional activity by 30 June 2015. This was to fund more than 10,000 additional specialist outpatient appointments. On 29 April and 7 October 2015 the Minister for Health convened wait-times summits which brought together health professionals from all parts of the state who deal with waiting lists on a daily basis to discuss and build consensus on how to address the challenge of wait times at all points in the patient journey.

In conclusion, I think we on this side understand the gimmicks and the rhetoric behind the nature of this bill. We recognise the lack of interest from the submitters who appeared before the committee. I do not think I have ever seen an inquiry in this House having fewer submitters, with only four in this case. It clearly demonstrates the lack of interest in this particular bill. In conclusion, I am proud to stand here this evening and oppose this bill in this chamber.

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (8.41 pm): I rise to speak on the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015 introduced by the member for Caloundra. Before I do, can I talk about what this government is doing working with health professionals to develop a proper approach to wait times at all points in the patient journey. When Queenslanders chose to remove a government that slashed thousands of jobs from the Public Service—including, importantly, Queensland Health workers—on coming to government we discovered that over 100,000 Queenslanders had been waiting longer than clinically recommended. While it is an important point—

**Mr Bennett** interjected.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I take the interjection, where the member acknowledges that 100,000 Queenslanders languished on the waiting list longer than clinically recommended to see a specialist at an outpatient appointment. This bill demonstrates a stunning lack of self-awareness by those opposite and a complete lack of attention to the initiatives already being undertaken in relation to waiting list reporting. The Queensland Health hospital performance website currently publishes information on the activity and performance of public hospitals. The Palaszczuk government is also delivering on our election commitment to release health statistics around waiting lists and to maintain and expand the public release of hospital performance data. Health has already commenced publishing additional data about elective surgery performance, rural hospital patient surveys and maternity patient experience. Unlike the previous LNP government, we are willing to listen to the people of Queensland and we are willing to consult—

**Mr Bennett** interjected.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I take the interjection from the member opposite who said that listening to the people of Queensland is not good government. We are willing to consult with the people of Queensland. This government has already announced the introduction of interim elective surgery targets, with the intention of undertaking broad consultation—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Again, we will listen to the people of Queensland in that consultation and we will consult with the people of Queensland to review the appropriateness of these targets in the longer term. This bill will only serve to create an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy and remove much needed support away from important front-line services—the front-line services the LNP gutted whilst in office, the front-line services that they cut, sliced and diced.

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**Mr de BRENNI:** It appears those opposite feel like they did not sack enough people while they were in power—they want to tie up in red tape the staff they left behind. This government has provided additional funding of more than \$361 million over the next four years to improve the number of specialist outpatient appointments—I trust that serves to answer your question. The bill will duplicate the department's role as system manager by giving the Health Ombudsman the power to audit and report on waiting time data.

The management of data collections is integral to the role of the department as system manager in a number of ways. Our department uses the data to monitor the delivery of health services in accordance with each hospital and health service agreement and inform purchasing decisions based on best practice approaches. The department's management of data collections supports its role in improving health services to Queenslanders. It enables meaningful analysis to inform decision-making and the delivery of system-wide improvements across the patient journey. For example, data is used to analyse current demand and forecast future demand for health services. Elective surgery data has also been used to analyse Queensland's use of elective surgery urgency categories and benchmark against other jurisdictions in order to develop national elective surgery urgency categories and progress service improvements.

Let me tell the House a few things this government is doing under the direction of the Minister for Health. On 4 May 2015 this government announced that an additional \$30 million in funding would be provided from existing resources over the next two years to clear the backlog of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for an outpatient appointment with an ear, nose and throat specialist by 30 June 2017, and I commend the health minister on that action. On 10 March 2015 the minister announced an extra \$30 million in funding would be made available to hospital and health services from existing resources. This will fund more than 10,000 additional specialist outpatient appointments. On

29 April and 7 October the Minister for Health convened the wait-times summits which brought together health professionals to consult and to listen with front-line workers. We brought together from all parts of the state professionals who deal with waiting lists on a daily basis to discuss and build consensus on how to address the challenge of wait times at all points in the patient journey.

It makes interesting reading when we contrast what the Palaszczuk government is doing against the LNP and the former health minister. I note the former member for Moggill praised the former Newman government and the now opposition leader's wait-time guarantee—or should that be, as we have heard from my colleagues tonight, the wait-time gimmick? It was the member for Southern Downs who left Queenslanders in the waiting room. The wait-time gimmick had a number of flaws. First, it failed to take account of the entire patient journey. It relegated over 100,000 vulnerable Queenslanders to waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment. Second, the exemptions provided under the wait-time gimmick made the program meaningless for many Queenslanders. Third, the program provided \$77 million over three years—wait for this, Mr Deputy Speaker—for advertising, consultants and bureaucracy but not one single cent for the provision of additional health services in any Queensland hospital.

**Ms Farmer:** They could have spent that on more nurses.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I take the interjection from the member for Bulimba. Imagine what that \$77 million could have done in terms of front-line services, nurses, doctors—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Furner): Just hang on, Minister. If there are any more interjections on my left, I will start warning.


**An opposition member:** You can talk now.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I thank those opposite for their assistance in encouraging me to continue to point out the flaws in the wait-time guarantee because Queenslanders should understand well the flaws in the wait-time guarantee. The only thing the wait-time guarantee could actually guarantee Queenslanders was that patients would have to wait to get onto the waiting list. That was its only guarantee.

**Mr Springborg:** You wouldn't have a clue.

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Mr de BRENNI:** No matter how much the member for Southern Downs or his colleague the member for Caloundra do not want to hear this, the only reason we saw steady improvements in elective surgery wait times over recent years has been as a direct result of increased federal Labor government funding and national partnerships which specifically targeted and funded elective surgery. Queenslanders made a clear decision in January 2015 to choose a government that would prioritise the delivery of front-line services, one that would hold confidence in front-line health workers, one that would not treat Queenslanders with contempt, one that would not waste tens and tens and tens of millions of taxpayers' money on selling a bogus message in things like the wait-time guarantee. The House should reject this bill.

 **Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (8.50 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill. This bill was introduced by my colleague the member for Caloundra on 19 May 2015. The issue of public hospital waiting lists is never far from the headlines as waiting lists and waiting times for surgery are controversial issues associated with frequent reforms and negative emotive headlines. We know from the official reports and anecdotal stories that individuals frequently experience lengthy delays before receiving elective surgery. Timely access to healthcare services is a primary concern in any healthcare debate. However, it is crucial for the management of waiting lists and action to address all long waiting times to have reliable information on those waiting times. Measurement is critical to understanding how any system works; knowing where a system contains problems is a key to finding solutions.

The member for Caloundra presented this bill for an act to amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 and the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011. The proposed amendments provide for the auditing and reporting of data related to waiting times for patients of hospital and health services. The previous LNP government was committed to providing increased transparency through its Open Data initiatives. It was determined to change the culture of the Queensland government to be more open by allowing more public access to government information collected in all regions in all kinds of formats and for all kinds of reasons regardless of which area of government. We were so open and transparent to letting the community know what was going on.


The LNP government increased the number of reporting hospitals from 27 to 61, a far cry from the days of secrecy and hidden waiting lists under successive Labor governments. Likewise, this bill arises as a result of the previous government's announcement of its intention to create an independent body to audit clinical waiting times and publish this information in an open and transparent way. The objectives of this bill are: to establish a Health Ombudsman as the independent reviewer of clinical waiting times for Queensland patients in the public health system; to ensure that the Health Ombudsman manages auditing and wait-time matters in a transparent, accountable and very public way—this would be the legislative outcome of the previous Queensland government's announcement of its intention to create the new independent body following the announcement of the wait-time guarantee—and to provide certainty in clinical waiting times for Queensland public hospital patients and to allay concerns as a result of being on a waiting list longer than necessary.

Independent auditing and the publishing of waiting times aim to provide Queenslanders with a full picture of how hospitals are performing and they will be able to access more hospital data than ever before. This bill would see Queensland public hospitals' surgical, outpatient and dental waiting lists audited and reported on by an independent Health Ombudsman. This would be in line with the consistency and independence in wait-list reporting sought by the AMAQ in its policy submission prior to the 2012 Queensland election.

As was said in this House previously, the bill removes politicians from the process of reporting waiting time data. The bill places it in the hands of an independent party, the Health Ombudsman, to avoid waiting lists turning into statistical soup, undermining the integrity of the hospital's performance statistics. This bill establishes the Office of the Health Ombudsman as the independent body to review and publish waiting time data and sets out its functions and powers. The reason behind this is that the Office of the Health Ombudsman is an existing statutory body; so utilising the ombudsman will reduce the cost and time of establishing this new body.

This is about being open and accountable. Earlier tonight I heard the health minister talking about the LNP creating red tape. The word 'hypocrisy' comes to mind immediately. If honourable members want to talk about red tape being created, they should look at the other side of the House; that is what they are renowned for. They are renowned for creating red tape and creating jobs within the Queensland bureaucracy. That is the only way that Labor creates jobs. When we talk about waiting lists, we really need to look at the Sunshine Coast in particular. We are still waiting for the MRI, the Mooloolah River interchange, which will provide a direct link to the brand-new hospital being built on the Sunshine Coast. Without that, it is going to be extremely difficult to get to it.

There is also the waitlist for when the health minister will come out and tell us when the new Sunshine Coast University Hospital will be finished. Will it be finished on time, as asked by the member for Maroochydore yesterday? The minister could not answer that question. But the waiting still goes on. Queenslanders are waiting to hear what Labor is going to do to solve the financial crisis here in Queensland. They are waiting to find out how many jobs are going to be created. This is extremely important to all Queenslanders, yet we wait and wait and wait because those opposite do not have a plan for the future. They have not got a plan to fix the health system. Can honourable members imagine if the Tahitian prince's money was still available? We could have used that money, but we still wait. Can they imagine if the Health payroll debacle had not happened? That money could have built hospitals all over Queensland, but we wait and the waiting list goes on. Mr Speaker, I thank you for your time.

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (8.56 pm): I rise to speak against the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015. Before I go into my speech I would like to congratulate the committee who has delivered the report on this bill. Honourable members can see, by virtue of the fact that we actually have three health bills before the House this week, just how busy this committee has been. These are really complex and deep issues. Obviously, the opposition only had four submitters for this bill, so this would have been one of the shorter ones that they had to consider. Nevertheless, I congratulate them. Health is a very, very important issue and they have done some excellent work. I would like to congratulate my friend and colleague the member for Nudgee on her excellent chairing, obviously the Minister for Health who has had carriage of this amendment bill and all the other committee members as well as the people who are going new onto the committee.

I have to say that, coming into this bill, I was a bit devastated. I suppose I had a false sense of hope in the last week or two that we had in this House reached bipartisan agreement on two health bills—bills that affect the health of every single Queenslanders. I am talking about the Mental Health Bill, which this House passed last week and, of course, the antismoking bill. These are notable achievements and will go down as notable achievements in the 55th Parliament.

**Mr Ryan:** Historic.

**Ms FARMER:** I take the interjection from the member for Morayfield. They are historic achievements. As I sat in my chair listening to members on the opposite side when we were debating both of those bills, I felt really proud of this parliament because we were doing what the people of Queensland expect us to do, which is to do the right thing by them and deliver good policy. It was great. I felt a warm inner glow.

**A government member** interjected.

**Ms FARMER:** I take the interjection from the minister. I was just about to say that I am very disappointed about this, because waiting lists are a critical issue. They are not something to be playing politics with. Just when there was a flicker of hope in the darkness about the LNP's capacity to develop good policy that is not about politics, the old habits come up. So we had a good week and that was it, because this is yet another gimmick. There are many gimmicks from the LNP about health policy.

This was the team that delivered the wait-time gimmick with the promise by the Leader of the Opposition, when he was the health minister, to fly Queenslanders around the state and accommodate them on the health department dollar in search of an empty theatre. I cannot tell you the number of times during the election campaign that people who had health problems told me they thought they were going to get their operation straightaway, and then they would find out that they were going to go on the waiting list for the waiting list. That is what they did not know. They would go to the public hospital and find out that, despite what the member for Southern Downs had said, in fact it would be six years before they got their back fixed or three years before they got an operation on their throat or two years for something else. What was it that the member for Southern Downs was talking about? It was the wait-time gimmick that he was talking about. Of course he never mentioned that the work he did do to get people off the waiting list all came from federal money. Not once did we hear about that.

That wait-time gimmick promise was an unfunded promise, and I know we have all sat here in this House and heard the Minister for Health, who is taking this very seriously, ask where the money was. The Minister for Health has asked repeatedly, 'Where was the money?' For how many days have we been waiting to hear where the money was? How many days has it been since the health minister first started asking about where the money was that raised the hopes of Queenslanders and then dashed them? It is 260 days that we have been waiting to hear about that, and we are still counting. Five hundred million dollars and we are still waiting for that.

Speaking of counting, that is exactly what the opposition is now telling us should be the core function of the Health Ombudsman. They are not saying that the Health Ombudsman should be talking about things that are at the heart of the health system like our nurses, who they sacked in huge numbers. They are talking about counting things like air charter companies and hotel operators and number crunchers. I can tell you that nobody in the Bulimba electorate thinks that they are the key issues for the Health Ombudsman. What they talk about is patient care, front-line services and nurses and doctors. When they were in government they sacked nurses and they went to war with doctors, and now they want to mess with the independent office that is charged with dealing with patient complaints. It is not a strategy or a policy; as I said, it is a gimmick. We sat in this House today and heard them rant on about how terrible the ombudsmen positions are and all the red tape, and here we have an ombudsman who has to deal with data.


Unlike many of the other gimmicks they have introduced around health, most of which were useless, this one has the potential to be quite damaging. Our health system is absolutely one of the finest in the world, and it is a big problem whenever people criticise and imply faults in our health system because it is the doctors and nurses and front-line workers who feel their reputations are being impugned. That is a terrible thing because of the good work they do. But with an organisation of over 73,000 employees there is always the prospect of some aspect of the system misfiring, and we need an independent umpire to deal with complaints as they arise. It is always going to happen.

When you also consider that the Health Ombudsman also has oversight of private practice you can appreciate that he operates a pretty full book, and the last thing we need to do is divert the important work of the Office of the Health Ombudsman into something that is already being done in a detailed and transparent way by the Department of Health. The excellent committee report details at quite some length the work that is currently being done. The Hunter review has led to the work that is being done in the health department now, and they certainly had quite a lot to say about what duplication there would be.

Unlike its predecessor however, this government is investing in solutions. Whenever there is an injection of funds, I have loved hearing the health minister talk about the results. We talked about \$361 million over four years to address the outpatient waiting list—a list which appears to have been

completely invisible to the Leader of the Opposition. I understand that this investment is already bearing fruit, with 15,000 fewer Queenslanders on the long waitlist to see a specialist than when we came to office. The Palaszczuk government will not abandon people on the waiting list to see a specialist; we will not be diverting valuable funds into counting data and red tape. We will be working on providing front-line services. We will be supporting our nurses and our doctors.

Like you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I had a fantastic experience with my family quite recently. On two occasions within a couple of weeks my daughter had to go to the Lady Cilento Hospital, and I cannot praise those doctors and nurses enough for the work they did. I want them to know that this government respects and supports them, which is not something that happened in the three years of the former LNP government. If there was one thing that doctors and nurses mentioned to me, it was the lack of respect. This bill is saying to them that they do not value that, so I speak against this bill and urge the House not to support it.

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (9.06 pm): I rise to oppose the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr RYAN:** The member for Mudgeeraba should wait, because I am about to commend her for supporting the health committee as deputy chair. Before the member for Mudgeeraba interjects she should wait for the compliment, because it is probably the only compliment she will get for a little while. I compliment the deputy chair of the committee, the member for Mudgeeraba; the chair of the committee, the member for Nudgee; and all of the other committee members who served on that health committee for bringing the report to the parliament and providing their views about this particular piece of legislation.

I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I thought the name of the bill was a punchline to a joke, because, when we are talking about waiting list integrity, there is no integrity whatsoever from the LNP when it comes to waiting lists. There is no integrity from the LNP when it comes to health policy. There is no integrity from the LNP when it comes to looking after healthcare professionals in our public health system in Queensland. We know their record when it comes to health in Queensland. We have seen it over the last three years when they were in government. Every single time I was out campaigning before the 2015 election, someone came up to me and told me their horror LNP health story. It is true. They deny it, but it is true. It is true when we talk about the LNP horror, so perhaps it is not a punchline to a joke. This bill is reflective of the horror movie that is the LNP in government when they were dealing with public health in Queensland. Every time I was out campaigning before the 2015 election I would hear the horror stories. I would be knocking on doors and there would be sacked nurses—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Furner): Order! Member for Morayfield, take your seat. Member for Burnett, I am going to warn you under standing order 253. You are on the list. The member for Morayfield has the call.

**Mr RYAN:** The more they shout, the more they try to hide the truth. I refer to those sacked nurses—those people the LNP said did not exist. They said that they did not sack any nurses. Well, I met many of them. I met sacked nurses from Caboolture Hospital—very hardworking people sacked by those opposite. Those opposite undermined the good work being done at Caboolture Hospital—a great public hospital in Queensland—by sacking nurses from that hospital. Caboolture Hospital is one of the busiest hospitals in Queensland—one of the busiest maternity hospitals and one of the busiest emergency departments. How did those opposite support it? When they were in government they sacked nurses. Shame on them. The horror movie that is the LNP health policy continues when they are in government.

It went beyond that. There is another group of people they said never existed—that is, people on the waiting list. There were TV ads about the wait-time guarantee in which they said, 'There's no-one on the waiting list.' When I was out campaigning before the 2015 election I met many people who were offended by those ads—people who were waiting to be seen because they had breast cancer. I knocked on the door of a lady in Narangba who told me that she had been waiting three months for an appointment for breast cancer treatment. She was offended by those ads because the LNP said that she did not exist. Those ads said that she was not waiting for an appointment. I met an older lady from Burpengary who, by the time the 2015 election came around, had been waiting three years for a knee operation. They said that she did not exist. Just recently people have come to my office and have said that they have been waiting for years as well.

I am very pleased to say that, because of the investment this government is putting in to our health system, under the wonderful leadership of the health minister, those people are now being seen. They are so grateful for that investment in the health system that not only are they publicly thanking our wonderful Caboolture Hospital and Queensland Health but also they are sending me letters. They are writing in saying, 'Thank goodness for your government and your investment in health because I am now seeing a doctor. I am now getting the treatment I need.'

Not only does this joke of a bill continue the horror story that is the LNP's health policy in government; it also has no support from key stakeholders. Do the nurses support it? No. Does the Health Ombudsman himself support it? I did not see any submission in support of it. In fact, what did the Health Ombudsman say when he was questioned by the committee? He said—

I do not see it sitting comfortably with the existing functions, because the existing functions are around managing health complaints and, fundamentally, protecting the health and safety of the public.

So the Health Ombudsman does not want it. The nurses do not want it. The union that represents white-collar workers in our health system does not want it. The Together union does not want it. The director-general of the department opposed it. The member for Caloundra did not produce any evidence that shows the AMA supports it, either. He should show us evidence that the doctors support it. Some other speakers may have already referred to the fact that on 26 October 2014 the member for Southern Downs, in respect of something very similar to what is being proposed to the House tonight, did not support the concept either. Even their own leader does not support this concept.

No-one wants this bill. Is it any wonder that only seven per cent of the LNP party room is prepared to speak on the bill tonight? It is only the member for Caloundra and three others. That equates to seven per cent. Out of all of Queensland, only the member for Caloundra and seven per cent of the party room of the LNP actually support this. Shame on them.


This bill demonstrates a lack of awareness of the activities and initiatives already being undertaken in relation to waiting list reporting. The Queensland Health Hospital Performance website currently publishes information on the activity and performance of public hospitals. The Palaszczuk government has undertaken, in line with its election commitments, to release health statistics around waiting lists and to maintain and expand the public release of hospital performance data. As a result, the Department of Health has commenced publishing additional data about elective surgery performance, rural hospital patient surveys and maternity patient experience. The government also announced the introduction of interim elective surgery targets in 2015 with the intention of undertaking broad consultation to review the appropriateness of these targets in the longer term.

The government is committed to developing a genuine, balanced and realistic approach to addressing wait times at all points in the patient journey. That is critical. We have to make sure we are honest about wait times at all points in the patient journey. One mob of people who were not honest about that is those opposite when they were last in government. They said that people did not even exist. That is because they were not honest about wait times at all points in the patient journey.

The interim elective surgery targets require that 98 per cent of category 1 patients receive their elective surgery within the clinically recommended time frame of 30 days and that 95 per cent of category 2 and category 3 patients receive their elective surgery within the clinically recommended time frames of 90 and 365 days respectively.

The 2015-16 state budget also allocated \$361.2 million over four years to reduce the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment. In line with another of the Palaszczuk government's election commitments, the Department of Health is also undertaking a review of the role of the Health Ombudsman. The outcomes of this review require consideration before any changes to the Health Ombudsman's functions could be contemplated.

This bill is a joke. This bill continues the message we heard during the LNP's three years in government—a horror story being inflicted on our health system. Queenslanders will not wear it. Every time they hear the LNP utter the words 'wait time' they know that they are being taken for mugs. I oppose the bill and encourage all members to oppose it.

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (9.17 pm): I rise tonight to speak against the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill 2015. I congratulate the committee, chaired by my colleague the member for Nudgee, and all those who participated.

The Office of the Health Ombudsman is Queensland's independent health service complaints agency. It enables Queenslanders to complain about a health service provided to them, a family member or someone in their care—just in case people did not realise what it is actually supposed to do. This bill would increase the scope of responsibility of the Health Ombudsman, and additional resources would be required to undertake the additional function. I will talk more about that later.

There is a risk that any new data extract developed for the Office of the Health Ombudsman may not reconcile with data used or published by the Department of Health as the data snapshot may be taken at different points in time. If the same point in time is not used for both of the data extracts, the result will be different without either extract being any more accurate than the other. If, on the other hand, the snapshot of the data for each extract is taken simultaneously, the function of the audit will be a duplication of existing processes and will not provide any benefit at all. I do not understand why you would want to do that.

During development of the private member's bill, the Health Ombudsman was not consulted about its proposed new function to audit and report on waiting time data. If he had been, we may be debating some better legislation today. At the public hearing on the bill the Health Ombudsman advised the Health and Ambulance Services Committee that he did not want this added power. In fact, when he was asked by the member for Thuringowa whether he considered that this function aligns with existing functions under the act, the Health Ombudsman replied—

I do not see it sitting comfortably within the existing functions, because the existing functions are around managing health complaints and, fundamentally, protecting the health and safety of the public.

Waiting lists are an important management tool for elective surgery, for specialist services and dental services, for example, but they are a management tool to allow HHSs and the department as well, and others, to look at how best to use the always limited resources they have in the best possible way to deliver the services they need to deliver. That is not my jurisdiction. My jurisdiction is health complaints, particularly around whether or not the service delivered was reasonable and whether or not it puts the public at risk.

The ombudsman, Mr Atkinson-MacEwan, also considered that there would be considerable costs associated with the new function, including recruitment of specialist staff, building new information systems and conducting the audits. He went on to say—

Currently, this is an audit role that does not sit inside my organisation. I would have to obtain the resources from somewhere to do it. I do not have the resources in-house at this stage to do this work.

The LNP seems very keen to make changes to the health system now it is in opposition. Let us look back at what it did for waiting lists when it was in government. The wait-time guarantee, otherwise fondly known as the 'wait-time gimmick', is the legacy of the member for Southern Downs. He left Queenslanders in the waiting room. When the Palaszczuk government came to office, we discovered that more than 100,000 Queenslanders had been waiting longer than clinically recommended to see a specialist at an outpatient appointment. The wait-time guarantee had a number of flaws. First, it failed to take account of the entire patient journey which relegated, as I said, over 100,000 people to waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment. Second, the exemptions provided under the wait-time guarantee made the program effectively meaningless for many Queenslanders. Third, the program provided \$77 million over three years for advertising, consultants and bureaucracy but not did provide a single cent for the provision of additional services in any Queensland hospital.

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**Mr KING:** The steady improvement in elective surgery wait times over recent years has been delivered—if you listen you may learn; you may become a better person if you listen—as a result of increased federal funding and national partnerships which specifically targeted and funded elective surgery—national partnerships. It had nothing to do with the wait-time guarantee, which was announced on 23 November 2014 and was not due to commence until 1 February last year.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr KING:** You talk about it like it was the thing that saved everyone. It did not do anything. Now let me talk about action taken by Labor on health since taking office. The Palaszczuk government is working with health professionals to develop a genuine and realistic approach to wait times at all points in the patient journey. In our first budget, we provided additional funding of over \$360 million over four years to tackle the significant number of specialist outpatient long waits. In March 2015 we announced an extra \$30 million funding, which has delivered more than 10,000 additional specialist outpatient appointments. The number of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment has fallen to around 85,000 as at 1 January 2016. In contrast, when we came to office, as has been said, the Palaszczuk government discovered that more than 100,000 Queenslanders had been waiting longer.

**A government member:** Disgraceful!

**Mr KING:** It is disgraceful. That was almost half of the 229,000 Queenslanders who were on the outpatient list—almost half of them—waiting as at 1 January 2015. Prior to our first budget, the government announced a number of initiatives to start the process of tackling the significant number of

specialist outpatient long waits. On 10 March 2015 our government announced that an extra \$30 million funding would be made available to hospital and health services from existing resources to deliver additional activity by 30 June 2015. This was to fund more than 10,000 additional specialist outpatient appointments. On 29 April and 7 October 2015 the Minister for Health convened wait-time summits which brought together health professionals from all parts of the state who deal with waiting lists on a daily basis to discuss and build consensus on how to address the challenge of wait times at all points of the patient journey.

In May 2015 we announced an extra \$30 million in funding to be provided from existing resources to be used over the next two years to help clear the backlog of patients who were waiting longer than clinically recommended for an outpatient appointment with an ear, nose and throat specialist. This was especially helpful to a young constituent of mine who waited for years under the last government for ENT surgery which severely impacted his employment and consequently his mental health. I am pleased to say that the young gentleman was operated on in November 2015 and is now in good health and gainfully employed with a far more positive outlook on life, and I commend the minister for his actions to help this.

I had a flick through the committee report on the bill and noticed that three of the four submitters did not support the bill, but who would? I note that the majority of LNP members do not even want to speak to the bill. Further to the ombudsman's concerns—because I would have to speak about what a union said—Together Queensland addressed the issue of resourcing in evidence presented to the committee. Its submission states—

Advice from our members is that approximately 4 FTE are involved in this function within CARU.

CARU is the Clinical Access and Redesign Unit, as I found out. It continues—

However this workload is spread across 11 staff who perform other functions that require a similar skillset. There is no clear manner in which resources could simply be transferred and, in any event, staff in the area may not be willing to transfer to the Ombudsman.

It is likely therefore that the Ombudsman's office would need to recruit and train staff (at least 4), as we understand the Ombudsman does not currently have any staff that possess the required skillset.


Is that trying to introduce red tape and waste? I would say yes. It continues—

The Ombudsman's current functions in addressing complaint and regulating health practitioners is very different to the technical and specialist role of reporting the wait list, currently performed by CARU.

Together Queensland considered the bill moves an existing function from an area of substantial expertise with no demonstrated benefit. Also, the objectives of the bill would not be met through reducing reporting frequency and moving the responsibility to monitor wait times to the Health Ombudsman. The submission continues—

Together members value the critical role of the Health Ombudsman in hearing patient complaints and monitoring the service delivery from health care providers and professionals and providing confidence to the public and community around complaints. The Ombudsman's office is well placed to do this work. There is a potential for the Health Ombudsman already to look at complaints from patients regarding service delivery and service access for patients however system-wide patient flow matters are not currently in scope.

In conclusion, a review into the role of the Health Ombudsman is currently being undertaken by the Department of Health as a result of an election commitment of the Palaszczuk government. The scope of the Health Ombudsman's functions should not change until this review is complete. I cannot recommend that this legislation be passed.

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (9.27 pm): Tonight I rise to talk about another health bill—something that is always dear to my heart. I begin by thanking the member for Caloundra for taking the time to introduce this bill. We have had many discussions in this House and the member for Caloundra and I have had many discussions in relation to things around health. We agree on many areas, but it probably comes as no surprise that tonight is not going to be one of those occasions.

I thank the committee for looking into this bill. It must have been a little bit challenging given that it only had four submissions. With regard to all of the committee work that I have done as part of the Finance and Administration Committee, generally we are overwhelmed with submissions and have had to deal with trying to shorten them and summarise them. But four submissions would have been a challenge. It honestly would have been a challenge to try to work out what people really thought about this issue. Members who have spoken before me have said that three out of four of those submitters opposed the bill.

The first point that I took from the report was the chair's comments on page 5 which I found quite alarming where she stated that the Health Ombudsman was not consulted on the potential new function during the development stage. That to me really rang an alarm bell—that is, why would you not consult the very person who is going to be at the forefront of delivering this? Should we actually pass this legislation through the House this evening?

To digress a bit but to give a bit of background to my involvement with wait times, in 2011 I was working as a paramedic. The minister for health back in those days, the Hon. Geoff Wilson, invited me to join a committee comprised of specialist doctors, nurses, triage nurses, coordinators, some paramedics and some other members of Queensland Health. The committee was called MEDAI—the Metropolitan Emergency Department Access Initiative. It was formed over a six- to eight-month period and it was designed purely to look into what was going on in Queensland hospitals, predominantly metropolitan hospitals but it also took into account some regional areas. I was the only member of that committee who came from anywhere outside the south-east corner.

One of the tasks of that MEDAI committee was to try to work out what was happening in our emergency departments. The terms of reference that we began with were fairly concise in that we were focused on the emergency department door and what was happening inside emergency departments. But we realised very quickly that the issues that were occurring in Queensland emergency departments were further widespread inside the health system, which introduced us to what happens in the wards, what happens with discharge, what happens with the patient journey and, certainly, waiting times for elective surgery.

One thing that was very clear to me was that, in many of our hospitals, there is a constant battle between the need for beds for people who have elective surgery demands and people who need beds because of emergency department demands. Like many things, when there is give on one side, there is take on another side. So if we were to apply a huge amount of pressure to hospitals to increase their uptake from the emergency department to reduce ambulance ramping, that would mean that there would be fewer beds available for elective surgery. In the opposite case, if we were to apply pressure to hospitals to improve their elective surgery rates, then the emergency departments would suffer the consequence.

The MEDAI committee was very much focused on how we could improve the pathway for patients arriving at hospitals, predominantly at emergency departments, but it took into consideration what was happening around the edges. The take-away message for me was that, when wait times blow out, our front-line emergency department staff pay a good deal of the price. I know that a lot of emphasis is given to paramedics, but our emergency department staff are the ones who really cop it from all sides. When things are going bad in a hospital, it is the emergency department consultants, all the emergency department doctors irrespective of their level, the nurses, the triage nurses, the administrative people, the cleaners and the security guards who pay the price. In relation to this bill and any other bills like it that come before the House that relate to hospitals, in whatever decision we make we have to consider who is going to pay the price. I fear that this bill will not address the issues that we are trying to address and will leave our front-line staff out there to pick up the pieces.

I want to refer to duplication and the administrative burden on the HHSs. I believe that this bill, if passed, will certainly give the Health Ombudsman the power to audit and report on waiting time data, but it would duplicate the department's role as the systems manager. The management of data collection is integral to the role of the department. The department uses the data to monitor the delivery of health services in accordance with each hospital and health service agreement and inform purchasing decisions based on best practice approaches. The department's management of data collection supports its role in improving health services. It enables meaningful analysis to inform decision-making and the delivery of system-wide improvements across the patient journey.

Elective surgery data has also been used to analyse Queensland's use of elective surgery urgency categories and benchmark against other jurisdictions in order to develop national elective surgery urgency categories and progress service improvements. I believe that, in light of the department's understanding of elective surgery and specialist outpatient service delivery and departmental activities and projects relating to service improvement, the department's role in collecting and validating elective surgery and specialist outpatient data is appropriate.

The bill would create additional imposts on hospital and health services. I believe that hospital and health services are doing quite a capable job out there. I deal with the HHS in my area quite regularly. I feel their pain. I understand what they are going through. I believe that services would be required to establish new processes and information systems to enable them to routinely submit data

to the Health Ombudsman. The bill would also require HHSs to respond to any request from the ombudsman in carrying out its function to audit the accuracy of the data provided by the HHS. I believe that this is a further burden on the HHS's resources. I believe that the HHSs are already achieving the goal of what we have set them to do. I do not believe that this bill will assist them or the people of Queensland in any way, shape or form. I oppose the bill.

**Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (9.37 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill. As a registered nurse, I applaud the efforts of the shadow minister for health to add transparency to hospital waiting times in Queensland. This bill will establish the Queensland Health Ombudsman as the independent reviewer of clinical waiting times for Queensland patients in our public health system. It will charge the Health Ombudsman with being an independent auditor of waiting times in an open, transparent and accountable way so that, when it comes to waiting lists, we can get the facts, not politics being consistently thrown into the public sphere by those opposite. This will be achieved by requiring our hospital and health services to provide wait-time data to the Health Ombudsman and by requiring the Health Ombudsman to analyse and publish this data in a timely manner.

The committee's consideration of this bill revealed serious inadequacies in the way in which health times are reported. I raised a number of concerns surrounding how information data is collated by Queensland Health and presented to the minister's office with external checks and balances not existing and the only form of accountability being internal procedures in Queensland Health. It is a little bit like Caesar judging Caesar. This process has been confirmed by the Auditor-General report titled *Emergency department performance reporting*, which mentioned that there was a lack of accountability for accurate and reliable data that leaves the system open to manipulation. This bill will implement a new level of external auditing and transparency that has never existed before under Queensland Health's own internal reporting mechanisms.

Throughout our time in government, under the stewardship of the Leader of the Opposition during his outstanding tenure as minister for health, we worked calmly and methodically to fix the basket case that was Queensland Health under Labor and Anna Bligh and deliver better outcomes for patients. After years of maladministration and neglect, the Health portfolio was finally seeing real results, with the number of patients waiting too long being reduced dramatically. In just three years, Queensland's hospital and health system went from being an undeniable mess under Labor to the best in Australia under the LNP. In fact, when the LNP left office in February 2015—for those of you who were not here—

**Mr Rickuss:** It was so bad you were going to break it up.

**Ms BATES:** Exactly. You were going to pull it apart. It was an absolute basket case. Anna Bligh was going to make another big bureaucracy and you had not paid any of the staff. In fact, when the LNP left office in February 2015 the number of patients waiting within the clinically recommended time was at 100 per cent for category 1, 99 per cent for category 2 and 100 per cent for category 3. We cleared the backlog of cochlear implant patients, we cleared the public dental long-wait lists for more than 60,000 Queenslanders, we provided an extra 8,000 procedures over four years and 2,000 extra surgical procedures a year through public-private partnerships, we provided up to 40,000 extra public specialist outpatient services and increased—

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! Those on my right! Everyone has had a pretty good time. Please allow the member for Mudgeeraba to speak.

**Ms BATES:** We increased engagements with GPs through GP liaison officers at targeted public hospitals. These achievements speak for themselves. It is a testament to the careful management of the LNP that waiting lists were at a level in 2015 that seemed impossible to achieve during the dark days of Labor up to 2012. The importance of this bill should not be underestimated, particularly as now more than ever Queensland is at risk of being taken back to the bad old days of the Labor health system under this government. In one of this Labor government's callous first acts the LNP's wait-time guarantee was scrapped. While the LNP was to guarantee alternative treatment in another public or private hospital for any patient reaching the end of their clinically recommended waiting period, this Labor government scrapped this initiative while providing no alternative.

**Mr Ryan** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Morayfield, I will ask you to cease interjecting.


**Ms BATES:** The member for Morayfield would probably not know this, but back in 2000 when Wendy Edmond was the minister for health there were private hospitals in Queensland who approached the Queensland state government to clear up the backlogs—all the colonoscopies, the gastroscopies,

the lumps and bumps, the biopsies, all of those—and they did not do a thing about it. They would not come at it back then and the list got bigger and bigger and bigger. I know this because I was negotiating it.

One of the callous acts of this government was to scrap the wait-time guarantee. The guarantee was alternative treatment in another public or a private hospital for any patient reaching the end of their clinically recommended waiting period. This Labor government scrapped this initiative while providing no alternative. Despite professing to be an open and consultative government, this Labor government ignored the will of this parliament and refused to reinstate the wait-time guarantee even after a motion in this House was successful against the Labor government. It was the will of this parliament that the wait-time guarantee be reinstated to ensure patients get their surgery on time, but this Labor government chose to ignore that motion. This petty political agenda means more Queensland patients will miss out on getting surgery on time despite impassioned pleas from doctors, patients and the Australian Medical Association Queensland, as well as the will of the Queensland parliament.

Within months we have already seen hundreds of Queenslanders denied their right to surgery on time while emergency department treatment rates were dropping back to unacceptable levels after the LNP had steadily improved the performance of our EDs when in government. It is becoming clear that when it comes to ensuring patients are seen on time in Queensland this government is frozen at the wheel. It is a do-nothing, say-nothing, be-nothing, know-nothing government which is more interested in scrapping LNP initiatives than coming up with its own—or actually pinching our initiatives and calling them their own. Queenslanders did not vote for this.

This bill seeks to mitigate the damage being done by the Labor government. It is an open and transparent way to allay patient concerns and ensure everyone is aware of just how much or how little the health system is delivering for Queenslanders. It is for these reasons that I will be supporting the bill.

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (9.43 pm): I rise tonight as a member of the Health and Ambulance Services Committee to give my contribution to the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill. Our objective was to examine that the Health Ombudsman was an independent reviewer of clinical waiting times for Queensland patients in our public health service and that he manages an audit of wait-time matters and provides certainty in clinical waiting times. We have heard plenty of times tonight that that is not his role.

Where does one start after the member for Mudgeeraba just said that in their time in government they calmly and reasonably tried cleaning up the previous Bligh Labor government's 'basket case'—I think were the words she used—of a health system. Can I say firstly—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** You're out of your seat! Madam Deputy Speaker?

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

**Mr Dick** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Thuringowa has the call.

**Mr HARPER:** The first initiative of those opposite was to sack many nurses and health staff throughout the system. No wonder they created a waitlist for a waitlist. My learned colleague the member for Barron River discussed the issues that surrounded our previous profession in Ambulance Services of MEDAI, the Metropolitan Emergency Department Access Initiative, and the need to stop ramping. It was the work of the previous Labor government that started those recommendations.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** The previous government did initiate some of those recommendations, but not all of them. Importantly, what it identified was the front of house, the start of the patient journey, and that patients could not get through the hospital because of the backlog within the clogged hospital system under the previous government's initiatives. We needed to unclog that problem that the previous government had created.

With respect, those opposite did try, with a wait-time gimmick, to say that they were going to fix people up, but it did not work. When our health minister commenced in February 2015 over 100,000 Queenslanders were waiting longer than clinically recommended to get a specialist outpatient appointment with a diagnostic test. It is important, to ensure elective surgery occurs on time, that we get people in front of a specialist. That is almost half the 229,000 Queenslanders on the waiting list for

the waiting list. Within six months, with some dedicated effort, the government was able to reduce this number to just above 80,000. This is still too high, and clearly more work needs to be done, but it does show that, unlike the previous government, we are not going to hide behind wait-time gimmicks. This legislation is yet another gimmick. It will divert dollars and, importantly, staff towards pointless reporting instead of dollars and staff going towards getting people seen by specialists and getting to their surgery.

There was much consultation with key stakeholders, particularly the health department, the Clinical Access and Redesign Unit, or CARU as it is commonly known, and the Health Ombudsman himself. I note that the previous government wanted the Health Ombudsman to provide an audit of clinical waiting times. Why? Could the previous health minister not answer the questions himself so he created a waitlist for a waitlist? I think so. He did not even consult with the Health Ombudsman on the proposed change to the waitlist audit process.

I point out that the importance of sound wait-time policy, transparency and accountability in wait-time data reporting is not in dispute. Whilst our committee supports sound wait-time policy and transparency and accountability in wait-time data reporting, a number of issues were identified with this bill in its current form that led government members to query whether the bill would meet its stated objectives. There has been plenty of debate over the years on wait times for healthcare services provided by the Queensland government. In truth, the fact remains that the LNP could not provide public confidence in wait-time guarantees and patients were simply being recategorised. I experienced, within the first few months of being elected as the member for Thuringowa, presentations of constituents that had been on a waitlist for a waitlist and recategorised. Those patients are emotionally drained from waiting and waiting.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** Actually, we got them fixed, thank you, member. We got them through the system and it was great to help out those people in need. The fact remains that waitlists and wait-time data are a live issue. We know that the health minister takes this very seriously and in 2015 commissioned the Hunter review to examine the governance, organisational structure and capability gaps within the health department. The department advised that it is currently implementing recommendations contained within the Hunter review and that the implementation will further define and strengthen the role of the department as the independent systems manager to provide clearer lines of accountability between HHSs and the Department of Health.


For the information of members, wait-time data is already published online by Queensland Health. It is also published in annual reports. I particularly note that the Clinical Access and Redesign Unit, CARU, plays a fundamental role. Its core fundamental role is improving the flow of patients through the health system by removing bottlenecks and providing clinical redesign support and advice. CARU manages key statewide data collections, including elective surgery and specialist outpatient data, to provide meaningful analysis to inform effective decision-making. Data is also published on the Queensland Health website on a monthly basis for the 61 hospitals and there is more reporting than that. For each of the 16 HHSs, the Queensland Health website publishes a quarterly report on the percentage of patients whose length of stay in EDs was within four hours; the total number of patients who waited longer than clinically recommended for surgery; the percentage of patients who received surgery within clinically recommended time frames; the number of people who waited two years and over on general-care waiting lists; and a number of other reporting statistics.

I do not think I need to do more than point out that in the committee hearing the Health Ombudsman stated that, if accepted, the bill would simply duplicate the existing quality assurance data already collected by CARU. More importantly, he also stated—and I should know because as a member of that committee I asked him directly—that it was not a core function of his office, which of course is to investigate health complaints. The bill would give the Health Ombudsman the power to audit and report on wait-time data, again duplicating the department's role as a systems manager. The management of data collection is integral to the role of the department as a systems manager in a number of ways. The department uses the data to monitor the delivery of health services in accordance with each hospital and health service agreement and inform purchasing decisions based on the best practice approaches.

I am running out of time so I will come to the point: the bill would create additional imposts on hospital and health services. They would be required to establish new processes and information systems to enable them to routinely submit data to the Health Ombudsman, again creating duplication. This would further burden the hospital and health services' resources, which are better used to improve clinical services, and monitor, manage and improve the efficiency of the service it provides. Of the four

submissions received by the parliamentary committee, three opposed the bill. The Queensland Nurses' Union submission opposed the bill. The Together union submission opposed the bill. The Director-General of the Department of Health opposed the bill. I note that the member for Caloundra referred to the apparent support of the Australian Medical Association in 2012 for this approach, yet the AMA made no submission. I note that the Health Ombudsman himself, who is the subject of the bill, gave testimony to the committee. Again I asked him about this; it is not his core function.

This government is working with health professionals to develop a genuine and realistic approach to wait times at all points in the patient journey. In our first budget, we provided additional funding of \$361.2 million over four years to tackle the significant number of specialist outpatient long waits. In March 2015, we announced an extra \$30 million of funding, which has been delivered to fund more than 10,000 additional specialist outpatient appointments. Labor and our minister are getting on with the job of tackling the wait-time gimmick left by the previous government. I do not support or commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (9.53 pm): I also rise to oppose the bill before the House tonight. After listening to the speeches from members on this side of the House, it is clear that this bill delivers more red tape. It is clear that it doubles the administrative workload for Queensland Health staff. We have heard that from the member for Greenslopes. We have heard about the pointless duplication that it would engender. It seems to me that it is a case of reporting back for reporting back's sake. It is also clear that it is going to make someone feel better, but not the patients. It will make the proponents feel better about themselves.

I wish to describe some of the things included in the bill. The explanatory notes refer to things such as establishing the Health Ombudsman as an independent reviewer of clinical waiting times; the Health Ombudsman manages auditing of wait-time matters; provides certainty in clinical waiting times; publishes waiting time data; sets out its functions and powers; provides waiting time data to the ombudsman; analyses and publishes the data in a timely manner on the number of patients of each hospital and health service—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! I ask members to keep the conversation to a minimum. It is getting late, but it is getting harder to hear the speakers.

**Mr WHITING:** It refers to the data on the number of patients of a hospital and health service waiting for longer than two years for general dental care. After reading that, it is clear that the legislation would double their workload. As the member for Thuringowa said, they are already doing this. This information is already published. It is doubling the workload of an already hardworking staff. As the minister said, patients get nothing out of this. It will take time and resources away from the front line of health service delivery.

When reading this legislation I thought this will mean nothing to those people who spend hours and hours in our Queensland hospitals after hours. I think specifically of the time that I spent in Caboolture Hospital with my own father. I will talk briefly about what he went through. He was a healthy man. He was an incredible sportsman who played baseball for Queensland. He picked up smoking in the Army. They gave out free cigarettes at that time and he developed a habit that led to 50 years worth of smoking. When he retired, his health collapsed in a spectacular way. One day he had a stroke mowing and then the skin cancer was discovered. He was only 72. His carotid arteries were shot. He had to have a pacemaker put in. Then they discovered he had emphysema, as well as osteoporosis. In the end, it was bladder cancer that got him. It is a very common ailment with smokers. Towards the end he lived with us and I remember helping him wash and just looking after him. My mother says one of her most enduring memories is, in the last few days, picking him up as if he were a small child or a bundle of sticks and taking him to hospital. Eventually he died in a nursing hospital, in a strange place, holding the hand of a kind stranger. I commend the government for passing the bill last night. I believe we need to push smoking out of all public spaces.

My point is that this bill would not have meant that much for my father. We spent hours and hours after hours on Saturday nights in Caboolture Hospital. He said that he knew the people there were trying their hardest. He knew that they needed more people at the front line. He would say, 'We need more people here.' At the end of the day, if asked whether this bill would have improved his health care, I would answer no. We were at Caboolture Hospital, one of Queensland's finest hospitals, as the member for Morayfield and the minister have said, but their emergency department services a vast number of working Queenslanders. To go into Caboolture Hospital on a Saturday night is to be in a very busy place. Therefore, I would say that if we want to improve health services to Queensland we build up the front line, as the Labor Party is doing.

I believe that only Labor has the really intense and true focus on building up the front line in health care. I wish to look at Labor's actions since coming back to government, especially in the area of reducing wait-time lists. In our first budget—and members have already heard this tonight—we provided additional funding of \$361.2 million over four years to tackle the significant number of specialist outpatient long waits. In March last year, we announced an extra \$30 million in funding which has developed more than 10,000 additional specialist outpatient appointments.

We have heard today a number of times that when we came to government we discovered that more than 100,000 Queenslanders had been waiting longer than the clinically recommended time for a specialist outpatient appointment. In April and October last year the Minister for Health—and I commend him for this—convened wait-time summits to bring together health professionals.

I reflect on the history in this area. I look around at all the major hospitals in Brisbane and throughout Queensland that have been built in the last 20 years, most predominantly under Labor. I look at how the RBWH has been redeveloped. I look at the Prince Charles and the PA as well. The Caboolture Hospital redevelopment was brought forward under a Labor government. I believe we have the strongest record on that. Reading through the bill it became very clear to me—


**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr WHITING:** We can talk about the LNP's wrong priorities. I did read the member for Caloundra's speech on this bill. Let us have a look at what he said in that speech.

Debate, on motion of Mr Whiting, adjourned.

## MOTION

### Order of Business

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.00 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That government business orders of the day Nos 1 to 4 be postponed.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (DOMESTIC SMOKE ALARMS) AMENDMENT BILL


### FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (SMOKE ALARMS) AMENDMENT BILL

#### Cognate Debate

Resumed from p. 516, on motion of Mr Hinchliffe—

That—

1. the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee consider and report on the Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016 and the Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2015 together;
2. under the provisions of standing order 136, the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report to the House on the Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016 and the Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2015 by 23 May 2016;
3. in accordance with standing order 172, the bills be treated as cognate for their remaining stages in the House as follows:
  - (a) second reading debate, with separate questions being put in regard to the second readings;
  - (b) the consideration of the bills in detail together; and
  - (c) separate questions being put for the third readings and long titles;
4. notwithstanding anything contained in the standing and sessional orders:
  - (a) the time limits and order for moving the second readings shall be: the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services—60 minutes, followed by the member for Kawana—60 minutes; and
  - (b) the time limits and order for reply to the second readings debate shall be: member for Kawana—30 minutes, followed by the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services—30 minutes;
5. standing order 136(6) be suspended for the Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2015 to allow the commencement of the second reading debate if three calendar months has not elapsed since the tabling of the portfolio committee report.

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (10.01 pm): Queenslanders expect this parliament to properly consider legislation. A robust process for the consideration of similar proposed legislation is fundamental to that objective. The opposition proposes to limit the effectiveness of a process that should properly consider the legislative options to save Queenslanders's lives.

The parliamentary committee system is intended to provide greater accountability. It is one of the great reforms of Fitzgerald. Our parliamentary committees provide a forum for a thorough investigation of issues of importance to our community.

Earlier the member for Kawana outlined his desire for a process that would result in a less than fulsome consideration of the options and alternatives before us. Opposition to the motion moved by the Leader of the House would result in an outcome where those participating in the legislative process know that there is an alternative legislative and reform agenda available to achieve desirable outcomes, yet it is not considered to the extent that it would otherwise be. It would lead to a farce of a process, where potentially one day the committee will consider evidence for one bill and the next consider the same evidence for the other bill.

We have heard from those opposite how important this legislation is—too important for politics but not important enough to consider it in a considered, professional and appropriate way. In the case at hand, we also add in the fact that the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is considering the same issue simultaneously. It seems bizarre—

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock! Member for Nanango and member Lockyer, you will have ample opportunity to speak on this motion when the minister is finished if you choose to speak.

**Mr STEVENS:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The member is going directly to the content of the notice of motion that was given by me in relation to the debate that will be held either tomorrow night or at some other time. It is on the books. The member is specifically discussing all of those issues which anticipate debate. I ask you to bring him back to the point of this debate.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, will you make sure your contribution is relevant to the matter we are debating at the moment.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Nanango, you will have ample opportunity to speak shortly.

**Mr de BRENNI:** The motion asks the House to consider the examination of the bills together. As I began to indicate, the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is considering the same issue simultaneously. It seems bizarre to me that we would not have a process to look at the findings of the Commonwealth's inquiry to ensure that we deliver the most robust legislation for Queenslanders.

The member to Kawana is so fixated on his vendetta against the member for Bundamba that he refuses to consider our motion. The committees are also designed to ensure the parliament is making the right decision at the right time for the right reasons. I believe that an effective committee system is a necessity for the maintenance of public trust in our government, particularly in the absence of an upper house. I know that that is a view that is shared by many inside and outside this place.

The Queensland Law Society notes that in circumstances where inadequate consultation periods are allowed stakeholders have difficulty making comprehensive submissions. This increases the chances that an unworkable provision will survive the review of legislation or that an unintended and unpalatable consequence of legislation will not be picked up prior to its passage.

Perhaps the opposition is having flashbacks to when they could come into this House and put legislation on the table and then use their numbers to guillotine debate and introduce regressive reforms. Here we are back in the past where the LNP think they run Queensland and would ruin it for their own personal and political gain.

The only assumption that can be drawn is that the member for Kawana will seek to again undermine the established timelines and pursue an urgency motion to bring on debate of his bill. There would be no other way for the House to consider the private member's bill any sooner than it could consider the government bill.

Queenslanders expect this place to host a contest of ideas. They expect the contest to be a contest of best ideas, not the quickest idea. The opposition still cannot accept that they do not have the best ideas or policies.


But why the urgency now? The coroner made findings about a house fire that happened in 2011. The Leader of Opposition Business said that the parliament should consider these bills separately because we had not been thinking about this. I have been thinking about this deeply while awaiting the coroner's recommendations. I spent the day after the Slacks Creek house fire and the day after that with a friend of mine who is a firefighter and held a fire hose onto that inferno for several hours without a break. He stayed on that scene until the bodies were recovered.

I think it is beyond the pale for the opposition to accuse us of not thinking about this. Let us talk about who has not thought about this bill. The government has taken a somewhat more considered and careful approach to determining how to best serve the interests of Queenslanders and how to meet the coroner's findings and how to save lives. The parliamentary committee should be afforded the most fulsome opportunity to consider the many and varied ways that the best outcomes for the people of Queensland can be achieved.

We propose that the committee should be given the opportunity to determine recommendations on both these bills, with each laid before it for the purposes of comparison and context. It has been well recognised that the committee time is generally too short and that better legislation results when committees have time to properly consider proposed legislation that comes before them.

The opposition seeks to shield the committee from all the facts and opportunities that might exist to determine the best advice for this House. The Senate referred this matter to its own committee processes last year and then five months later the Senate granted an extension of time to March 2016. This is after the expected reporting date of the current inquiry.

If the member for Kawana is serious about saving lives, more than he is serious about his vindictive campaign of hate against the member for Bundamba—the true driving force behind his bill—then surely any reasonable person would submit that the Senate inquiry terms of reference are so close to that of the private member's bill inquiry to warrant that the committee should consider its findings to enable the Queensland parliament to be appropriately informed. I commend the motion to the House.

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.08 pm), in reply: I acknowledge the contributions we have heard to the debate on the motion from the member for Rockhampton and the member for Springwood. I thank them for those. Both of those honourable gentlemen are committed to the best process and the best outcome in terms of consideration of the legislation that is before the House.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Lockyer, you will be warned if you persist. It may be standing order 252 or 253.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Other contributors to the debate have put forward some fallacious and rather erroneous suggestions. They are suggestions that indicate that this course of action will see a delay in the legislative outcomes that people in this state want to see in terms of responding to the coronial findings and the issues associated with those dreadful and terrible fires. I do not want to go to the core of the matters that will be debated and considered by the committee and then by the House down the track. I want to stick to this procedural matter about how we get the best analysis and consideration of these bills in the committee process.

This issue of timing is a fundamental matter that is before us. A suggestion has been made in this debate tonight by those opposite that the course that the government proposes would delay the implementation of these laws. There is no such suggestion. These matters will ultimately be debated by the House and the House will choose which of the bills before it goes forward and which of the bills before it is adopted—one that has a 10-year implementation phase or one that has a three-year implementation phase. This decision tonight makes no difference to how that is considered and what choice this House makes when the time comes. I do not want to go to the nub of those matters and that debate, because that will come, but this motion tonight does not mean that there will be quicker implementation of one bill over the other because both bills will be considered by the House.

What this motion seeks to do is provide the community and this chamber with the best opportunity to consider and compare the pathways forward before them. On the one hand, we have the member for Kawana's bill and, on the other hand, we have the bill introduced into the House by the Minister for

Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Those two bills are best compared together by the committee and analysed together by the community through submissions and contributions to and engagement with the committee process that will be undertaken through to 23 May. This motion would allow for those bills to come back to the House in a cognate debate in a time frame that would in fact be quicker than what is currently provided for under the standing orders for the member for Kawana's bill. This motion would allow those matters to be considered by this parliament within a shorter time frame than the time frame that would be seen to be supported by those opposing the motion.

I encourage and implore those members who want to see this matter dealt with on behalf of those communities that have been affected by tragic and terrible domestic house fires—those members who want to see action around this happen and happen in a way that is timely and effective—to support this motion. There will be different views as to which of the bills is the best way forward, but this motion provides the best opportunity for both bills to be considered and for this House to make the best decision in a timely manner. I support the motion before the House.

Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

**AYES, 42:**

**ALP, 42**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

**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.

Pair: Lauga, Watts.

Resolved in the affirmative.

## TACKLING ALCOHOL-FUELLED VIOLENCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Reconsideration

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.17 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, notwithstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders:

1. this House notes that clause 37 of the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill was inadvertently not considered during consideration in detail;
2. the bill is, on the passing of this motion, taken to have been reconsidered by the House and clause 37 is deemed to stand part of the bill;
3. the bill is, on the passing of this motion, taken to have been read a third time, with clause 37; and
4. the long title of the bill is confirmed.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** It has nothing to do with the Attorney-General, member for Kawana.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. No, I do not need that at this time of the night.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.


Motion agreed to.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.19 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

### Mount Ommaney Electorate, Lunar New Year

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (10.19 pm): I rise this evening to share with the House the wonderful hospitality that has been shown to me through the festivities of the Lunar New Year 2016, Year of the Monkey, with many events across Brisbane being celebrated. It was a pleasure to represent the Queensland opposition as the shadow minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural affairs.

On 5 February we kicked off the new year celebrations at the annual Vietnamese New Year Tet festival at Inala. I have attended this event for many years, and Dr Cuong Bui and his hardworking team never fail to impress the crowds that attend this event. It is getting bigger every year with a fabulous array of authentic food and performances. The Vietnamese Mutual Assistance Queensland Year of the Monkey lunchtime celebrations continued the next day at a very popular Darra restaurant. That proved to be equally successful. I thank Mr Van Pham and his organisation for their hospitality on such an enjoyable afternoon.


Last weekend the Taiwanese Friendship Group held their afternoon celebrations to welcome in the new year at the Taiwan Centre. Mr Nicholls, the member for Clayfield, accompanied me and we had a wonderful time.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mrs SMITH:** It was wonderful, in the hands of the very capable Lewis Lee, who emceed the event with such professionalism. Our thanks go to Billy Wu, the president, who is a good supporter and friend of multicultural events.

Finally, I advise the House of the wonderful company we enjoyed that evening at the Brisbane Chinese Lions celebration at the Landmark Restaurant to not only acknowledge the Year of the Monkey but also to celebrate their 20-year anniversary, under the guidance of current president Johnson Chen. It was very good to see all the founding members there. They have over 40 members. We had a wonderful night, and it would not be Chinese celebrations without the lion dance. I am hoping that everybody has a healthy, happy and prosperous new year. For those truly memorable experiences, I thank all of the different multicultural organisations that opened up their hearts and showed us hospitality on this very special occasion.

### Queensland Women's Week


 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (10.22 pm): I rise tonight to congratulate the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence on the initiative to establish the inaugural Queensland Women's Week in March. I know that many of those among us are aware that International Women's Day is held on 8 March. In celebration of this, the minister took the bold step to officially introduce Queensland's Women Week—a whole week to commemorate the work and lives of women in our state. To this, I say well done.

In our community there are still those who ask why we need an International Women's Day when women have the same rights as men. Here in Australia we have come a long way in addressing the disparity that exists between men and women, but we are not completely at the point where men and women's rights are equal. With a gender pay gap of 18 per cent, only 14.2 per cent of company board chair positions being held by a female and a female CEO rate of 15.4 per cent, there is still a long way to go. Queensland Women's Week is one way to highlight all that Queensland women do to contribute to the vibrant and diverse state we have today and to encourage the community to think about the ongoing inequity which still exists.

As a member of the Zonta Club of Ipswich, I am a strong supporter of highlighting the positive impact women make in our society. It gives me great pleasure to see that this government has decided to stand up and say, 'Women of Queensland, your achievements and accomplishments have not gone unnoticed.' By acknowledging and celebrating the role women play, Queensland's Women Week emphasises how essential their impact is and reminds us just how much we as a state have gained from female participation in every facet of our community. I am proud to say that in my electorate of Ipswich we are joining this initiative by hosting our own Ipswich Queensland Women's Week. The week will be launched on 5 March. Significant female leaders from the Ipswich community as well as the minister will be in attendance to celebrate the successes of Ipswich women.

The superintendent of police in the Ipswich district is a woman. The CEO of our hospital and health service is a woman. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southern Queensland is a woman. These women are exceptional but no more exceptional than the many thousands of women who play a vital role in ensuring my community works as well as it does. As a state, we have a responsibility to our constituents to honour and celebrate their triumphs. Queensland Women's Week is the beginning of our state's endorsement of our women, and I once again commend the Minister for Women and Youth for helping us take another step towards equality.

### Mercy Community Services

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (10.25 pm): Since becoming the member for Condamine, I have attended a large number of functions, countless meetings and briefings, many school celebrations, special birthdays and anniversaries, citizen ceremonies and local shows. It is difficult to compare these events with the two occasions on which I have visited the Mercy Community Services' facility in Toowoomba.

Gayle Sainsbury and her dedicated team provide a service to vulnerable children and their families in the Darling Downs region. Listening to Gayle speak about her young clients was heartbreaking and made me appreciate even more the wonderful family that I have. The work performed by the Mercy Community Services has been embraced by the whole community. This was evidenced when local community groups came together to create a wonderful therapeutic garden and play area where children can enjoy being outside in a safe and beautiful environment.


The project was initiated by Liz Wagner and her willing group of volunteers who established a welcoming garden inclusive of murals, lawn, vegetable plots, shrubs and pathways. Students and teachers from Concordia Lutheran College designed and built the play equipment located in the garden, much to the delight of the children.

Catherine McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland in 1831, with Mercy Family Services being sponsored by the Brisbane Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. Their work continues today with many improvements being made to the care and services provided. In Toowoomba, Mercy Community Services deliver an inclusive, responsive and innovative service for children, young people and families. They assist disadvantaged and vulnerable people and families by making them feel valued, reconnected and strengthened, and giving them hope for the future.

I witnessed the love and devotion of the staff at Mercy Community Services to the children they support in their quest to provide them with the skills to become more resilient and place value on their position in our society. There is a team of multidisciplinary psychologists and social workers as well as physical therapists who assist in achieving these goals. At Mercy Community Services the recently renovated kitchen is a much loved place for children to enjoy the tactile experience of cooking. Cooking utilises sight, touch, smell and taste, and the end result is usually delicious—something not lost on the staff or the children.

I would like to thank Gayle and her team for welcoming me to Mercy Community Services. I was genuinely moved by the dedication shown to improving the lives of vulnerable children and young people within our community. Congratulations on the wonderful work that you do.

### Algester Electorate, State School

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy and Minister for Small Business) (10.28 pm): I rise tonight to share some exciting news with regard to some students in my electorate. For the last 12 months, people in my electorate of Algester, in particular in the suburb of Pallara, have been watching a brand-new school being built. Teachers, students and parents have been planning the move to the new facility, being very involved in the design and the final construction of the school. There have been a great deal of nerves, trepidation and anxiety about the move, and lots of lobbying about making sure that the new school provides everything that the community requires. At the beginning of the school year this year we saw some very excited and happy children and some very pleased and proud parents entering the brand-new school.

It is an incredibly well-thought-out and planned school. The children have access to great science facilities and, as the Minister for Science, that was great for me to see. We were able to lobby for the multipurpose sports courts so that the community right across Pallara and Forest Lake can use that facility outside of school hours. I want to congratulate the new principal, Mark Johnstone, for all the work he has been doing with the parents, teachers and students in preparing for the big move from one site to the other. It is a huge undertaking to move all of those things that are precious to the education of children into a whole new set of buildings, so congratulations go to the principal and all of the parents and students.

I would also like to welcome some brand-new principals to my electorate. At Grand Avenue State School we have a brand-new principal, Tony Maksoud—

**Mr Power:** Yes, we know Tony.


**Ms ENOCH:** Yes, Tony is great. I take that interjection from the member for Logan. Tony Maksoud has moved to Grand Avenue State School—

**Mr Power:** And I got Michael Quinn.

**Ms ENOCH:** Oh, you got Michael Quinn. Tony is a fantastic, energetic principal who will bring some great stuff to the kids of Grand Avenue State School. We also have a new principal at Boronia Heights State School, Sue Clark, who is working with the students on some of the great things they are doing.

I would also like to quickly update the House on some fantastic work that the Hillcrest Neighbourhood Watch has been doing. At Christmas we did a Santa lolly drop across our community and it was like going back in time to when we were kids and the neighbours would get together and get on the back of a ute and hand out lollies to kids as part of the Christmas spirit. So along with the Neighbourhood Watch and the great officers from the Browns Plains Police Station, I was able to go around the community offering sweets to the kids and involving the whole community. I can proudly say that I was the person who operated the siren on the car. It was a great event.

### North Queensland, Country Racing

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (10.31 pm): Tonight I rise to speak in relation to the state of country racing in North Queensland—

**Government members:** No.

**Mr COSTIGAN:**—which is going from bad to worse—as we hear the groans from members opposite—under the current Palaszczuk Labor government.

**An honourable member** interjected.


**Mr COSTIGAN:** And they are an embarrassment. This morning we heard from the racing minister, who proudly proclaimed that Labor will ‘deliver for country racing’—deliver a death warrant perhaps, but that is about it, I dare say, judging by what is coming up. I say this because the Mackay Turf Club, the oldest sporting club in our region, has been done over by Racing Queensland—that rudderless mob under this mob opposite that I have to say is doing no justice for the sport of kings, the sport that brings communities together, the sport that brings together people from all walks of life around Mackay and the Whitsundays.

For 2016-17—get this—the MTC has been allocated only 22 meetings and of that just a handful will be conducted on a Saturday. That is right: there will be just a handful of Saturday meetings in a community that loves its racing, in a city that was once home to the legendary George Moore. My late grandmother personally knew arguably the best jockey the world has ever seen. While he was a bit before my time, I dare say that the late George Moore would be turning in his grave at what has happened not only under the current Palaszczuk Labor government but also under previous Labor governments going back the last 25-odd years. They have damaged not only the MTC but also turf clubs across the north.

It is worth noting in relation to Mackay that, of those 22 meetings planned for 2016-17, 10 of them will be on a Tuesday. Members can imagine how successful that will be for the Mackay Turf Club. In fact, Racing Queensland know full well that these meetings will run at a loss and, incredibly, they are happy to subsidise this. Let me say that the MTC do not want a handout. Minister, they just want a fair go. The MTC want to have the ability to have meetings on days when they can make a dollar to pull bigger crowds, bigger fields, bigger sponsorship dollars and so on.

I might add that the Townsville Turf Club is also suffering under this mob. They have 36 meetings coming up in 2016-17, and—guess what?—they include just seven race meetings on a Saturday. It is disgraceful. As a proud advocate of country racing, I can say that a lot of people out there are coming up to me and saying, ‘Do something about it.’ I ask the minister, ‘What are you doing about it?’ The MTC has a plan and a vision to have a North Queensland carnival. I think it has all the merit under the sun in terms of taking prize money from dud meetings and putting it into cup meetings in Mackay, Rockhampton and Townsville. I want to finish by paying tribute to the racegoers who recently came to Ooralea to support the drought relief appeal. It was a successful day. Well done to all.

### Teal Ribbon Day

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (10.34 pm): Mr Speaker, this morning you kindly drew the attention of the House to Ovarian Cancer Awareness Day. To be honest, I always have mixed emotions about wearing the teal ribbon. For me it is a reminder of a disease that was such a large part of my life and that of my family for eight years, but doing everything possible to raise awareness of the insidious nature


of this disease is far too important for me not to wear a ribbon and not to withstand three minutes of some discomfort to make a very small contribution to raising awareness of Ovarian Cancer Awareness Day.

Ovarian cancer is referred to as the silent killer, so named because it can have no symptoms or non-specific symptoms such as back pain, abdominal or pelvic pain, indigestion, abdominal bloating, a sense of feeling full, and frequent or urgent urination—all of which can easily be dismissed in isolation as non-threatening. There is no screening for ovarian cancer—though many women incorrectly believe that routine pap smears will identify the disease—and there is no proven method of prevention. Because of these factors and the often poor prognosis of those diagnosed, Ovarian Cancer Awareness Day and indeed month is vital to educate and raise awareness among women in our communities. I commend Ovarian Cancer Australia and others for the work they are doing in this regard. One in 70 women develops ovarian cancer in their lifetime. Ovarian cancer often only presents when it has spread. Out of the 1,400 Australian women diagnosed every year, only 20 per cent of these women will survive for longer than five years, compared to those with breast cancer, which has an 80 per cent survival rate.

My mother was diagnosed when she was 43 years old. She had experienced abdominal bloating and other irregularities that in the busyness of life she ignored. When she did consult her GP, he similarly dismissed the fairly minor symptoms at first. Like so many mothers, even when her concern did grow she put it aside to take care of her family, us—as my father at the time himself was in the advanced stages of cancer.

When my mother—Margaret was her name—did present to her GP once more after over a year of experiencing these fairly innocuous symptoms, she was sent for a colonoscopy which identified advanced stage ovarian cancer. She underwent a lengthy surgery to remove the mass, lost part of her bowel and stomach lining and was given a low chance of surviving five years. We had eight years in the end, full of chemotherapy, the continuous roller-coaster of blood tests and CA125 counts, sickness and fatigue, but it was equally sweet, infinitely precious and we lived it to the fullest. My mother went through pain bringing me into this world; mine was in watching her leave it. I implore all women to be vigilant, to recognise the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer, to know their family history and to talk to their GPs about appropriate proactive screening and health checks.

### Gold Coast Hospitals, Safety

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (10.37 pm): I rise to update the House on my efforts to secure the safety of staff, patients and visitors in and around our major hospital precincts on the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service, which takes in Gold Coast university and Robina hospitals, is responsible for delivering healthcare services to more than half a million Gold Coast residents, including residents in my electorate of Mudgeeraba.

Late last year, as members are well aware, I observed staff during shifts at these two hospitals as a member of parliament to enhance my understanding of hospital operations. What I saw was shocking. Security were understaffed and overworked, adequate security procedures were not in place and nurses considered assault to be an everyday part of their job. That is why last November I launched three petitions which call on this Labor government to do something about safety in our health precincts. Last week, these petitions were tabled in the House, with hundreds of Queenslanders putting pen to paper and throwing their support behind safer health precincts.

At Gold Coast University Hospital, security officers are often preoccupied with security incidents for hours, leaving staff, patients and visitors at risk. In the next three years, the population surrounding Gold Coast University Hospital—including Griffith University, the Commonwealth Games village and a planned private hospital—will increase the size of that area to that of a small regional town.


We need to act now to ensure that the Gold Coast's largest hospital is secure, and that will ultimately mean ensuring an ongoing police presence at this major health hub. A total of 102 residents have signed my e-petition calling for a manned 24-hour police beat on site at Gold Coast University Hospital.

In recent months, we have seen reports which have raised concerns for community safety in the Robina area. After I personally dropped information about my petition in letterboxes throughout Robina, 134 residents signed my e-petition calling for the Robina Police Beat to be upgraded to a 24-hour police beat to keep the community safe. I also have a postcard petition, which I look forward to tabling in parliament, that was letterbox dropped to some 920 homes. A further 106 residents signed a nonconforming petition, bringing the total to 240 residents.

Under the former LNP government's Safe Night Out Strategy, the maximum penalty for assaulting Health staff increased to 14 years in jail, but too many nurses are still failing to report instances of assault. It is never acceptable for a patient, even if under the influence of drugs or alcohol, to assault our hardworking doctors, nurses and paramedics. We need to ensure our Health staff know to report these assaults so action can be taken. When in government, the LNP ensured being under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of an assault could no longer be used as a legal defence, meaning sentences cannot be reduced in cases of drug or alcohol fuelled violence. Almost 500 residents have signed my e-petition calling for an awareness campaign within the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service so that nurses can report assaults. It is now incumbent on this frozen-at-the-wheel, do-nothing, say-nothing, be-nothing, know-nothing Labor government to act on these issues and ensure our hospitals are safe—

*(Time expired)*

### **Caboolture Hospital**

 **Mr WILLIAMS** (Pumicestone—ALP) (10.40 pm): I rise to speak of a memorable opportunity recently when I joined Dr Lance Le Ray, Executive Director of the Caboolture Hospital, in welcoming 17 new intern doctors to our hospital. This is a wonderful achievement of the Palaszczuk Labor government, which is committed to increasing the real numbers of doctors in the field. No smokescreens and mirrors are being used here as those opposite have done in the past.


The Palaszczuk Labor government is getting on with the job of looking after Queenslanders in real terms. This induction was very special to the people of Pumicestone in that we welcomed back Miss Ashley White, a former student of St Columban's College. She had also attended Tullawong State High School. We welcomed her home to become an intern doctor right where she grew up. This young doctor is a shining example to our youth and our students of the achievements they can all enjoy with hard work.

The Caboolture Hospital Education and Skills Centre will be a busy place for these fine young doctors finishing their training and taking their time to go out and take their place amongst the doctors, of which there is a shortage currently. Who provided this wonderful facility at Caboolture Hospital? It was the Labor government, just as it provided the entire Caboolture Hospital. In 1991, after promise after promise, time and time again, election after election, it was Labor that delivered. It was not the LNP that delivered. The staff of this hospital tell me that it is a pleasure to come to work under the Labor government knowing that they have a job to come to tomorrow. That is in stark contrast to those opposite.

**An opposition member:** That's not what they're saying to Lisa France.

**Mr WILLIAMS:** Thank you. The Palaszczuk government is building staff numbers, resources and confidence for the benefit of the whole community. There is no slash and burn like we saw from those opposite when they were in government. These 17 young doctors will be with us for 12 months before taking their place out in the regions. Some of them will go into the exciting field of research, and we know that Queensland leads the way in these areas. The government supports this innovative work. I have a full expectation that we will have another 17 or even more doctors than that in 12 months time when these interns move on.

### **Dairy Farmers; Gregory Developmental Road**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (10.43 pm): Back in 2000 there were 1,500 dairy farmers. In 2013 I tabled the Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill, which was going to give dairy farmers a fair price for the milk that they produced. A fair milk mark would also go on a milk bottle to show Queenslanders that those farmers were paid a fair price and that if they bought that type of milk they would know they are helping to preserve the dairy-farming industry in Queensland. There are now around 440 dairy farmers.


I do appreciate the fact that the Minister for Corrective Services stepped in after I advised him that the prisons across this state were using UHT milk from New Zealand. We appreciate the fact that the minister stepped in. However, UHT milk is used in departments right across this state. I have spoken to the Premier about this. We want to protect the sustainability of the milk industry right now. When we look back and see that in 2000 there were 1,500 and we now have 430 dairy farmers, the fact that that correctional centre has been able to provide local fresh milk has made a hell of a lot of difference on

the Atherton Tablelands. We are saying that we are serious about this. We want to see fresh milk delivered to local departments so they use fresh milk from Queensland and local dairy farmers, not milk from overseas.

I am also disappointed because I have spoken a number of times to the Minister for Main Roads and asked him to come to Charters Towers to look at the Gregory Developmental Road. The previous Labor government and Albanese gave \$150 million over five years, but it has been three years and that \$150 million has all been spent. So for the last two or three years, 39 kilometres of unsealed road has just been sitting there waiting to be sealed. It also crosses creeks. We want to ensure that this is made into an island highway because those rural communities need jobs and they need people and tourists to stop in their towns. However, they cannot stop in those towns if Cape River is flooding. They cannot stop in those towns if they know they will be hit head-on by B-triples. When we are talking about a single-lane highway and there are triple road trains coming right at you, there is no way in the world those people are going to use that road.

All we are saying is that there are 39 kilometres of road to be sealed, finished once and for all. That is 39 kilometres out of 450 kilometres. That will bring people from the south. People can come from Rockhampton, go to Emerald and to Clermont, through to Charters Towers, up to Mount Garnet, through to the Atherton Tablelands. Cape River crosses between Charters Towers and Clermont and one river crossing needs to be upgraded with a bridge. That will prevent everyone being stuck at that bridge.

### Children in Hot Cars; SEQ Stars

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (10.46 pm): I can assure the member for Dalrymple that in the whips office we only use fresh Queensland milk and we will continue to do so. When local resident Mandy Petrie first contacted me on Facebook I did not know the gravity and drama of the issue about which she was going to talk to me. She told me the story of walking through a car park of a local shopping centre, which I will not name because it is not their responsibility but it is a very serious issue. She came across a baby locked inside a car. In this particular car park there are some sunshades, so the baby was not in imminent danger of dying but was very sweaty and was soon to become distressed. She immediately contacted security, who brought in the police, and then she brought the issue to me. Mandy Petrie, the young woman involved, was not just someone to complain, to come and suggest that it was simply a problem. She said—

You hear about but when you see it and see a baby asleep and you have got to walk up to a car and see if that baby is still alive, it made it a bit more real I guess.

She wanted to make a difference; she wanted to start a campaign. That is why I joined her. Together, we conducted an experiment on Thursday of last week at Browns Plains aimed at educating the public about the dangers of children and animals being locked in hot cars. We advertised on *Jimboomba Times* that we were going to place a temperature gauge inside my Commodore ute on a particular day and we asked people to follow us on Facebook to see the temperature. We built up the experiment quite a bit so I was quite nervous. What if it was unseasonably cold? What if it was overcast that day? As it turns out, it was quite a cool and breezy day so I was worried about how hot it would get, especially as we had the journalist from the *Jimboomba Times* there to witness the experiment. Mandy was on hand as well.

I took the temperature gauge, which was a large-faced LCD one for the purposes of the media, and I put it in the front of the car. As the temperature rose, the screen began to black out. In fact, it quickly became so hot—30 degrees, 40 degrees, 45 degrees—it blacked out, so we had to turn the air-conditioning on and cool it down. Then we realised that the temperature had gotten to 53 degrees. That would quickly damage any young child and create brain and intestinal damage. Mandy and I wish to really highlight to the House and Queenslanders in general that people need to guard against ever leaving kids in cars, even briefly.

I also want to update the House on the SEQ Stars, who went down to the Melbourne Boomers and we thought their season was over. But against the second place Dandenong Rangers—and I know the member for Sandgate knows this—they struck back 88-64 to win the game and a place in the finals. I hope they can go all the way, beat Townsville and be champions after their adversity.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.49 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, Grace, Harper, Hart, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Katter, Kelly, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Miles, Millar, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pyne, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Trad, Walker, Watts, Weir, Wellington, Whiting, Williams