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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Thursday, 17 October 2019

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THURSDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2019

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

Mr Speaker (Hon. Curtis Pitt, Mulgrave) read prayers and took the chair.

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I respectfully acknowledge that we are sitting today on the land of Aboriginal people and pay my respects to elders past and present. I thank them, as First Australians, for their careful custodianship of the land over countless generations. We are very fortunate in this country to have two of the world's oldest continuing living cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose lands, winds and waters we all now share.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

E-petition, Irregularities

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the Clerk has reported to me that the software that enables the Assembly's petition system has revealed 1,529 irregularities in the 9,002 signatories in e-petition No. 3176-19. The e-petition calls for equal access to world-class palliative care and to not consider legalising euthanasia. The Clerk advises that approximately 17 per cent of persons who joined the petition have duplicated their joining. Indeed, one petitioner joined the petition 70 times, which is particularly high. Under the standing orders and the conditions of use, a petitioner can join a petition only once. I assure the House that the e-petition software system always identifies duplicates and other irregularities in our e-petitions. As such, irregularities are deleted, as has occurred in this case.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Kawana and member for Clayfield, there is no need for debate. You are not off to a good start.

School Group Tours

 **Mr SPEAKER:** I wish to advise members that we will be visited in the gallery this morning by students and teachers from Northside Christian College in the electorate of Everton; Caningera State School in the electorate of Burleigh; and Hymba Yumba Independent School in the electorate of Jordan.

PETITIONS

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

Fire Ants

Mr Crandon, from 32 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure that the clear and present danger of fire ants on our coastal plains that are marching south, is dealt with by a campaign working from the south and moving north [[1852](#)].

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

Pennington, Mr A

Mr Bennett, from 700 petitioners, requesting the House to reinstate Mr Pennington to his role at the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service until a full enquiry is conducted into this termination [[1853](#), [1854](#)].

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

Palliative Care

From 9,183 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure equal access to world class palliative care for every Queenslander and to not consider legalising euthanasia [[1855](#), [1856](#)].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services (Hon. Dr Miles)—

1857 Response from the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services (Hon. Dr Miles), to an ePetition (3111-19) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 474 petitioners, requesting the House to establish an oral immunotherapy pilot project in Queensland.

1858 Response from the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services (Hon. Dr Miles), to a paper petition (3194-19) presented by the member for Rockhampton, Mr O'Rourke, from 860 petitioners, requesting the House to provide medical specialists who deal with Parkinson's disease to the Rockhampton region.

Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations (Hon. Grace)—

1859 Response from the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations (Hon. Grace), to an ePetition (3145-19) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 4,198 petitioners, requesting the House to conduct a review into the Religious Instruction provisions in the Education Act 2006.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Hummingbird House

 Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.34 am): In this state there are many families who will never need the support of Hummingbird House, Queensland's only children's hospice, and that is a good thing. However, for those who do words cannot describe how important that support is at an incredibly emotional time that no parent should ever have to go through.

Around 3,700 young Queenslanders will tragically not reach their 18th birthday due to life-limiting conditions. They and their families deserve our support and care as they navigate their way through incredibly emotional situations, which most of us could not imagine. Hummingbird House is a home away from home for children with life-limiting conditions where they can live and receive care at the end of their lives. It is a place where families can spend precious time together and focus on what matters most: each other.

Last week my government committed an extra \$8.25 million over the next five years to make sure Hummingbird House continues to support even more children and their families. I thank the Minister for Health. That extra money will enable Hummingbird House to provide more short-break stays, family support services, creative therapies and care at the end of life, including grief and bereavement support for families who need it most. My government has proudly supported Hummingbird House since 2015 and will continue to do so, because it is an incredibly important service for families who need our support.

Saitama Prefecture, Sister State

 Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 am): It is a great pleasure to update the House on a significant milestone in the long and fruitful relationship between Queensland and the Japanese prefecture of Saitama, which is part of the Greater Tokyo urban area. 2019 is the 35th anniversary of the first signing of the Queensland Saitama sister-state agreement, our longest sister-state relationship.

To mark the occasion, a delegation from Saitama is visiting us this week, as you pointed out in the House yesterday, Mr Speaker. The delegation is led by Mr Takayoshi Kamio, Speaker of the Saitama Prefectural Assembly. We offer a warm welcome to the 80 delegates, who include 20 members from Saitama Prefectural Assembly as well as a higher education delegation, a goodwill delegation of women entrepreneurs and a business delegation. I know that the Queensland Parliament Friends of Japan Group, co-chaired by the member for Cairns and the member for Bonney, is also looking forward to welcoming our guests.

This evening it will be my honour to host a reception for our Saitama friends. We will sign a joint statement renewing the agreement between our states and a framework for ongoing collaboration, including trade and investment business delegations; sharing of best practice economic development policies; and research collaborations, high school and university partnerships, and sports activities. Queensland and Saitama already share many links, for example, in education. Tokyo Denki University

is collaborating with QUT and the Nihon Pharmaceutical University is working with the Griffith Institute for Drug Discovery at Nathan. Five Queensland state high schools and five private schools have sister relationships with schools in Saitama.

Since becoming Premier, I have led four trade missions to Japan, most recently in May to Tokyo. Japan is Queensland's second largest market for merchandise exports, valued at \$11.96 billion for the year to August. In the year to June, we welcomed 212,000 visitors from Japan, which is our fifth largest tourism market. In 2018 there were 5,365 international student enrolments from Japan. The nation of Japan is one of Queensland's most valued trading partners.

Within that relationship, tonight we celebrate the extra special link we have with our sister state. I hope honourable members make the time to come along. I also invite the Leader of the Opposition.

Sunshine Coast International Submarine Cable

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): It was a pleasure to recently attend the opening of the new landing station for the Sunshine Coast international submarine cable project. A proud mayor, Mark Jamieson, and his council colleagues were there, along with some of the region's local members of parliament and Minister Cameron Dick.

The landing station in Maroochydore is the terrestrial connection point for a 550-kilometre undersea fibre-optic cable. That cable will link with the 9,700-kilometre cable being laid between Japan, Guam and Australia. The cable will provide Australia with faster data and telecommunications transmission speeds to Asia and the USA. It will be the only international cable landing on the east coast of Australia outside of Sydney.

As I said on the day, if laptops are the toolboxes of the 21st century, the cable will be the virtual highway our children will use to get to work and for work to get to them. It will mean new industries, new employers and new careers. That equals more jobs and economic growth for the Sunshine Coast and for Queensland. It is the reason we committed \$15 million out of a \$35 million budget. I congratulate the Sunshine Coast Regional Council for providing the rest.

NRL Grand Final

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.39 am): It is disappointing that Queensland has been denied an NRL grand final. We thought we had a strong case.

Honourable members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think we are all in agreement on something. Sydney's stadiums were unavailable. We have the best one in the world, with more seats, ready and waiting.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members, I appreciate the enthusiasm, maybe more than you know, but I would like to hear the statement from the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sadly, that was not enough. As Premier I am extremely disappointed. Once again a call has gone against Queensland in New South Wales's favour.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr Butcher interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think those opposite are in support of this. I am not quite sure. I think they are.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, you will cease your interjections. Member for Gladstone, you will cease your interjections.

Ms PALASZCZUK: As Wally Lewis said, 'You get the feeling it was always going to turn out this way.' I think the decision is unfair to Queensland fans.

Mr Hart: Have you lost Peter Beattie's mobile number?

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Burleigh, you are warned under the standing orders.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am not happy with him either, frankly. It takes the game away from people who give it their heart and soul. Some things you have to pay for and some things you earn—like respect. As Queensland fans of Rugby League, I think we have earned that respect. Our people love this game. It brings families together. It brings our whole state together. We have invested in it by building the best Rugby League stadiums in the world and by producing its best teams and players. You cannot buy the kind of love Queensland has for Rugby League. It would be nice if we could see it returned.

Path to Treaty

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (9.41 am): I join with the Premier in expressing my disappointment around the NRL grand final determination yesterday.

Today the journey towards a reframed relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders takes another significant step forward. This morning in Cairns our first community consultation session on Queensland's Path to Treaty will take place. This is the first of 26 sessions to be held right across this state. This is the start of a conversation towards a future that is more just, more equal and more respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

The conversation on treaty and agreement making with First Nation Queenslanders is another step forward in our state's journey towards reconciliation. Public consultation sessions will be held in remote, regional and urban centres throughout Queensland, stretching from the Torres Strait to Toowoomba and Brisbane to Birdsville. Beginning this conversation about the treaty is a key component of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. I invite all Queenslanders to join the conversation and to have their say about treaty in a respectful way—sharing what it means to them, what treaty or treaties could look like and why.

Path to Treaty is a once in a generation opportunity and it will benefit all Queenslanders. The aim of the process is to deliver greater self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that stimulate local communities, create more jobs and help to deliver improved housing and better health outcomes. That will not only be a positive outcome for those communities but also contribute to the future prosperity of our state.

The consultation sessions will be led by the independent eminent panel and treaty working group members, ensuring each community has an opportunity to have their voice heard. Facilitators will be on hand to help guide the Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous representatives from various walks of life, including academia, community leaders, business owners and human rights advocates, and will encourage genuine, respectful and meaningful conversations on Queensland's Path to Treaty. It is important the voices of all Queenslanders can be heard as part of this process.

This is a conversation we hope will go some way to righting the wrongs of the past and to setting the foundation for a new and just relationship; a conversation that acknowledges our state's ancient history and the truth about colonisation and lights the path for our shared future—a path that we hope will embed respect for the ancient and ongoing rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in the modern fabric of our relatively new state. Queensland is ready for this conversation and now is our time to talk treaty as we walk together on this journey grounded in voice, treaty, truth.

Apprentices and Trainees

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (9.44 am): Last night we had the opportunity to roll out the red carpet for our apprentice and trainee of the year at our first apprentice and industry parliamentary reception. Carpentry apprentice Ellie Farrington from Toowoomba finished high school with the grades that allowed her to choose almost any university course she wanted. After starting out studying architecture and then finishing with a Bachelor of Mathematics, Ellie still was not sure this was the right path for her.

Ellie has now been awarded Queensland's Apprentice of the Year after finding her passion in carpentry. She is breaking down barriers and giving back to other young apprentices by mentoring them in their first years. She is a strong advocate for promoting apprenticeships as equal to university as a pathway to a successful career. The skills people learn through an apprenticeship are real life skills with on-the-job training.

Our Trainee of the Year, Aman, is an exceptional achiever and last night he shared his incredible journey with us. In 2006, Aman arrived from north-east Africa but struggled initially in his new country and at school. After falling in with the wrong crowd, he spent time in juvenile detention. Aman found his way to the Queensland government's pilot program Transition 2 Success where he completed year 12 equivalent qualifications and certificates in literacy, numeracy and business. Aman has now gone on to complete a Certificate III in Community Services, is finishing a Diploma of Youth Work while being employed full-time with the Department of Youth Justice. Vocational education and training has been life changing for Aman and he now wants to help other young people as a youth worker.

It is stories like Ellie's and Aman's that drive the message about why investment in training and skills is critical. Last year we introduced free TAFE for year 12 graduates and this year we have built on that with our free apprenticeships and traineeships for under 21s. That is 60,000 young Queenslanders who are getting the skills they need for the jobs of the future. This will back local businesses by removing the training cost. They will be able to take on more apprentices and trainees—not only providing more skilled workers but creating more local jobs.

There are 139 qualifications on offer in traditional trades such as electrical, plumbing and carpentry, as well as in growing industries such as aviation, health care and hospitality. The Palaszczuk government is investing in the future of young Queenslanders and we look forward to seeing many more apprentices and trainees like Ellie and Aman.

Hospitals, Emergency Departments

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.47 am): Every day thousands of Queenslanders go to Queensland hospital emergency departments because they can access cost-free, world-class care, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We are seeing more people than ever through our emergency departments and our clinicians are saving more lives than ever before. We will never turn away anyone requiring medical treatment. Patients needing lifesaving treatment will always be seen first.

The Queensland government continues to invest in facilities and emergency departments across the state, committing \$1.8 billion to our EDs in the last budget. Since last year we have also increased emergency department staffing by more than 600 positions across the state. I welcome calls from the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union for a review of the entire health system—hospitals, GPs, Medicare, aged care, private health insurance and private hospitals—to understand why so many people are seeking care in public hospital emergency departments. I have met with health ministers from every other state and territory—Labor and Liberal National—and they all agree the current funding model needs a holistic review. I will discuss this with the QNMU when I meet with them next week.

The Queensland Emergency Department Strategic Advisory Panel of clinicians meets regularly to review and improve practices in our emergency departments. Since the 2015 election we have hired 1,996 more doctors, 6,199 more nurses and midwives, 511 more paramedics and 1,717 more health professionals like radiographers, pharmacists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists. This financial year we are expecting to hire nearly 800 more nurses, 200 more doctors, 250 more health professionals and 200 more ambulance officers. The LNP has criticised the Palaszczuk government for employing too many more doctors and nurses. They do not support our hospital building program. Their only proposal is to privatise hospitals which would see nurses again sacked.

Finally, I want to thank the seven QAS crews who responded to that horrible crash at Bald Hills yesterday. The community I represent is reeling from the news that 36-year-old Shahid Islam, who died at the scene, was set to move into his new home in Griffin on Saturday. It is so, so sad. Our thoughts and prayers go to his wife and their four-year-old son.

Resources Industry

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (9.50 am): I am very pleased to advise the House that the Queensland resources sector is simply going gangbusters. Let me share a few of the latest highlights.

Last month I was granted leave from the chamber to represent the Premier at the official opening of the \$1.76 billion Byerwen coalmine. Here is a regional Queensland project that will employ more than 500 people in good, honest jobs once it hits full production. One of the highlights for me was talking to the traditional owners, the Jangga people, and hearing about what the employment and training opportunities from this project meant to them.

While I am here, here is a shout out to the Iman and the Mandandanji people, the traditional owners out Spring Gully way for the opportunity to join them at Origin's new facility last week. I went on a cultural exploration with them through some of the land there. It was a really moving experience to be with them, Mr Speaker.

While we are on gas, Jemena has completed the 60-kilometre pipeline that will connect gas from Senex's Project Atlas to the Wallumbilla gas hub and from there to the east coast market. This pipeline project alone has created about 300 jobs and will help fuel many more as that gas, protected for the domestic market by this government, flows to manufacturing all across this state.

We have a couple of thousand more jobs in the pipeline as Olive Downs and the Winchester South coal projects progress. Since Anastacia Palaszczuk became Premier, more than 200,000 jobs have been created across this state. The resources sector proudly has contributed to 7,000 of those jobs.

On our government's watch, there has been more than \$20 billion worth of new investment in resources. The latest data shows that, in the face of volatile commodity markets, Australian resource exports look likely to hold up in 2019-20. The quiet performer for Queensland is zinc. National zinc production is surging, driven by mines in our very own North West Minerals Province. Rio Tinto's Amrun bauxite project and Metro Mining's Bauxite Hills project in Queensland have helped push up national bauxite production. There are new projects, new jobs and emerging markets for new minerals to create jobs and business opportunities for Queenslanders well into the future.

Road Infrastructure

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (9.53 am): As the country's most decentralised state, millions of Queenslanders rely on our 33,000-kilometre network of roads to connect them to work, to school, to jobs and to health services each day. Thousands of farmers, small businesses and truckies use our roads to export world-class goods and services from our regions and cities to our export partners across the world. Simply put, our roads mean jobs for Queenslanders. That is why the Palaszczuk Labor government is proudly investing more than \$1 billion this year to rebuild, resurface and repair our roads, adding to a record \$23 billion over the next four years to expand our country's largest state controlled network of roads.

From Cape York to Coolangatta to Cloncurry, the Palaszczuk government is on a maintenance blitz, with more than 6,600 Queensland workers laying the bitumen and grading our roads—and 4,500 of those jobs are in regional Queensland. Through local business, our crack RoadTek team and regional councils, the Palaszczuk government's road maintenance program is employing bitumen rollers, local grader operators, steel fixers, diesel fitters, machine operators and engineers who I am always pleased to meet and thank when I am on site.

Last month I visited Lockhart River in Cape York, where a number of locals are now proudly owning and operating their own local road construction businesses—and doing fantastic work, I might add. Through a steady pipeline of work, many are now hiring members of their own community to build local roads and grow their local economy.

The Palaszczuk government recognises how important it is to not only invest in new roads and major upgrades, like the M1, but maintain them and repair them where necessary. This year alone our government will resurface 2,273 kilometres of road, rehabilitate 188 kilometres of road and line mark 4,500 kilometres of road and will carry out important work to manage fire risk, invasive plants and animals. Unlike those opposite, we will not abandon that commitment to supporting jobs in our regional communities. We will not sack 700 RoadTek workers and try to sell it off.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chatsworth, you will cease your interjections.

Mr BAILEY: We will not cut the TIDS program to local roads and local councils right throughout Queensland. We will invest in them. We will continue to invest in rebuilding, resurfacing and repairing the nation's largest road network, unlike those opposite who cut \$600 million from the roads budget over three years.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: They do not like to hear the truth, do they, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister, I ask that you ensure your statement is of public interest.

Mr BAILEY: We will continue to push the federal government for our fair share of funding to maintain Queensland roads on their National Land Transport Network. Only the Palaszczuk Labor government will stand up for Queensland and only the Palaszczuk Labor government can be trusted to keep Queenslanders moving.

Shark Control Program, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park; Cardno Report

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (9.56 am): The Palaszczuk government is a government that believes in science. We support the science behind shark control in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and we are responding accordingly.

Members will be aware of the AAT and subsequent Federal Court decision on the GBRMPA permit that put unworkable restrictions on operating the Shark Control Program in the Great Barrier Reef. This is a federal permit under federal legislation in the federally controlled Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The federal government and those LNP members opposite have been very quick to jump on board and back that decision, which demands a catch-and-release program for dangerous sharks instead of a catch-and-remove program that has enjoyed bipartisan support here for 57 years.

We commissioned the Cardno report to examine what new options we might have for shark control in Queensland as I announced in this year's budget. This report, which has been released, makes it clear that a catch-and-release program will not work in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. It makes it absolutely clear that, if you release dangerous sharks from drum lines in the marine park, you will inevitably release them close to areas where people are enjoying swimming or water activities. I table a page of that report and encourage those opposite to read that report.

Tabled paper: Document, dated 20 September 2019, titled 'Queensland Shark Control Program' [1860].

As a government that believes in science, we accept the findings that catch and release will not work in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. This has not stopped some others, including the federal government and their colleagues opposite, from insisting we do just that, despite the science and despite the fact that to do so would put our staff and contractors at serious risk—and they continued to spout misinformed comments even after receiving a briefing from my office and my department. I have today written to the member for Gympie inviting him to support this government in putting Queenslanders before sharks. I table a photo to show how dangerous sharks are lurking off our coast but are captured and removed under our program.

Tabled paper: Photograph depicting shark control [1861].

Today I will be meeting with the GBRMPA CEO after question time. Queensland remains resolute: we support catch and remove, not catch and release. The federal government has responsibility for what happens in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and the federal government must legislate to allow our Shark Control Program to return.

Mr Andrew interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Mirani, you are warned under the standing orders.

Schools, Infrastructure

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.58 am): The Palaszczuk government is committed to giving all Queensland children a great start. This includes our commitment to delivering high-quality education infrastructure in growing communities across the state. Since 2015 our government has delivered 13 new schools in the fastest growing areas of the state. The 2019-20 state budget includes a record \$1.5 billion for new and upgraded infrastructure in state and non-state schools. This investment will support more than 4,000 jobs for Queenslanders.

The Palaszczuk government's \$1.3 billion Building Future Schools Fund is delivering new state schools and infrastructure in high-growth areas of the state. We are currently building eight new schools which will open next year at Calliope, Mango Hill, Coomera, Yarrabilba, two at Ripley Valley, Lee Street State Special School in Caboolture and Fortitude Valley State Secondary College, which this government saved from being sold. Our Building Future Schools Fund will also deliver an additional five schools in 2021: a new primary school at Palmview; a new special school at Palmview; a new secondary school at Caloundra South; a new primary school at Pimpama; and a new secondary school at Dutton Park. These are all some of the fastest growing areas of the state.

We know that all school sectors in the state are experiencing the same growing pains with the rapid expansion of our school communities across Queensland. Under the National School Reform Agreement the federal government is responsible for providing the majority of funding for non-state schools. However, when it comes to infrastructure investment in non-state schools it is the Palaszczuk government that is doing the heavy lifting and outstripping the federal government spend at a rate of over three to one.

The Palaszczuk government will continue to work cooperatively with the non-state sector; for example, in this year's budget \$705.3 million is allocated for recurrent funding grants and \$100 million is allocated for capital assistance grants for non-state schools. Since 2015 we have provided the non-state school sector with a total of almost half a billion dollars for capital assistance grants distributed and assessed independently by the Block Grant Authorities. For example, tomorrow the Minister for Health and member for Murrumba will open a new \$2.5 million learning facility at North Pine Christian

College at Dakabin, with the state contributing almost \$1 million to the project. In August the member for Logan opened stage 2 of St Clare's Catholic Primary School in Yarrabilba, where the state contributed \$1.7 million of a \$2.3 million project.

The Palaszczuk government will continue to support our Catholic and independent education partners to deliver new infrastructure where and when it is needed most. I look forward to welcoming and attending the Independent Schools Queensland parliamentary reception this evening.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services; Leach, Commissioner G

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.02 am): Last Thursday marked a new chapter for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services with the appointment of Mr Greg Leach as the new commissioner. Commissioner Leach brings a wealth of experience to the role, having spent the last 32 years working in emergency services. He is a proven leader. He joins QFES from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade of Victoria, where he served as acting chief executive officer and chief officer. Prior to that he held senior positions with the Country Fire Authority and Ambulance Victoria. He is a member of the Institution of Fire Engineers.

Preparing for and responding to natural disasters has always been part of Queensland life. We are the most natural disaster prone state in Australia, but now we face the challenges that climate change presents in understanding and preparing for current and future natural disasters. I am confident that under Commissioner Leach's leadership QFES will continue to provide best practice prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to help build a more sustainable and resilient Queensland.

Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing has been at the helm of QFES for the last five months, and what a challenging time it has been. Mike has done an outstanding job leading the team through some of Queensland's darkest hours. Managing more than 1,800 active fires is no easy feat, and Mike has led with great compassion, strength and dedication. Mike will remain acting commissioner until Commissioner Leach takes up his appointment in early December. I acknowledge and thank Mike for his continued service and welcome Commissioner Leach to the QFES family.

Inspector-General Emergency Management, Review

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.03 am): Last month I requested the Inspector-General Emergency Management to undertake a thorough investigation into the state's emergency response to the September bushfires. This is to ensure best practice was followed and identify areas where improvements can be made. As this government did after last year's fires and this year's floods, we want to hear where our response efforts were most effective and where improvement may be needed.

The Inspector-General Emergency Management will consult with relevant local, state and federal agencies and entities, including the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. Bushfire affected communities in Stanthorpe, Sarabah and Peregian Springs are invited to have their say as part of IGEM's independent review. Public submissions are now open, and I encourage those affected to share their feedback and observations by making a formal submission to the review. The review will consolidate previous recommendations from the 2018 bushfire review published in July 2019.

This is about ensuring Queensland has the capability necessary to effectively prevent and respond to the threat of bushfires in Queensland. We should always strive for better. Recommendations from the review will ensure our future preparations and responses are in line with best practice. Public submissions can be made online or via email until 5 pm on 5 November.

Sport, Infrastructure; Active Clubs Program

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport) (10.04 am): In the short time since the Palaszczuk government's 10-year sport and active recreation strategy titled Activate! Queensland was launched, we have announced 13,000 FairPlay vouchers to help kids from low-income families join a team. We announced the Community Use of Schools initiative to unlock the gates to state schools right across Queensland for the use of local clubs. We have announced upgrades to the Queensland Academy of Sports, supporting elite Queensland athletes going for gold. We have announced Gabba upgrades, giving fans the best sporting experience. We have made Queensland the home of both Australian cricket teams at the National Cricket Campus at Allan Border Field, and we have signed historic new partnerships through the new Active Industry Fund with Netball Queensland as the first and many others to follow.

Today I am pleased to kick off another new initiative to cultivate grassroots participation in sport and recreation. The Palaszczuk government's Active Clubs program is investing \$5 million in Queensland clubs over the next three years, and I can announce that it is open today. The program will support investment in equipment and training for clubs across Queensland and encourage Queenslanders to take part in sport and active recreation.

The message we heard from Queensland clubs while developing our sport and active recreation strategy is that, whilst clubs could apply for infrastructure grants, often it was the inaccessibility to things like equipment that hindered participation. We found this particularly in communities facing disadvantage. Under Active Clubs, through a simple process 1,000 local clubs—that is an average of 10 clubs for each electorate in Queensland—will benefit from \$2,000 grants in the first year alone, helping them purchase essential equipment like bats and balls, helmets and padding, or resources and support for their coaches and volunteers. We listened and now we are delivering.

Palm Island, Water Supply

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.06 am): I would like to update the House on Palm Island which, as we all know, has been having water issues for the past year. In May this year two external consultants were appointed to do a full review of the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council's water and wastewater issues.

As a result of this review, in June this year I announced six priority projects that, when completed, will address the problems. These include installing a monitoring system; thoroughly cleaning the main drinking water tank, including replacing the roof and making it vermin proof; decommissioning two water treatment plants and replacing them with one large tank; installing more backwash and sludge tanks; installing a new raw waterline from the Solomon Dam; and installing a new rising main.

Through the Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program the Palaszczuk government has provided \$6.1 million so far so that five of these projects can be completed. The sixth, the rising main from the water treatment plant to the main reservoir, will be a significant and complex project. My department has determined that it will cost about \$2 million to complete, which brings me to this year's federal election when the LNP promised \$2 million to make sure that Palm Island has a safe and secure supply of drinking water.

We have not seen anything so far, so last night I signed a letter to the federal Minister for Indigenous Australians asking him to deliver on their commitment to the people of Palm Island. That reminds me what a friend the people of Palm Island have in the member for Townsville. He has been relentless in his advocacy for that community and has had regular meetings with the mayor, Alf Lacey, and other councillors and community members on the island.

I would like to thank the various departments and the Palm Island council for the work they have already been doing to improve water quality. The island's five water reservoirs have been cleaned, with work finalised on 11 October, although I understand that the water will still be a little discoloured for a bit longer. As for the lifting of the boiled water notice, that will be a decision made by the council in consultation with Queensland Health.

As for the six priority infrastructure projects, if Canberra can actually get around to signing the cheque, all six are expected to be delivered in the next two years. Let us face it, the island's residents do not need a seagull politician such as the LNP member for Herbert flying in and promising them the world before an election and then not delivering it afterwards—although I am not sure he has been back. Palm Islanders have a right to ensure that their families—their children—have access to clean drinking water and that is what the Palaszczuk government is doing. We are doing our bit. What we are asking now is for a little help from our friends in Canberra who seem to have forgotten that thanking Queenslanders is not enough after an election; it is time for them to keep their promise.

Counterterrorism, Training Facility

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (10.10 am): Last week I visited the Wacol police precinct to showcase a world first innovation where motorcycle police officers from Queensland's Road Policing Command are using drones to map traffic scene incidents. This is a world first and it is already delivering significant savings to motorists by reducing congestion.

Coincidentally, this demonstration took place immediately adjacent to the construction of our new counterterrorism facility. I saw that good progress is being made on construction. This world-class facility will be a game changer. It will include two firearms ranges, a multifunction training area and a scenario village. There will also be two railway carriages put in place for training in the scenario village—truly making this facility world class.

Construction started last month, with the first pouring of concrete tilt slab panels. I am advised that the construction program is on track with completion scheduled for next year. As previously advised in this House, once opened the centre will be formally named the Bob Atkinson Operational Capabilities Centre. This centre will be used by operational police and specialist units within the South-East Queensland catchment area to complete all operational skills and tactics training for frontline police. The centre will enhance capability training to enable a higher standard response to terrorism and other high-risk incidents. The facility will also have the ability to be used for large-scale multiagency exercises. This will aid the ability of various agencies to coordinate responses to major incidents, including terrorism related matters.

I am advised that this world-class facility will be available to other state and national agencies to enhance their own operational skills and capabilities. Indeed, so significant is this new facility that interest is also anticipated by international law enforcement agencies to use this facility. The Queensland Police Service is truly world class and this new counterterrorism training facility is already gaining a world-class reputation.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

 Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.12 am): I wish to advise the House that the Minister for Innovation and Tourism Industry Development and Minister for Cross River Rail will be absent from the House today. The Premier and Minister for Trade will take questions for this minister during question time.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

 Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.12 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 22 October 2019.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Report

 Mr KING (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.13 am): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 29 of the Transport and Public Works Committee. This report covers portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 12 June 2019 and 20 August 2019 considered by the committee. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Transport and Public Works Committee: Report No. 29, 56th Parliament, October 2019—Subordinate legislation tabled between 12 June 2019 and 20 August 2019 [\[1862\]](#).

INNOVATION, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report

 Mr PEGG (Stretton—ALP) (10.13 am): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 21 of the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee titled *Subordinate legislation tabled between 12 June 2019 and 20 August 2019*. I commend this report to the House.

Tabled paper: Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee: Report No. 21, 56th Parliament, October 2019—Subordinate legislation tabled between 12 June 2019 and 20 August 2019 [\[1863\]](#).

NOTICE OF MOTION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument



Mr CRISAFULLI (Broadwater—LNP) (10.13 am): I give notice that I will move—

That the Recreation Areas Management (Fees) Amendment Regulation 2019, subordinate legislation No. 197 of 2019, tabled in the House on 15 October 2019, be disallowed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr SPEAKER: Question time will conclude today at 11.13 am.

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Integrity

Mrs FRECKLINGTON (10.13 am): My first question is to the Premier. In the last six months alone, the Palaszczuk government has had integrity scandals caused by the Premier's former chief of staff, the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Employment and the members for Keppel, Mount Ommaney and Toohey. What actions will the Premier take to stop these continual examples that prove Labor has a fundamental problem with integrity that is inflicting the Queensland government?

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the Premier, can I say, Leader of the Opposition, that that is a lengthy preamble. I will allow the question but I am giving you notice that I am paying very close attention to the lengths of some of the preambles in questions.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I also believe that the question has an imputation. We have seen a number of occasions this week where the opposition continually use the phrase 'integrity crisis' in relation to allegations that have already been proven to be inaccurate and are lacking in any substance at all. A number of these matters have already been confirmed to have no validity whatsoever.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, I have given guidance to the House on a number of occasions that when a point of order is being taken I need to hear the point of order. Equally, I am trying to seek advice concurrent from the officers at the table, and when I am seeking advice I need to be able to hear that advice. If there are future interjections during that time, people will be removed from the chamber.

I will not rule the question out of order, but I again say that the wording of the questions being asked is critical. I believe that individual members may have potentially felt impugned, particularly by the use of the word 'crisis'. However, I will allow the question but equally give the Premier latitude in answering the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question because I am happy to put my integrity and the integrity of this government against the integrity of those opposite any day of the week. Mr Speaker, I believe that the premise of the question could be deliberately misleading and I will look at that question and think about referring that.

We know that those opposite like the witch-hunts. They do the witch-hunts and they come back with absolutely nothing. Let us talk about some of the issues of the LNP. Very clearly, we have a number of members on the other side of the House who have spent taxpayers' money to go to Sydney with their spouses. I want to know from the member for Nanango, the member for Everton, the member for Bundaberg, the member for Callide, the member for Nicklin, the member for Warrego, the member for Lockyer, the member for Gregory, the member for Gympie, the member for Ninderry and the member for Condamine—

Ms Trad: And Nanango.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I said that at the very beginning—and the member for Nanango. I want to see full itineraries and why those members thought it was completely acceptable to take their partners on a taxpayer funded junket. It was a taxpayer funded junket. We still have not seen the Leader of the Opposition go and front the media to answer questions. We have not seen the member for Nanango this week go and front the media to answer any of these questions. She is too scared to do it. She is hiding. Will the Leader of the Opposition go and answer questions today from the media?

Whilst I am on my feet I want to talk about electoral donations. I want to talk about \$3 million of electoral donations that the LNP wanted to remain secret. They fought it to the High Court—they fought it every step of the way—to keep those donations secret: \$3 million. Finally, they were dragged kicking

and screaming to full disclosure by the AEC. There were three court cases. How much did that cost the LNP? When we came to office we reduced the political threshold for donations from \$12½ thousand to \$1,000, and those opposite fought this government every step of the way. It was the first piece of legislation that this government introduced into the House and those opposite shamefully voted against it.

Crime and Corruption Commission Recommendations, Declaration of Interests

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My next question is to the Premier. Will the Premier advise the House when the government will implement the Crime and Corruption Commission's recommendations for new criminal laws arising out of the Deputy Premier's investment property scandal?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As I have said previously, they will be introduced before the end of this year. Let me go back to the original answer that I gave. We want to see the Leader of the Opposition stand up and account for why taxpayers' money was used for a junket to Sydney and Luna Park.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118(b) on relevance. The Premier may wish to answer the first question again, but it is the second question we are interested in.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, as I gave guidance earlier, I allowed you latitude in the first question as to how you answered it; you were given that latitude. I will not be giving as much latitude here. It was a very direct question. I ask you to come back to the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have answered it.

Buy Queensland, North Queensland Stadium

Mr STEWART: My question is of the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier advise the House how the Palaszczuk government's Buy Queensland policy has provided jobs and local benefits from construction of the North Queensland Stadium, and is the Premier aware of any alternative approaches?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Townsville for that question. As we know, the Townsville stadium is rising out of the ground in Townsville. We had the parliament up there just recently and we were able to go and visit the stadium and, of course, install the first seat with Johnathan Thurston. We are very pleased that that stadium is providing local work, and there is going to be even more local work. I know that the member for Thuringowa and the member for Mundingburra are equally proud of what that transformational project will do to the city of Townsville.

With my government's Buy Queensland policy we are ensuring that as many jobs as possible are located there for North Queenslanders. A total of 1,700 North Queenslanders, including nearly 140 apprentices and trainees, have worked on the stadium since construction commenced.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I hear interjections from the Leader of the Opposition. They had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the table in relation to federal funding when it came to the Townsville stadium. What was wrong with Townsville? Why could they not have gone to Townsville to have their meeting of National Party MPs? Why did they have to go to Sydney?

Ms Grace: To talk about the drought.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is right: to talk about the drought. Let me also advise the House that \$161.8 million has been invested with local subcontractors. That means local jobs. A total of 490 local businesses are engaged in the supply chain. That means more local jobs. I am quite sure a lot of people are going to enjoy visiting the Townsville stadium. It is a much better place to visit than Luna Park in Sydney. That is where they all went—Margaret River one year, Luna Park the next year. What is next? Adelaide or Tasmania perhaps?

Honourable members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I hear New Zealand. Perhaps they can all go to New Zealand and have a National Party meeting and talk about the drought—

Ms Trad: Tahiti.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—or Tahiti. Tahiti looks nice. The member for Burleigh might take them all to Canada to go see the Rockies at taxpayers' expense. Shame on you! It does not pass the pub test.

Mr SPEAKER: Through the chair, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It does not pass the pub test to take your wives on a junket to Sydney to visit Luna Park and talk about the drought.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, you are warned under the standing orders.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They are no friends of the farmers on that side. At least we have Furner, the farmer's friend, on this side. We will back Townsville and local jobs.

(Time expired)

Crime and Corruption Commission Recommendations, Declaration of Interests

Mr MANDER: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier. When cabinet finally considers the Crime and Corruption Commission's recommended new criminal laws to enhance ministerial accountability, will the Treasurer remove herself from the cabinet room for the deliberations and voting on the proposed laws given these new criminal laws are only needed because of the CCC's assessment of the Treasurer's conduct?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for the question. I will repeat for the benefit of the member, because I know that he is quite slow on occasion in terms of comprehending events—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Deputy Premier, you have the call.

Ms TRAD: I know. I am—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members to my left.

Ms TRAD: They are like seagulls from *Happy Feet*. Do honourable members remember the seagulls on the boat? They would go, 'Squark, squark, squark!' That is exactly what the backbench is like. For the benefit of those opposite I will repeat: the CCC—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. I remind all members that their comments should be directed through the chair.

Ms TRAD: I will—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms TRAD: See what I mean? 'Squark, squark, squark!' For the benefit of those opposite I repeat that the CCC did an exhaustive assessment of these matters, lots of information was provided to them and they did conclude that there was no dishonest or corrupt conduct. There was no evidence of it; there was no dishonest or corrupt conduct. They did make some findings—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Sorry to interrupt, Deputy Premier. Members, I know there has been some combative language to date. The Deputy Premier is being responsive to the question asked. I ask you to hear the response because I cannot hear the response being provided.

Ms TRAD: They made some recommendations and, as the Premier has said, they will be fully implemented. Of course I think what we have seen from those opposite is a different standard of behaviour for them from other people. They want to question integrity, but they are very happy to go on a junket. I think in Sydney from Luna Park you can see the seagulls.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118(b). It was a very serious question with respect to the CCC's recommendations of criminal offences and the cabinet process. I ask that the Treasurer be brought back to the question asked.

Mr SPEAKER: Deputy Premier, the question is a direct question. I know you have given a response and I have commented that you have been responsive. Do you have anything further to add with regard to the question asked? Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Drought

Mrs LAUGA: My question is of the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on any initiatives that could provide financial assistance to drought impacted Queensland communities?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Keppel for her question. Of course, there are parts of her community that are experiencing drought. I know that it is this side of the House that is particularly attuned to those challenges and difficulties. That is why under the leadership of the agriculture minister there has been a review of our assistance provided to drought-affected communities, and we saw an increase in this year's budget to help those communities.

What we have not seen is the federal government's \$5 billion allocation flow through to farmers. This is incredibly distressing. It is distressing for those on the land who know that that money is there, who see the articles in the paper, who see the Prime Minister and the federal Treasurer going on and patting themselves on the back about how they have made this allocation to farmers, but not one single dollar has flown through. We have called on them to flow that money through to farmers.

It is an absolute disgrace that, when we debated this in the House the other day, the member for Southern Downs voted against it. That is an absolute disgrace. As the National Farmers' Federation stated this morning in releasing its report, the federal government ought to be doing more. It is members on that side of the House who ought call on their colleagues at the federal level to let that money flow through. Of course they will not, because they are more interested in lining their own pockets with junkets with their spouses.

I am going to dwell on this issue again. Why is it that those opposite went to Sydney—the only part of Sydney that was not drought declared—to talk about the drought in Queensland? Why did they take their spouses and sip champagne at Luna Park? I had my office do another check on whether or not there was a drought in Sydney. It appears that there was a drought in Sydney on the North Shore: it is a man drought! There is a drought in Sydney; there is a man drought.

Mr SPEAKER: Deputy Premier, please table that.

Ms TRAD: I table that for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Article from the Sydney Morning Herald, dated 15 September 2019, titled 'Why there's a man drought in Sydney's east and north side' [1864].

There is a man drought in Sydney's east and North Shore, where those opposite went to talk about the drought in Queensland. We know that on that side of the House they do not have a man drought, do they? In fact, I looked at the photo with that article and saw four women. After certain retirements at next year's election, that will be about the same number of women in the LNP in Queensland. I think I know what has happened here. The men of the LNP in Queensland went to help out the men on the North Shore of Sydney to bolster their numbers—it all makes sense. Those opposite should repay the money and they should hang their heads in shame.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Thank you, members. Member for Logan, you are warned under the standing orders.

Queensland Health, IT Projects

Ms BATES: My question is to the Premier. The health minister told media that 100 complaints per day about Labor's latest IT debacle is not necessarily a bad thing. With Queensland's small businesses not being paid and facing having to let staff go—and supplies to hospitals on credit hold—will the Premier intervene and sort out this IT debacle as quickly as possible?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. I think last week I had a meeting with the health minister and the director-general to go through the health supply system. I was very satisfied with the response I received from them. I am advised that the new system is functioning within expected parameters and that staff are gradually beginning—

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Glasshouse, cease your interjections.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—to settle into the new processes and practices. The delay in some invoice payments was caused by a range of issues including unusually high invoice volumes being received since go live—and the staff and suppliers are adjusting to that.

Last month, as the minister outlined, a vendor hotline was provided. I am advised that the volume of calls to the service desk is averaging around 100 per day, as the health minister said. Since 1 August—and this is really important—more than 70,000 payments were made through the new system, totalling over \$1.2 billion. The supplies are getting to where they need to go. Since that time, more than 37.6 million items were picked for despatch at the Richlands distribution centre. Queensland

Health of course remains committed to its suppliers and contractors and appreciates their understanding during this time. Of course, the health minister and the director-general will continue to monitor this system.

Police Service, Technology

Mrs McMAHON: My question is of the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective—

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Glass House, I have already cautioned you. You are warned under the standing orders. I asked for silence during questions.

Mrs McMAHON: My question is of the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services. Will the minister please update the House on steps taken by the Queensland police to ensure they remain at the cutting edge of police technology and advise of recent instances of expertise in the international arena?

Mr RYAN: I thank the member for the question and for her support of the over 11,000 police in Queensland. They have truly earned their world-class reputation. They are internationally renowned and their expertise has regularly been called on. Recent examples in New Zealand include being called on for firearms regulation advice; seeking the Queensland Police Service's expertise in planning for the 2021 APEC summit in New Zealand; and high-risk missing persons advice. Our police have an international reputation and are well regarded. They serve for the greater good, unlike the LNP.

The LNP serve themselves; they only do what is good for themselves. The member for Toowoomba North is a recidivist offender. Last year he was caught out taking a taxpayer funded wine tour in Western Australia with other LNP MPs and their partners that cost taxpayers \$45,000. Did he learn his lesson? No, he did not. Since then, he has been to Melbourne, Launceston and Hobart, costing taxpayers almost \$4,000, apparently attending to business in his electorate. The only thing Melbourne, Launceston and Hobart have in common is the cold weather.

Now it has been revealed that only a few months ago the member for Toowoomba North went to New Zealand on a four-day visit to Auckland and the remote tourist town of Kerikeri near the Bay of Islands. They call Kerikeri 'a place so nice that they named it twice'. What was the member for Toowoomba North doing in a remote tourist town called Kerikeri near the Bay of Islands? What was his legitimate reason for being there at taxpayers' expense? This visit cost taxpayers several thousand dollars. What is the member's excuse for staying in the remote tourist town of Kerikeri?

I challenge him to provide his itinerary, because taxpayers would expect no less. Recently—just this week—the member for Toowoomba North justified his colleagues' taxpayer funded jaunt to Luna Park by saying, 'Obviously meeting in a capital city is much cheaper than visiting those rural areas.' By his own words, the member for Toowoomba North is full of hypocrisy. His trip to the remote tourist town of Kerikeri contradicts his own words. There are serious questions for this member to answer. The taxpayers demand it, and I call on him to explain himself.

Queensland Health, IT Projects

Mr HART: My question without notice is to the Premier. Media reports today expose that Labor's health minister is using money from hospital budgets to fix Labor's \$135 million IT debacle. Can the Premier guarantee that not one dollar will be redirected from patient care to be spent on patching up another Labor IT failure?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Of course, money that is directed to frontline services will not be diverted from frontline services. I find it ironic that the member for Burleigh would stand up in this House with the record of when he was last in government of cutting frontline services. The member represents Burleigh on the Gold Coast. They cut the number of nurses on the Gold Coast. The member for Burleigh is seated next to the member for Moggill, who presided over the worst doctors dispute that this state has ever seen when those opposite were in government. The track record speaks for itself. On that side of the House—

Dr Rowan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Moggill will put his comments through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They are happy to cut, sack and sell. On this side of the House we are building and delivering. We value our workers. We are out there talking about how good our workers are in the performance of their duties. On that side of the House, it is always criticism. It is always nasty,

because those opposite simply do not care. They do not care about Queenslanders or about families. My government will continue to build the state that we need to cater for the growth and to cater for families that deserve good quality health systems across this state.

Whilst I am on my feet I also want to comment on what the Minister for Health said in the House this morning regarding the fact that the health ministers across the nation had a meeting without the federal health minister. The No. 1 issue that premiers wanted to discuss at the COAG meeting this year was health. The No. 2 issue would have been drought, but the Prime Minister has seen fit to cancel that COAG meeting.

Government members: Shame!

Ms PALASZCZUK: Shame! It is an absolute disgrace that the Prime Minister of our country has cancelled the meeting of first ministers where we can talk about these important issues that affect the lives of everyday people not just in Queensland but across the nation.

M1, Upgrade

Mr POWER: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Can the minister update the House on the progress in upgrading the M1? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches to the government's substantial M1 investments?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for Logan for his question because he is a fierce advocate for road upgrades and the M1. I can happily report that this government has committed to building a better M1. Some \$2.3 billion worth of investment is going in. As people drive down through the merge around Varsity Lakes they will see vast amounts of bitumen going down—that beautiful black bitumen. The widening of the M1 is going gangbusters. We also have \$100 million on the table for exits 41 and 49.

This government is doing a lot of things for the M1 after it was ignored by those opposite. Not a single new dollar went on the M1 under the Newman government—not a single new dollar. Last week I could barely believe it when I read a quote in the *Albert and Logan News* from the opposition leader about the M1. In the *Albert and Logan News* dated 10 October this year the Leader of the Opposition said—

... the state government had wasted too much time trying to fix the M1.

I had to read it three times, and let me quote it again—

... the state government had wasted too much time trying to fix the M1.

That is the LNP policy. One would think that it would have learnt the first time after it did not spend a single new dollar on the M1 and lost government, yet it is still committed to ignoring the M1. This government has \$2.3 billion flowing into the M1 as well as \$100 million in the interchanges at exits 41 and 49. If the opposition was elected it would have to rename the M1 the 'M91' because that is how low it regards the M1! It has all of these Gold Coast members, yet what do they say?

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr BAILEY: Are they standing up for the M1? Are they standing up to the opposition leader?

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr BAILEY: There are the member for Coomera and the members for Theodore, Burleigh, Currumbin and Broadwater. What are they saying about the M1? Are they standing up for the M1?

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr BAILEY: No, they are not.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Coomera will cease his interjections.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr BAILEY: It is like silence of the lambs over there.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Minister, resume your seat. Member for Coomera, I can appreciate there is some provocation, but I asked you to cease your interjections and you continue to interject and not put your comments through the chair. You are warned under the standing orders.

Mr BAILEY: With regard to all of those lazy Gold Coast MPs, it is like silence of the lambs out there. They bleat away when we invest in the M1 and they are silent when their opposition leader says that we are doing too much on the M1. This opposition leader is not fit to lead any political party. She has not learnt the lesson from the M1. The question for people is this: do they trust the bitumen builders on this side of the chamber, or do they support the silence of the lambs and the slash squad on the

other side who did not spend a single new dollar on the M1 and whose policy continues to this day to ignore the M1 to leave motorists in gridlock? That is their policy. The cat is out of the bag. The Leader of the Opposition has said so.

(Time expired)

Hospitals, Emergency Departments

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Premier. Given calls today from the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union that we need an urgent review to fix Queensland emergency department wait times and the ambulance ramping crisis, will the Premier admit that cutting \$203 million from the hospital building budget was the wrong priority?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Maroochydore for the question. If the member was listening during ministerial statements this morning—I think it was the beginning of the minister's ministerial statement—the minister went through in detail and outlined what the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union was talking about and then talked about how he is having a meeting with it next week and talked about how this is an issue that is occurring not just at a state level but at a federal level. I find it ironic that those opposite would even stand in this House and talk about health when their record is so stark.

Ms Simpson: We fixed Health.

Government members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me assure the Leader of the Opposition that when she was Campbell Newman's right-hand woman they did not fix Health; they gutted Health. There was no fix. It was an absolute embarrassment.

Ms Fentiman: Barrett centre.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We saw the closure of the Barrett centre, and we know what happened there. We are now building a brand-new Barrett centre. In the next couple of weeks I will be out there with the Minister for Health inspecting the progress of the brand-new Barrett Adolescent Centre for young people who have severe mental health issues in this state.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, cease your injections.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let us look at their record. Those opposite sacked 4,400 staff, including 1,800 nurses and midwives, and attacked doctors on their pay conditions. They spent over \$500,000 a fortnight paying high-priced contractors and consultants. Let us look a bit more with regard to nurses. I know the member for Mudgeeraba was a nurse and while the member for Mudgeeraba was a minister they sacked 1,800 nurses and midwives. How can the member for Mudgeeraba have sat around that cabinet table sacking 1,800 nurses and midwives?

Dr Miles: She was the first nurse they sacked.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Unbelievable. I take that interjection. Let us talk about preventative health. The LNP cut 177 full-time-equivalent Queensland Health staff working in preventative health care. It cut \$3.8 million.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Leader of the Opposition, I have tried to give you guidance to cease your interjections. You are warned under the standing orders.

Ms PALASZCZUK: With regard to NGOs, the LNP cut \$36.4 million in annual funding from 153 health service projects run by NGOs including diabetes, Drug Arm, Kidney Support Network—

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier's time has expired.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—Mission Australia, the Flying Doctor Service—

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier's time has expired. The Premier will resume her seat.

(Time expired)

Labour Hire Licensing

Ms BOYD: My question is to the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations. Can the minister update the House on recent developments under the government's labour hire licensing laws and any alternative approaches?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question because I know that she knows that our labour hire licensing laws are delivering for workers in this state. We passed these laws—Australia's first—in spite of those opposite not only voting against them but also trying to campaign against them every step of the way. Our licensing laws now have over 3,000 licensees covering over 100,000 workers and we have been able to extract and stop 350 dodgy licensees from gaining licences in this state, protecting vulnerable workers.

The compliance unit has forged strong links with our federal counterparts and they are applauding the work of this unit. We have had an additional three successful prosecutions due to them not abiding by labour hire licensing laws. This is the first time a director has been prosecuted under the act as a party to the offence and also the first time a user has been prosecuted. This came from a tip-off from workers who were not being paid for work picking berries. These people have now been fined and prosecuted—Australia's first prosecutions under labour hire licensing laws.

There is one thing that we know for sure. We do not have to go to Margaret River to know how to protect workers. We do not have to go to Sydney to know how to protect workers. We do not have to go to a cocktail function and dinner at Luna Park to know what it takes to protect vulnerable workers.

At every opportunity those opposite rise to talk about crisis, to talk about issues that are out of control, yet the evidence was so substantial when it came to the exploitation of labour hire workers. What did they do? Absolutely nothing! When it comes to protecting workers in this state, it is the LNP that will do nothing and the ALP that will protect workers in this state.

The LNP voted against laws that established the wage theft inquiry and fought it every step of the way. The LNP voted against industrial manslaughter. The LNP voted against fair industrial relations law and is obsessed with the role of unions in health and safety.

When it comes to protecting workers, we know where we stand. I correct the Deputy Premier: the seagulls were in *Finding Nemo*. They were in Sydney and their cry was, 'Mate, mate.' That is what it was like in Sydney with the LNP members—'Mate, mate.' What about youth unemployment in regional Queensland? 'Mate, mate.' What about the drought in regional Queensland? 'Mate, mate.' What about maternity services in regional Queensland? 'Mate, mate.' They are a joke!

(*Time expired*)

Unemployment

Mr BLEIJIE: My question without notice is to the Premier. The independent Australian Bureau of Statistics has just released during question time data that shows on any measure Queensland now has the highest unemployment rate in the nation, with a record 178,000 Queenslanders looking for work. When will the Palaszczuk government stop the petty politics, back the LNP's plans to build the job-creating infrastructure, no new taxes and streamline approvals for major projects?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Of course, we know that those—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members to my left, the Premier has barely risen to her feet and you are interjecting. You cannot possibly know what the Premier is going to say.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We know that participation is up and more people are moving to Queensland. Not only that, some 226,800 jobs have been created since we came to office. That figure has gone up from the previous month. More people are in work and we need to make sure that we continue to drive that growth and investment.

The biggest risk to the Queensland economy is the LNP. Why do I say that? Because the LNP has a record of what it does when it is in government. The LNP sacks—14,000 jobs gone when the LNP was in office.

Mr Mander: One hundred and seventy-eight thousand.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We know how much the LNP cares about Queensland. I note the member for Everton is interjecting. We know that he enjoys going to Sydney more than he does being in Queensland, or talking about regional issues, or jobs. There is no National Party conference out where people are hurting the most—out in the bush areas. No, he goes down to Luna Park.

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Everton, you are warned under the standing orders. I have repeatedly asked you to cease your interjections and you are not putting your comments through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: As the minister for resources said in the House this morning, we have record growth in our resources sector. Queensland is the only state on the east coast that is opening up its gas resource. Recently, the minister represented the Queensland government in opening up a brand-new metallurgical coalmine. Of course, just yesterday we announced the new wind farm. In Queensland, we can do everything.

The biggest risk to the Queensland economy is the LNP. We only have to look at those opposite to see who sat around the table with Campbell Newman. They might try to write Campbell Newman from the history books, but the ghost of Campbell Newman will always remain, especially with the Leader of the Opposition, who was Campbell Newman's protege. She learned everything she knows from Campbell Newman.

Mr Saunders interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Maryborough, you are warned under the standing orders.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We will continue to back our programs in regional Queensland—our Works for Queensland, Skilling Queenslanders for Work, which those opposite cut, our Back to Work program and our huge boom with building new schools across Queensland and expanding our hospitals. That is unlike those opposite, who had a list of closed schools and shut hospitals.

Children and Youth

Ms PEASE: My question is to the Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. Will the minister please update the House on how the minister's department is supporting vulnerable children and young people and whether the minister is aware of any alternative approaches?

Ms FARMER: I thank the member for her question and her continued advocacy for vulnerable young people. Across my portfolios, there are people working every single day to improve the lives of vulnerable children and young people. They work on the basis that every child and every young person deserves the same hope and opportunity as the next one. The Palaszczuk Labor government has made a massive investment in this—with almost \$1 billion over eight years and a real focus on prevention and early intervention, because we want to stop those kids from getting into the child protection system in the first place.

We are starting to see results. In today's media alone, we have seen reports that Queensland is the only state to send down the growth of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the child protection system. We have so much more to do. This is the fifth quarter that we have seen a plateauing off of that growth. This is about our priorities. This is about our values and it is about what informs our spending priorities.

In my portfolios I see the depths of depravity and evil and need. It is why across both of my portfolios I say to the department for every single dollar we spend, 'Is this working?' That is why I am outraged at the priorities the LNP has for taxpayer funds—the \$23,000 that has been spent on a trip to Luna Park and a cocktail party—because I can tell—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. My point of order is on relevance—118(b). The question from the government member was about vulnerable children in the minister's portfolio and the minister has strayed from that question.

Mr SPEAKER: Member, I do not have a copy of the question in front of me to validate exactly the wording of the question. Minister, I ask that you ensure that you are being relevant to the question. Do you have anything further to add?

Ms FARMER: I can tell members what \$23,000 would pay for in my portfolio. It would pay for 300 hours of counselling for a child who has been sexually abused. It would pay for a youth worker for 1½ days a week for a whole year to work with a young person to re-engage with education. It would pay for four trips a year for an Indigenous child and their carer—

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Those on the opposite side are deliberately causing a distraction. The minister is not taking the interjections and it is impossible to hear the minister giving the answer.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the House. Please resume your seat. I am listening to the minister's contribution. The minister is provoking those opposite, so I will monitor the minister's answer.

Ms FARMER: It would pay for 300 hours of counselling for a child who has been sexually abused. It would pay for a youth worker to work 1½ days a week with a young person to re-engage with education. It would pay for four trips a year for an Indigenous child and their carer to reconnect with country. For the price of a cocktail, they could pay for a young child in care to go to a Broncos game in Brisbane—just one nice thing they could do for a child in care. I am calling on the LNP to repay that money. This issue is about integrity. It is about values. It is about what we think we should be spending taxpayers' funds on. They should hang their heads in shame.

Mount Isa, Flying Foxes

Mr KATTER: My question is to the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts. The artificial forest created in remote, arid Mount Isa is victim to an enormous influx of bats. The cemetery is barely accessible, families and children are bound indoors and risk of Hendra virus is high over local horse paddocks. Long delays in dealing with the same issue in Charters Towers will not be tolerated again, so will the minister put people before bats and immediately approve and fund a flying fox management plan?

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the minister, that is verging on having a preamble that is too long. I will allow the question.

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government's balanced approach to managing our native wildlife is aimed at conserving and protecting vulnerable species and their habitat while managing the safety and expectations of a growing population. This is the balance that we have to strike every time. There has been a great deal of work that has been happening with regard to the management of flying foxes.

Mr Dametto: No, absolutely nothing.

Ms ENOCH: There has been a great deal of work that has been happening with regard to the flying fox. In particular locations we have seen some very innovative trials to see how we can move flying foxes to different habitats and protect habitat at the same time. Those trials have been part of a broader review of how we ensure we are able to manage threatened species, in particular flying foxes, and protect their habitat. That research program, particularly into little red flying fox migration and behaviour, is something that I have been talking to other states about as well because, seeing some of those behaviours, we want to learn how we can ensure that we protect the rights of citizens.

Keep in mind that it is councils that have the ability to manage that. Amendments were made by the former LNP government to the flying fox management framework. As a result, councils have that as-of-right authority under legislation to disperse flying fox roosts if they choose to do so. This is the balance, of course. This research project will be an important one. In the meantime, there have been some detailed conversations between myself, the member for Traeger, the mayor involved, the department and the council to try to find opportunities to find new innovative ideas to manage flying foxes and to share those ideas with other states. That is all part of the bigger story about how we find that balance to protect flying foxes, in particular their habitat and those threatened species, and at the same time take into account the fact that we have a growing population and there are expectations and safety concerns with regard to all of that.

QBuild

Ms LINARD: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport.

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Sorry, member. Member for Broadwater, you are warned under the standing orders. Please start your question again, member for Nudgee.

Ms LINARD: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport. Will the minister update the House on the rebuilding of QBuild, including building a female workforce, and is he aware of any other approaches?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for Nudgee for the question. I know the member for Nudgee is a big supporter of rebuilding QBuild as well as women in construction. Last Friday marked the International Day of the Girl. I was in another electorate—in Cannon Hill, in fact, in the member for Bulimba's electorate—to announce an exemplar project, one that will prove women in frontline roles in construction can be achieved. When I was there I met two of our new QBuild apprentices. I met Ashley, an apprentice painter, and Jessica, an apprentice carpenter—two hardworking young women with their

entire careers ahead of them. This Labor government is proud to back them in and create opportunities for women in frontline construction jobs. I am pleased to announce that our approach on this construction site, on this building, will mean that we will exceed the National Association of Women in Construction target of 11 per cent, up from the average national average of 2.4 per cent. We will prove that women can deliver building projects in Queensland.

It is no surprise there is no acclamation from those opposite because we already know that the LNP has a problem with women. We know that the member for Everton gets very anxious about women on boards. He is quite comfortable with them boarding a plane off to a taxpayer funded junket in Sydney though. I am sure he thinks that women making up 2.4 per cent of the construction industry is high enough. I want to make sure that the member for Everton braces himself for this one: I am pleased to announce that as part of our intake of QBuild apprentices and tradespeople, 11 per cent of those 300 apprentices and tradespeople will be women in frontline construction roles in Queensland. We are ahead of the game. Already we are at 15 per cent. Women just like Ashley and Jessica will be working on sites like at Cannon Hill and right across Queensland.

Those opposite complain about taxpayer support for rebuilding jobs like those in QBuild, jobs for women like Ashley and Jessica, but somehow it is okay to go on a taxpayer funded junket to a theme park. I know that back in the 1950s, which is referred to as the golden age amongst people in the LNP, the idea of women in the workforce was a crazy idea. News flash to all those opposite: the world has moved on. Women are not only in the boardroom, they are now building the boardroom. We know that the member for Everton and his colleagues over there do not want women building in Queensland. They prefer them riding the Wild Mouse ride down at Luna Park. Perhaps he does not want them in construction, he would prefer to see them visiting Coney Island. Maybe they do not want women in jobs at all; they prefer to see them not in the boardroom, maybe in the kitchen. They simply cannot bring themselves to support women in jobs in Queensland. They do not back QBuild. They are not worthy of the support of Queenslanders.

Vegetation Management, Drought

Ms LEAHY: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's comments on *Sky News* last night about Labor's vegetation management laws and the drought. Will the Premier today commit to relaxing Labor's vegetation management laws so landowners can harvest additional mulga to keep their stock alive given Queensland's prolonged drought conditions?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. It is great to see she was watching me on *Sky News* on *Richo + Jones*. It is great to see that they are showing an interest in the drought. The reason I actually went on that show was to talk about drought. I did raise this when we debated the motion in the House yesterday. The Leader of the Opposition said the motion was a joke, that talking about drought and asking the Prime Minister to release the \$5 billion of the drought fund was a joke. It is not a joke. This side of the House is more than happy to stand up for the farmers and to raise those issues at a national level.

Let me talk about a couple of things. The issue that Alan raised was an issue in relation to a Mr McDonald. That issue, as I advised him this morning, is currently before the Court of Appeal and it is over issues that I am advised happened between 2013 and 2015. It was not under Labor's vegetation management laws, it was under the Sustainable Planning Act.

Dr Lynham interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, you are warned under the standing orders. You will put your comments through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In relation to mulga in general, we recognise that it is a very difficult time for primary producers. The existing legislation already allows farmers to push mulga to feed livestock with appropriate notification to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. We have officers who are more than happy to work quickly with farmers to make sure they get their notification process done quickly. They need to put in details and we will make sure that we do it as quickly as possible. That notification, once received, is allowed for two years. We will work quickly with people to make sure that that happens.

In conclusion let me say this: it is only this side of the House that has been talking about the drought. We have been going through it for seven years in Queensland and we have been putting money on the table to make sure that there are ways in which our farmers can access fodder subsidies and access relief for electricity.

A government member interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will take that interjection. We do not have to go to Sydney to do it, we are doing it right here in Queensland. The best way the federal government can help is to get out that \$5 billion drought fund. They have a consultation process. It does not even start until next July. It is a disgrace!

Neighbourhood Centres

Mr KING: My question is to the Minister for Communities and Minister for Disability Services and Seniors. Will the minister update the House on how we are progressing with the delivery of vital neighbourhood centre infrastructure projects?

Mrs O'ROURKE: I thank the member for the question. I know how passionate he is about working with vulnerable people in his community. He knows how much neighbourhood centres actually contribute to supporting people through some of their troubles. The Queensland government is delivering new neighbourhood centres in Inala, Moranbah, Murgon, Thursday Island, Wilsonton and Kallangur. In fact, the Queensland government is investing \$10.7 million in the 2019-20 budget for the construction of new neighbourhood centres and the replacement or refurbishment of existing centres. That is the equivalent of approximately 33 full-time construction jobs across the state.

The Moranbah Youth and Community Centre was delivered with joint Queensland government and BHP Mitsubishi Alliance funding of \$4.16 million, creating approximately 13 construction jobs in the local community. We also provided \$3.1 million for the construction of the new Graham House Community Centre in Murgon, creating approximately 10 local construction jobs. I had the great pleasure of attending the opening of both of those neighbourhood centres in August and September this year. Both of those communities are incredibly grateful for the new and modern centres from which they will be able to deliver support to and work with people in need.

On Friday the Premier had the honour of officially opening the new Inala Community Centre in her electorate of Inala.

Ms Palaszczuk: Hear, hear!

Mrs O'ROURKE: I am sure it was very much welcomed. That new centre, worth more than \$4 million, has been many years in the making. I know that the local community was very pleased to see it come to fruition. The project also contributed to local jobs, with the creation of 13 local jobs during construction.

We are another step closer to delivering the new \$4 million Thursday Island Community Centre, with a select tender process now underway among local builders who have experience delivering projects of that type and size in the Torres Strait region. The opening of the tender follows extensive community consultation and the release of the concept plan for the new centre earlier this year. It is expected that 15 full-time equivalent jobs will be created for local people in the Torres Strait during construction. The tender is due to close this Friday, 18 October. I look forward to announcing the successful building contractor later this month.

Our record on building and delivering is in stark contrast to that of those opposite when in government, when we saw projects cut, people sacked and our assets sold. I look forward to updating the House on the progress of those projects in the future.

Climate Change

Mr CRISAFULLI: My question is to the Minister for Environment. Does the minister support federal Labor's declaration of a climate change emergency?

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, you have one minute to respond.

Ms ENOCH: How ironic it is to get a question from the LNP about climate change when there are members on their own backbench who do not even believe in climate change. In the last sitting week, the member for Callide announced that he did not believe in the science of climate change. He said that it was not man-made, but had been happening for millions of years. He believes that somehow, magically, climate is changing in an accelerated way not because of humans but because of a normal cyclic change in climate. The only thing more ironic would be to get this question from the member for Callide.

I will be very clear: this side of the House has been operating in the space of urgent action, which is why we have been having a raft of activities to ensure that we are addressing issues of climate change. That is why we see our very strong targets in terms of emissions—

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: The period for question time has expired.

POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION (DISCIPLINE REFORM) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 16 October (see p. 3308) on motion of Mr Ryan—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (11.14 am): I rise to make a contribution to debate on the Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The opposition supports the bill. I note that on 12 April 2019 the Economics and Governance Committee recommended that the bill be passed. The policy objectives of the bill include to provide efficiencies in the investigation of complaints and the hearing of allegations, and to suitably discipline officers—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Coomera, I am sorry to interrupt you. Members, I remind you again that when you are leaving the chamber to do so quietly as a courtesy to the member who has the call.

Mr CRANDON: The policy objectives of the bill include to provide efficiencies in the investigation of complaints and the hearing of allegations, and to suitably discipline officers while, at the same time, ensuring that the public's confidence in the QPS is maintained. The objectives of the bill are achieved by reducing delays in finalising discipline investigations, modernising the discipline sanctions that can be imposed upon a subject officer, formalising the role and range of management strategies available as part of the discipline process and addressing review provisions that apply to the CCC.

The bill reduces delays by establishing time frames for the institution of discipline proceedings and the finalisation of investigations. Proposed section 7.12 provides that, generally, disciplinary proceedings in relation to a complaint must be commenced within the later of either one year from the date the disciplinary grounds arose or six months from the complaint being made. However, if starting a disciplinary action will compromise a current operation, the ground for the disciplinary action is taken to arise on the day the operation ends, as proposed under section 7.13. The bill also enhances the efficiency of the investigative process and disciplinary proceedings by introducing an abbreviated disciplinary process, under proposed section 7.18. It allows the prescribed officer, with permission of the CCC and at any time during the investigation, to invite the subject officer to participate in the ADP.

With reference to modernising the discipline sanctions that can be imposed upon a subject officer, the disciplinary sanctions will include dismissal, which is a current sanction; suspension from duty without pay for a period not exceeding 12 months, which is a new sanction; disciplinary probation, which is a new sanction; demotion on a permanent basis, which is a current sanction; demotion for a stated period, which is a new sanction; comprehensive transfer, which is a new sanction; local transfer, which is a new sanction; performance of up to 100 hours community service, which is a new sanction; increasing the maximum fine from two penalty units to 50 penalty units, which is a new sanction; and reprimand, which is a current sanction. The bill omits the current available sanction of a reduction in the officer's level of salary within their current rank and forfeiture or deferment of a salary increment or increase.

The bill provides for educational activities and development opportunities that may assist in improving a police officer's professionalism or minimising the risk of analogous behaviour occurring in the future. The bill inserts a new section 7.3, which formalises professional development strategies in the new police discipline process by allowing the commissioner to impose a professional development strategy on an officer in response to a complaint as a risk-mitigation strategy to improve the officer's performance.

Regarding CCC powers, the CCC can assume responsibility for and complete investigations into police misconduct. The bill simply removes 'breach of discipline' and replaces it with the term 'ground for disciplinary action'. 'Misconduct' will remain as a distinct ground for disciplinary action. The bill amends this by giving the CCC the power to apply for review of a QPS decision not to institute disciplinary proceedings against an officer.

The bill has bipartisan support from the LNP and all key stakeholders, including the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Police Union of Employees, the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union of Employees, government representatives and representatives of the legal fraternity. I look forward to the implementation of the bill.

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (11.19 am): I am pleased to make a contribution to the Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The tabling of the Fitzgerald inquiry report into the Queensland parliament 30 years ago was a defining moment not only in Queensland's political history, but in the evolution of the Queensland police force. This legislation marks another defining moment, bringing with it major structural changes to police discipline practices designed to correct, instruct and improve officer behaviour.

We know that the majority of our police officers perform their duties professionally, with integrity and with honesty. However, as we learnt 30 years ago, we cannot always rely on this and we need to ensure that we have a police discipline system that is robust and provides the Queensland public and police with confidence. It also speaks to the changing and agile nature of policing with new technologies playing an important monitoring role. In fact, our government's commitment to roll out body worn cameras to all officers is a crucial element in providing certainty to the public and to the police force when incidents arise.

There are a range of amendments in this bill to improve key facets of the police discipline system, including reducing the delays in finalising discipline investigations, modernising the disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed upon a subject officer, formalising the role and range of management strategies available as part of that discipline process and addressing review provisions that apply to the CCC. It is on this last part that I will primarily focus my contribution.

As a member for the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, I understand and support the role of the CCC as the oversight body in the police discipline system. As we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the tabling of the Fitzgerald inquiry report this year we must be ever vigilant to ensure we never return to those dark days. Thirty years ago Queensland was a different place and the tentacles of corruption and police misconduct had spread through parts of the old QPS. The Queensland Police Service has strengthened its systems and processes, resulting in a modern and professional crime-fighting agency.

The bill does not seek to alter the role of the CCC as an oversight body in this police discipline system. The Crime and Corruption Act provides that the commissioner has primary responsibility for dealing with complaints about police misconduct. However, this is subject to the monitoring role of the CCC, whereby the CCC can overview the progress of police investigations into disciplinary matters and their outcomes, issue guidelines, review and audit the handling of complaints and require the QPS to report to the CCC about an investigation. Furthermore, the CCC can also assume responsibility for and complete investigations into police misconduct.

Currently, there are two different avenues for review of a disciplinary decision dependent on whether the offending conduct is considered to be misconduct or a breach of discipline. This bill will remove the artificial distinctions between these two types of conduct, which will assist in simplifying the police discipline systems, as the ability to review a decision or the sanction imposed for improper conduct will not be dependent on the categorisation of behaviour.

The bill will also allow the CCC to apply for review of QPS decisions not to institute disciplinary proceedings against an officer, which implements recommendation 15 of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee report No. 97, which was tabled in parliament in June 2016. Furthermore, the CCC will also obtain the ability to apply for review of disciplinary decisions in relation to any grounds for disciplinary action, ensuring the QPS is not mishandling matters that should be dealt with as misconduct. This will enhance the oversight and monitoring functions of the CCC by ensuring the QPS investigates misconduct appropriately. These changes also mean the ability of the CCC to apply for review of a decision will no longer be determined by whether the matter was classified as misconduct by the prescribed officer.

The modernised and more efficient discipline system has been the subject of detailed consultation by the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Corruption Commission and has the support of all parties, including the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union of Employees and the Queensland Police Union of Employees. This is a very important thing as cultural change must be supported from the ground up.

One of the key areas of focus for the CCC, as highlighted in their most recent public report released on 23 August, has been to collaborate with key stakeholders to implement and monitor this program of reform of the police complaints and discipline system. An interesting area of work has been

the establishment of a joint assessment and moderation committee which includes representatives from the CCC and the Ethical Standards Command. This committee reviews how serious complaints are triaged and monitored and aims to improve the timeliness and consistency in approach when the QPS investigates complaints against its own officers.

A second tier of the JAMC is the investigation consultation process which focuses on those matters which are the subject of the CCC's statutory monitoring function. As indicated by the CCC in their report, this process allows matters to be nominated by the CCC or the QPS and topics for discussion may include opportunities for collaboration between the parties. It also allows the QPS to raise issues that have arisen in the course of an investigation that may be contentious or that impact on resources and the CCC can make clear its expectations regarding investigations and outcomes. The CCC reports that the ICP meetings reduce the time delay between tasking and action which results in the timely investigation of matters.

We know that a common complaint of the police discipline system has been the time taken to investigate and finalise matters. This impacts not only the complainant but also the subject officer involved. The bill establishes time frames for the institution of discipline proceedings and the finalisation of investigations, and also introduces an abbreviated disciplinary process which expedites investigations into matters that are simple or not in dispute.

Technological advances are also aiding investigations into police discipline, with body worn cameras providing an impartial record of events and interactions. The clarity of real-time footage can not only facilitate a quicker resolution of criminal investigations but also provide police officers and the public with confidence that evidence is being recorded without prejudice. I was pleased by the minister's announcement earlier this year that a new contract arrangement will mean all uniformed, first-responder officers will have body worn cameras. The Queensland Police Service was the first policing agency in the Asia-Pacific to implement a body worn camera regime and this early adoption of technology plays a vital role in the way police operate on a daily basis.

Thirty years ago the Fitzgerald inquiry was a watershed in the state's history, ushering in a new era of accountability and oversight that has resulted in the Queensland Police Service now being held in higher regard by the Queensland community, but we must be ever vigilant. This important bill before us supports a strong culture of continued transparency and integrity for the Queensland Police Service. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (11.26 am): The nature of policing is such that it frequently requires officers to engage with disagreeable community members, people in crisis, people with heightened emotions, people with high expectations and often people who are violent, who hurl insults or have little regard for the law. Sometimes in these interactions—thankfully infrequently—police do not behave or conduct themselves with the highest professionalism expected. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that we have an effective system that deals with this in an efficient and effective manner.

Often after these encounters though members of the public feel aggrieved and seek to complain about the officer, which is later found to be unsubstantiated. We only have to look at some of the rubbish police have to put up with such as the recent disgusting comments of a Greens Brisbane City councillor who said the whole service was violent and racist. It is absolutely disgraceful. I will not even mention his name in this place.

Mr Russo: Oh no, go ahead.

Mr HUNT: Jonathan Sri. It is disgraceful that those opposite still get into preference deals with these people. It is absolutely shameful. They are disgusting comments. Good, effective and honest police, by the very nature of their work, will still find themselves at times dragged into the discipline system, and they expect that. What they do not expect, however, is for the system to drag on and on as it has in the past with justice delayed and justice therefore denied. In the past the process has become a punishment in itself. We have lost countless hours of policing due to sick leave from officers unable to mentally cope with the process itself. These reforms, which are long overdue, are welcome by the QPS, the Queensland Police Union and the LNP.

I remember when I was a detective and allocated to investigations in the very busy district of Oxley. It would not be uncommon to have a workload of around 20 to 30 cases and investigations. If any one of these went past a month without resolution, questions would be asked by the boss. It has therefore historically been an irritant of police officers that the discipline investigations system that sometimes stretched out over years on various matters did not seem subject to the same scrutiny on time lines. It is pleasing to see that this long overdue issue has been recognised and that the bill before the House goes towards addressing this.

As noted in the explanatory notes to the bill, the police discipline system has been the subject of numerous reviews by the QPS and the CCC, including its previous iterations as the Crime and Misconduct Commission and the Criminal Justice Commission. As a result of these reviews and general stakeholder dissatisfaction, a number of aspects of the police discipline system were identified for improvement and modernisation. I will not go through them all. One of these was a general lack of public and officer confidence in the current police discipline system.

I have outlined the angst of officers already. However, this angst has also been felt in the community. Confidence in the system is important so that the public can feel that they not only have a right to complain but their complaint will be dealt with quickly and fairly. The nature of the system where someone brings a grievance forward in the form of a complaint and a judgement needs to be made on the evidence will always have the danger of leaving one of the parties dissatisfied with the system if the finding is against them. That balance of retaining confidence in the system is often difficult to get right.

The second issue identified was unnecessarily lengthy time frames taken to investigate and resolve some complaints, as I mentioned. This is the main issue that undermines that confidence we spoke about. As I stated earlier, this situation has been unacceptable for many years. It is good to finally see a bill that addresses this.

Another important aspect of the bill is modernising the discipline sanctions that can be imposed upon a subject officer. I note that there are a number of new options now available to correct the behaviour of officers who fall short of the high expectations of the community. We can only hope that there is consistency in sanctions so that confidence is maintained in the system.

I note that with body worn cameras being rolled out we can hope that police and the community can be further protected and evidence gathered in relation to a complaint to substantiate it or not. I imagine that this new technology will assist greatly in corroborating the version of events of witnesses and, more importantly, will expedite the resolution of complaints.

I note the speaking list and that many of my colleagues once again are going to be guillotined and not be able to speak on this bill, so I will leave my contribution there. I support the bill and I look forward to seeing these improvements in the discipline system for the good of the police and the community.

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (11.32 am): I cannot let the member for Nicklin's comments about preference deals and Jonathan Sri go.

Mr Hunt: Rule it out.

Mr BROWN: I take that interjection from the member for Nicklin.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Pause a moment. Member for Southern Downs, if you are going to interject, do it from your seat.

Mr BROWN: It was the member for Nicklin.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: My apologies, but the warning still stands.

Mr BROWN: Speaker discipline right there! I take the interjection from the member for Nicklin. Rule it out, because the dirty deal that the member for Nanango, the opposition leader, is doing in South Brisbane is cloning Jonathan Sri. It is cloning the office that the Extinction Rebellion use to do their rallies every week. The training ground for Extinction Rebellion is in South Brisbane and they want to double it through a dirty preference deal with the Greens. I take the interjection from the member for Nicklin: rule it out. I call on the opposition leader to rule out this dirty deal. If they are so outraged about doing preference deals and Jonathan Sri's comments against police officers, rule it out.

I rise in support of the Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I, like, I assume, all members of this House, have nothing but respect for the men and women in blue. Their hard work and dedication to their jobs is the cornerstone of keeping our communities safe. For that, we owe the Queensland Police Service a massive debt of gratitude. I thank them for the service they provide the people of Queensland each and every day.

I also want to thank the new senior sergeant at Capalaba, David Candale. I had the chance to meet with him at the police remembrance service a couple of weeks ago. It was good to have a catch-up and get his views on what he sees are the needs in the area. I look forward to having a long-term relationship with Senior Sergeant David Candale at Capalaba.

The Police Service Administration Act 1990 is the legislation that provides for the management of the Police Service. From time to time, matters relating to discipline of officers have to be dealt with under this act. This bill contains a number of necessary amendments to implement the new discipline

system. It includes changes that will provide greater efficiency during the complaints investigation process, suitable discipline options for officers if required and all round protection for the integrity of the Queensland Police Service, including through educating officers.

This bill modernises the way that disciplinary sanctions can be imposed by providing a greater range of actions that can be taken against officers, helping to close the gaps where there are large incremental differences in the types of actions that can be taken. These ensure that there is greater fairness not only for officers subject to an investigation but also for the community.

The new sanctions include disciplinary probation, demotion for a specified period, comprehensive transfer and local transfer, performance of up to 100 hours of community service and increasing the maximum fine to 50 penalty units, up from the current two penalty units. A suspension period for up to 12 months without pay may also be applied, as well as demotion for a specific period. These changes correspond with changing times and changing community expectations. The new system will allow disciplinary action to be taken which is fair and reasonable, with sanctions that are not considered too punitive or too weak.

The bill also formalises the role and range of management strategies that are available as part of the discipline process. The current system does not allow for officers subject to disciplinary action to undertake educational or development opportunities that could assist as a means of improving their ability to be professional and mitigate the risk of future disciplinary action due to their behaviour. Under these amendments, the QPS will be able to impose a professional development strategy upon subject officers in a way that is tailored to meet the individual needs of that officer.

Importantly, this bill maintains and enshrines the right of the subject officer to contest any allegations. This is important to ensure that natural justice occurs wherever an allegation has been made and, where the allegations are substantiated, the subject officer will have a right of reply and can make a submission on the appropriateness of the proposed sanction.

This bill is important for securing the integrity of the Queensland Police Service in the eyes of ordinary Queenslanders. The overwhelming majority of Queensland police officers are selfless human beings who do the right thing. They put their lives on the line each and every day to ensure that our communities are safe. This bill ensures that there is fairness within the process in regard to police discipline.

I would like to congratulate the QPS, the Queensland Police Union, the CCC and the opposition for their bipartisan cooperation on this bill. It is fantastic to see all groups come together to present a bill for the common good to ensure that we secure the utmost integrity of the Queensland Police Service. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (11.38 am): Famed businessman Lindsay Fox once said, 'Life isn't about algebra and geometry. Learning by making mistakes and not duplicating them is what life is about.' It is an infallible truth that we are all human. As a consequence of this, from time to time we make mistakes. No-one, no matter who they are or what role they fill, is immune from this, including our state's hardworking police officers who, from time to time, have to deal with some of the most emotionally challenging, critical and dangerous situations and are required to make decisions in real time. That is why it is important to prioritise frameworks that assist officers learn from any mistakes and ensure they do not make the same mistakes again. The bill before us intends to achieve this goal.

Before I go further, I would like to thank the Economics and Governance Committee and the secretariat for undertaking the inquiry. I note that the committee contacted 60 key stakeholder organisations and community groups across police, justice and legal sectors and received over 900 emailed submissions.

As a former senior sergeant and officer in charge of a large police station, I was charged with the responsibility of maintaining discipline within my teams, the oversight of discipline processes and conducting investigations into allegations of wrongdoing across the service. I can assure this House that the current police discipline system is not completely broken, but the system has been in need of reform for many years as the system does not address the underlying causes of misconduct. Quite honestly, the Police Service relies heavily on their strong culture of professionalism and integrity. I can assure the House that the Police Service hates it when one of their own does something wrong.

History shows there have been quite a number of inquiries into the system over the last few decades. All of those inquiries said that the current system is slow, punitive and ineffective. I particularly want to stress to the House the importance of the bipartisan approach taken in the development of this bill. The LNP has worked with the government, the Crime and Corruption Commission, the police union and the Police Service to devise a new system which recognises that police officers are human and

can make mistakes. The new system allows officers to identify mistakes and come forward. It encourages them to do so because the new system is designed to support them and provide them with guidance and training to develop professionally, as opposed to punishing them for every minor indiscretion.

I am pleased to say that this new system will bring the Queensland Police Service into line with modern management practices. In the spirit of cooperation, a lot of work has been done by the Queensland Police Service and police unions. In June 2016 the Crime and Corruption Commission chairman, Mr MacSporran, convened a bipartisan forum with the Police Service, the Police Union of Employees, the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union of Employees and relevant government and shadow ministers to initiate a cooperative approach to reform the police discipline system. In relation to that group Mr MacSporran said that everyone, to their credit, immediately agreed it was an important reform that needed to be progressed, and they formed subcommittees to start the work.

After a series of roundtable discussions and negotiations on different aspects of the system, in October 2017 all of the key parties, including the relevant government ministers and shadow ministers, signed a memorandum of understanding on the principles of the new discipline system upon which this bill is based. The bill aims to provide efficiencies in the investigation of complaints, the hearing of allegations and ensuring the suitable disciplining of officers in order to ensure that the public's confidence in the Police Service is maintained. The bill intends to achieve these objectives through several changes designed to: reduce delays in finalising discipline investigations; modernise the sanctions that can be imposed on a subject officer; and formalise the role and range of management strategies available as part of the discipline process.

As a former police officer, I can say firsthand from observing colleagues who have been subject to investigation that the current system allows for lengthy delays, and the time it took for simple complaints to be resolved was unimaginably slow. The system was a punishment in itself. It was nothing for matters to drag on for years, all that time hanging over an officer's head. It effectively put a person's career and life on hold. Those delays and the stress caused by uncertainty not only impacted on the officers themselves but their friends and workmates and, worse still, on their families and loved ones. I can speak personally about my role as a rehabilitation coordinator and the personal trauma I witnessed in police officers, while the subject of mere allegations, who were stressed to the point of being so sick they had to take time off work. A number of these officers faced only minor breaches and some never returned to work.

The new system does introduce strict time lines for commencing proceedings, and I hope these reforms will minimise future delays. It means that the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Corruption Commission will be held to account. They will be required to investigate matters quickly and not allow investigations to drag out for years. From my own personal experience I do not see this as any problem, as what gets measured gets done. The Ethical Standards Command is well resourced with experienced and appointed detectives who have compulsive powers, including the power to require the police to forego their right to silence during a discipline investigation. If a first year uniformed constable can investigate an assault in a matter of days, then I have every confidence that experienced detectives will be able to investigate complaints quickly, properly and comprehensively in the time periods allowed.

Importantly, the removal of pay points as a sanction means that officers will no longer be subject to an ongoing compounding sanction of financial problems which put some officers in financial ruin. It put those officers years behind their academy mates in terms of pay. Under the old system, a reduction in pay level for a constable equated to a delayed promotion. For other officers, a reduction meant it could take years for them to catch up to top pay levels. Naturally, this also had an impact on their superannuation and retirement prospects. It created absolute stress for officers and their families.

The bill inserts a new section 7.3, which formalises professional development strategies by allowing the commissioner to impose a professional development strategy on an officer in response to a complaint as a risk-mitigation strategy and to improve the officer's performance. Whilst the new system focuses on education and training, it still allows the commissioner to sanction officers who do not come up to our community standard. Cases of serious misconduct can still result in fines and community service. Where the misconduct is so concerning that the person is no longer fit to hold a particular rank or even to be a police officer, they can be dealt with through demotion and dismissal.

Community confidence will be maintained in the system, as the Crime and Corruption Commission will also have review rights to QCAT, the independent tribunal which oversees police misconduct. Similarly, officers themselves will have recourse to QCAT should they be aggrieved by a

discipline decision. I can say that the new system and the new philosophy underpinning it means that officers will actually be encouraged to engage with the system. It costs significant funds to recruit and train police officers. The new bill recognises that officers are human beings who can make mistakes.

In the short time I have left I want to say a big thank you to all hardworking members, sworn and unsworn, of the Queensland Police Service. I would particularly like to recognise my local officers in Lowood, Laidley, Gatton and Helidon, who do a great job. I can assure the House and the Queensland community that the Police Service does everything in its power to be professional and beyond reproach. This new system will help us maintain that and see officers dealt with accordingly.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (11.48 am): I rise to make a contribution to the Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. On 12 April 2019, the Economics and Governance Committee recommended that the bill be passed. The LNP supports and welcomes the bill, which condenses a revised police discipline system and has been negotiated with bipartisan support.

The objective of the bill is to provide efficiencies in the investigation of complaints and hearing of allegations, and to suitably discipline officers, while at the same time ensuring the public's confidence in the QPS is maintained. It will effectively reduce delays in finalising discipline investigations, modernise the discipline sanctions that can be imposed upon a subject officer, formalise the role and range of management strategies available as part of the discipline process and address review provisions that apply to the CCC.

This bill ensures that the small number of Queensland police officers who fail to uphold the high standards set by the QPS will be held to account. It is imperative that Queensland maintains a comprehensive and effective police discipline system to ensure that members of the QPS adhere to proper standards of conduct and that public confidence in the Queensland Police Service is preserved.

The reduction of delays in finalising investigations essentially means we will have more men and women on the ground fighting the growing crime rate across our state and keeping our families safe. This change is welcome in the communities of Cambooya, Pittsworth and Oakey where officer numbers and police resources are inadequate due to the population growth. Frontline police officers can only use the resources they have available to them and sometimes this is lacking.

The bill reduces delays by establishing time frames for the institution of discipline proceedings and the finalisation of investigations. It would be good to see these time frames adopted for the hiring process as well. It has taken almost 12 months to fill the position of officer in charge at the Pittsworth Police Station which has been vacant since January 2019 because of the current unlimited appeals process. Proposed section 7.12 provides that generally disciplinary proceedings in relation to a complaint must be commenced within the latest of (a) one year from the date the disciplinary ground arose or (b) six months from the complaint being made. The replacement officer should be a priority to ensure law and order is maintained.

If starting a disciplinary action will compromise a current operation, then the ground for disciplinary action is taken to arise on the day the operation ends, ensuring the public do not lose faith in the QPS. If we can make these changes to ensure investigations are not compromised, is it not too much to make sure we are resourced, such as in Oakey with a second police vehicle? Seven officers sharing one car is impractical. The bill also enhances the efficiency of the investigative process and discipline proceedings by introducing the abbreviated disciplinary process. It allows the prescribed officer, with the permission of the CCC and at any time during the investigation, to invite the subject officer to participate in the ADP.

This bill has bipartisan support from the LNP and all key stakeholders, including the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Police Union of Employees, the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union of Employees, government representatives and representatives of the legal fraternity. Three stakeholders made submissions on the bill. These stakeholders consisted of the Women's Legal Service, the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland. All stakeholders warmly welcomed the reform of the police disciplinary system, agreeing that the changes were likely to result in a fairer and more effective disciplinary process for the Queensland Police Service which is long overdue. The BAQ did, however, raise some concerns surrounding the new professional development strategies stating that, while professional development was intended to be included in a subject officer's disciplinary history, this was not made explicit in the bill. The new section 11.25(2) forms a strong conclusion that a professional development strategy should be included. However, the definition of 'disciplinary history' in this new section is silent.

There was also discussion from BAQ where they stated some practical examples surrounding professional development strategies, such as where members who have often used a police officer's disciplinary history in criminal trials to support a client's allegation of inappropriate conduct by a police officer. However, despite a pattern of complaints against an officer, members have been unable to prove that pattern of complaint conduct at trial because the subject officer was dealt with by managerial guidance and, as such, discipline history was not recorded. This creates a grey area in the matter, and BAQ asked for a stricter stance whereby professional development strategies will form part of the subject officer's disciplinary history. This process will not leave officers to fend for themselves. Like other industries, the opportunity and access to education activities and further personal and professional development have been made available. It is important to supply educational activities and development opportunities that may assist in improving a police officer's professionalism or minimising the risk of similar behaviour in the future.

The LNP supports these amendments. I once again ask the minister to look at the replacement process for officers in stations, because it has dragged on for far too long in Pittsworth.

 **Mr BATT** (Bundaberg—LNP) (11.54 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The LNP team in Queensland is made up of several police officers who the House has heard from today, including me now. My 23 years of work for the Queensland Police Service has provided me with a very good understanding of the processes, procedures and protocols. From the outset, I would like to clearly state my support for the passing of this bill. This bill looks to make important and necessary changes within the QPS. As such, this bill has bipartisan support from the LNP and also all key stakeholders, including the Queensland Police Union and the Police Service.

This bill seeks to implement a new police discipline system in order to improve the effectiveness of police complaints, investigations and hearing allegations while ensuring the public's confidence in the Queensland Police Service remains well maintained. This bill also seeks to see additional education provided to allow officers to improve their skills and performance.

From my extended time in the Queensland Police Service, I know firsthand that the vast majority of officers provide exceptional service and maintain very high standards of work every single day, but like in any industry there are always some who unfortunately fall short of the standards set before them. That is why it is imperative we have suitable systems in place that effectively deal with these situations, and this bill will ensure that those officers are dealt with in a suitable manner.

These major improvements will be achieved by making four key changes. Firstly, the bill will see strict time lines for the commencement of discipline proceedings and the finalisation of investigations established in order to reduce delays. As a former peer support officer and also a long-term police union representative who has supported many officers through these investigations and proceedings, I can advise the House that these reforms will definitely be well received by officers. One of the biggest concerns of officers who are under investigation has been the extraordinary length of time taken to commence or finalise investigations. As we have heard from other former police officers, the process itself has become part of the punishment.

Secondly, the bill will modernise the current discipline sanctions that can be imposed upon a subject to include a number of new sanctions, such as suspension from duty without pay for a period not exceeding 12 months, disciplinary probation, demotion for a stated period, comprehensive transfer, local transfer, performance of up to 100 hours of community service, to name a few. The bill will also omit the currently available sanction of reducing an officer's level of salary within their current rank and penalty or deferment of a salary increase or increment.

Thirdly, the bill will provide for educational activities and development opportunities that may assist in improving a police officer's professionalism and/or minimising the risk of comparable behaviour occurring in the future. It will also formalise the professional development strategies in the new police discipline process by allowing the commissioner to impose a professional development strategy on an officer. Finally, the bill will ensure the CCC can assume responsibility for and complete investigations into police misconduct. The bill will remove the term 'breach of discipline' and replace it with the term 'ground for disciplinary action'.

I am trying to cut my time short so that everyone who is left to speak can get a chance. All stakeholders welcome these reforms, agreeing that these changes will likely result in a fairer and more effective disciplinary process for the QPS. Queensland's police officers put their safety on the line every day to keep Queensland communities safe. The changes will improve the Queensland Police Service and I support the passing of this bill.

 **Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (11.59 am): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the bill before the House and, of course, note that the LNP will support this very important piece of legislation. Like other members in the House, I want to thank the police on the Sunshine Coast for the great work that they do. I also want to acknowledge Police Remembrance Day, held each year, and those officers who have passed in the execution of their duty as well as their families, who have lost a loved one in very sad and tragic circumstances. One thing with regard to police officers that we do not often think about is that any day they walk out the door might be the last day they do so. If they then come home, it could be a completely different person who walks through the door. On the coast we are blessed with great police officers who work hand in hand with members of parliament and local councillors as well as the public to try to deter crime and catch those who commit crime.

The committee recommended that the bill be passed, and it does cover a number of topics. Clearly, it is of public necessity that there is confidence in the police generally and also in relation to the question of discipline. We know in this state that there has been a history where police have been the centre of attention—and I go back to the Fitzgerald inquiry some number of years ago. I do recall in some detail the circumstances surrounding that inquiry and the role of police in relation to being investigated but also the role of the police officers who stood up in the inquiry and gave solid evidence against corrupt police officers. It is those men who often do not get the acknowledgement they are due and I wish to do so here today.

The other situation that arises from the Fitzgerald inquiry itself is the necessity to undertake ongoing reviews so that what crept in during those long, dark years does not resurface again. Perhaps the most recent example of that is the ‘Lawyer X’ situation in Victoria which, of course, is now subject to a royal commission that is currently ongoing. What will come from that and the impact on public confidence in Victoria as a consequence of the findings of that royal commission is hard to assess at this point in time. However, it is one more example of exactly what we must guard against in this nation.

The report highlights that there have been numerous reviews in relation to the public concern regarding the police disciplinary system.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Member for Caloundra, please pause for a moment. Members in the chamber, I have already said there is too much noise. Can we please keep the noise down?

Mr McARDLE: Again, the perceived lack of rigour in the disciplinary system has led to a lack of public confidence. I also do take on board comments by former police officers on this side of the House that it is unfair on both parties—that is, the officer complained against and the complainant themselves—to be left in limbo for long periods. It is important that when a matter is before a relevant tribunal by way of a complaint against a police officer that complaint is dealt with efficiently and effectively so that both parties can get on with their lives. It is completely unacceptable that a police officer or, indeed, a complainant has to endure months, if not years, of waiting and anguish to see either their matter resolved and their career resumed, or the matter resolved and the citizen who made the complaint fairly dealt with.

The bill also puts in place provisions to ensure complaints are dealt with efficiently and effectively. Of course, the sanctions that are currently in place are deemed to be outdated. In addition, the adversarial and legalistic nature of the proceedings are such that they deter people from making complaints and this drags issues out. There is also a perception of a lack of consistency in decisions and also a conflict between the QPS and the CCC in relation to investigations.

Combined together, those points lead to, in the public’s mind, a lack of confidence in discipline within the complaints system involving QPS officers. That is not good for our Police Service and is not good for the greater acknowledgement or understanding of what police have to do on a daily basis. Things that we can do to restore that confidence are indeed important.

As I said, the bill puts in place time frames for investigation and guidelines to support the operation of the system. It also introduces a shortened process if the conduct is not in dispute and the CCC approves the proposed sanction. These are indeed good steps in relation to restoring the confidence of the public in the process. Stakeholders themselves endorsed the process, which means (1) that there is an acknowledgement that the process needs to be rectified and (2) that the systems to be put in place are going to restore the confidence that has been lacking in times gone by.

As I said, the issue here is one where the police are called upon to undertake many duties and provide many services. When they attend a residence to serve a summons or to execute a search warrant they do not know whether or not they will be faced with a gunshot through the door. I can recall not too long ago here in Queensland an officer did, in fact, attend a residence on the basis of serving a summons, if I recall correctly, and he was shot dead by the person on the other side of the door.

Understanding the stress that police officers experience on a daily basis is important when we consider the role they perform in our society. However, it is equally important that police officers are held to a high standard, as indeed we are. A process that alleviates the length of time during which that sanction or disciplinary application is dealt with is all the better for all police officers and, indeed, the community.

I do commend the minister for placing the bill before the House. It is a good bill. I understand very clearly that this is for one thing only and that is to ensure confidence in the police force by the public and also by the police officers themselves, so that when they go through a process they know they will get a fair, effective and efficient hearing. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.06 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Before I start can I acknowledge the work that our police officers do each and every day. It is without question one of the most challenging jobs that exists in our community. I also want to acknowledge the contribution from my former police colleagues in the chamber today, who have lived and breathed policing and the various iterations of the police disciplinary process that have evolved over many years.

I was a member of the Police Service in 1990 when the Police Service Administration Act first came into effect. As I progressed through my career in the Police Service I worked within the bounds of that legislation. As I rose to more senior ranks I was placed in a position on many occasions of using the sanctions and the disciplinary process at the various stations I was attached to. For a lot of police officers involved in that process, both as the subject officer and as the authorising officer, it certainly was a stressful time. Some of the disciplinary complaints that I was handed were two or three years old.

I acknowledge that it has been recognised here today that a police officer can be under investigation for two to three years. The stress that that puts them under—the fact they cannot be promoted, they cannot be transferred, they are being held up in terms of recognition, they are not allowed to attend courses—all those sorts of things go hand in glove with being under investigation. Unfortunately, we lost a lot of good police officers because of those delays in finalising police investigations and police complaints. I certainly welcome the changes in this long overdue disciplinary reform in this Police Service administration bill before the House today because they are well and truly overdue. This bill is timely.

As the Police Service has evolved, so has the necessity to evolve and update the discipline process with which our police officers are required to comply. If the community is to have confidence in our police officers, they need to know that there is a robust and transparent discipline process in place. Alternatively, police officers need to know where they stand as well in terms of the discipline process should they be subject to that process.

I note some of the new sanctions that can now be imposed. As an authorised officer, we were very limited in the sanctions we could apply as part of a disciplinary process. At times, that became extremely complex and difficult because we are dealing with people's lives. Making and imposing changes and sanctions on those officers can have a life-changing impact. I note that some of the new sanctions are: suspension from duty without pay for a period not exceeding 12 months; disciplinary probation; demotion for a stated period; comprehensive transfer; and a local transfer. When you look at the impact of what, for example, a transfer may mean for an officer who has a family, that is a massive impact, a massive sanction, in terms of saying to an officer, 'You are now transferred.' Not only are they moving from this station; their spouse may lose their job. Any kids in school will be uprooted and moved to a new locality. In all probability, they will have to sell their house. If we roll all of this together we start to see what that means and appreciate just how severe are some of these sanctions.

There will be times when those sanctions will need to be applied, because we expect our officers to uphold the highest standards in our community. Quite often, they are held to a higher standard than a lot of other occupations in our community, because in our police officers we put our faith and trust. I will never forget being sworn in and being given the power and authority, if necessary, to take someone's life. If we think about that and that burden that rests on their shoulders, we appreciate just how important are these jobs and the responsibility that goes with it.

Quickly, I note that the educational development opportunities that go with this are important, because our officers who are part of this process need the ability to access that development opportunity as well. I commend the bill to the House and I am happy to support it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Under the provisions of the business program agreed to by the House and the time allocated for this stage of the bill having expired, I will now put all remaining questions.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail



Mr RYAN (12.12 pm): I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, explanatory notes to Hon. Mark Ryan's amendments [[1865](#)].

Question put—That amendments 1 to 10, as circulated, be agreed to and clauses 1 to 32 and schedule 1, as amended, stand part of the bill.

Amendments as circulated—

1 Clause 9 (Replacement of pt 7 (Internal command and discipline))

Page 22, line 19, after 'proceeding'—

insert—

, started against a member of the service or a former officer within the meaning of section 7A.1(1)(b),

2 Clause 22 (Amendment of s 219BA (Meaning of *reviewable decision*))

Page 60, line 2, 'officer.'—

omit, insert—

officer; or

(c) a decision under the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*, part 7A to do neither of the following in relation to a former officer—

- (i) give the former officer a written notice under section 7A.3(1)(a) of that Act;
- (ii) hold a disciplinary hearing under section 7A.3(1)(b) of that Act.

3 After clause 22

Page 60, after line 2—

insert—

22A Insertion of new s 219FA

After section 219F—

insert—

219FA Proceedings relating to particular reviewable decisions about former officers

- (1) This section applies in relation to a reviewable decision mentioned in section 219BA(1)(c).
- (2) The commission may apply to QCAT, as provided under subsection (3), for a review of the reviewable decision.
- (3) The application must be made—
 - (a) within 28 days after the commission becomes aware of the decision; and
 - (b) as otherwise provided under the QCAT Act.
- (4) The commission must, within the period mentioned in the QCAT Act, section 37(2), give the former officer a copy of the application.
- (5) Subsection (4) does not limit the QCAT Act, section 37(2).
- (6) The parties to the proceeding are—
 - (a) the commission; and
 - (b) the person who made the reviewable decision; and
 - (c) if the former officer to whom the reviewable decision relates elects to become a party to the proceeding—the former officer.
- (7) Notice of an election under subsection (6)(c) must be given—
 - (a) to QCAT, the commission and the person who made the reviewable decision; and
 - (b) within 14 days after the former officer is given notice of the application for review under subsection (4).

4 **Clause 23 (Amendment of s 219G (Proceedings relating to reviewable decisions))**

Page 60, after line 4—

insert—

(1) Section 219G, heading, after 'relating to'—

*insert—***other**

(2) Section 219G, before subsection (1)—

insert—

(1A) This section applies in relation to a reviewable decision mentioned in section 219BA(1)(a) or (b).

(3) Section 219G(1), 'a reviewable decision'—

omit, insert—

the reviewable decision

5 **Clause 23 (Amendment of s 219G (Proceedings relating to reviewable decisions))**

Page 60, line 5, before 'Section'—

insert—

(4)

6 **Clause 26 (Amendment of s 219J (Additional power for reviewable decisions))**

Page 61, after line 22—

insert—

(1A) Section 219J, heading, after 'for'—

*insert—***particular**7 **Clause 26 (Amendment of s 219J (Additional power for reviewable decisions))**

Page 61, lines 23 to 25, from "QCAT"—

omit, insert—

'QCAT'—

omit, insert—

mentioned in section 219BA(1)(a) or (b), QCAT—

8 **After clause 26**

Page 62, after line 20—

*insert—***26A Insertion of new s 219JA**

After section 219J—

*insert—***219JA Requirement to return particular matters to commissioner of police**

(1) This section applies in relation to a reviewable decision mentioned in section 219BA(1)(c) if, after reviewing the decision, QCAT sets aside the decision.

(2) QCAT must return the matter to the commissioner of police with—

(a) a direction to give the former officer a written notice under the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*, section 7A.3(1)(a) or to hold a disciplinary hearing under section 7A.3(1)(b) of that Act; and

(b) any other direction QCAT considers appropriate.

(3) If QCAT makes an order under subsection (2), the commissioner of police must ensure a written notice under the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*, section 7A.3(1)(a), or a notice mentioned in section 7A.3(1)(b) of that Act, is given to the former officer within 6 months of the making of the order by QCAT.

(4) Subsection (3) applies despite section 7A.1(4) of that Act.

9 **Clause 29 (Insertion of new ch 8, pt 16)**

Page 69, after line 33—

*insert—***452A Application of ch 5, pt 2—particular reviewable decisions relating to former officers**

(1) This section applies in relation to a decision made after the commencement under the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*, part 7A to do neither of the following in relation to a former officer—

(a) give the former officer a written notice under section 7A.3(1)(a) of that Act;

(b) hold a disciplinary hearing under section 7A.3(1)(b) of that Act.

(2) Chapter 5, part, 2, as amended by the *Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019*, applies to the reviewable decision even if it relates to a disciplinary ground that arose before the commencement.

Note—

See also the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*, section 11.26.

(3) In this section—

disciplinary ground has the meaning given under the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*, previous section 1.4.

10 Schedule 1 (Acts amended)

Page 74, after line 6—

insert—

2 Section 49(4)(c) and (d), 'or 219G'—

omit, insert—

, 219FA or 219G

3 Section 219B, definition *disciplinary proceeding*, paragraph (b), after 'section'—

insert—

219FA or

Motion agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 32 and schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

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

Motion agreed to.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 22 August (see p. 2476).

Second Reading

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (12.14 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill before the House today is about making the best workers compensation scheme in the country even better with a package of sensible and practical improvements that give effect to the recommendations of the five-yearly review of the workers compensation system conducted by Professor David Peetz in 2018. Before turning to the details of the bill, I first thank the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee—particularly the chair, the member for Nudgee, who does an excellent job, and all the members of that committee—for its report on the bill tabled on 8 October 2019. I also thank all the organisations that made written submissions to the committee and those who appeared to give evidence to the inquiry. I am pleased that the committee has made one single recommendation—that the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 be passed. It is certainly a bill that deserves bipartisan support.

As I said, the bill gives effect to the government's response to the second five-year review into the operation of Queensland's workers compensation scheme which was undertaken by Professor David Peetz from Griffith University. I sincerely thank Professor David Peetz, who did an excellent job on the five-yearly review. The review made 57 recommendations in total, including 15 proposed legislative amendments. There has been significant consultation undertaken to develop the bill. A

stakeholder reference group including representatives of employer associations, trade unions, the legal community, allied health associations, WorkCover Queensland and self-insurers was formed to advise the government on how best to implement the recommendations of the Peetz review.

The stakeholder reference group met on six occasions to consider and discuss each of the legislative recommendations. Stakeholders were also provided with opportunities to provide written submissions and feedback to specific issues raised at the meetings as well as being provided with consultation drafts of the bill. I take the opportunity to thank all representatives of the stakeholder reference group for their important and valued contributions.

A key focus of the bill is to assist workers with physical and psychological injuries when they are at their most vulnerable. The bill achieves this by making important changes to the way that injured workers are supported while their workers compensation claim is being determined and during their rehabilitation and return to work. One of these critical changes is to amend the definition of a psychiatric or psychological injury so that a worker's employment only has to be a significant contributing factor to the injury rather than the current requirement for it to be the 'major' significant contributing factor—a small word but a great impact on injured workers. The current definition introduced by the Newman government in 2013 sets a different work-relatedness test for psychological injuries compared to physical injuries. Queensland is the only jurisdiction in the country to do this.

The Palaszczuk government believes that all injuries, whether physical or psychological, have an equal impact on the worker's ability to undertake work and should not be treated differently. This amendment rights that wrong, restoring consistency in the way that physical and psychological injuries are treated within the workers compensation scheme and bringing Queensland back into line with the approach taken by other jurisdictions. In addition to this important amendment, the bill will also provide better support to workers suffering from psychological or psychiatric injuries. The bill does this by including a new requirement for insurers to provide reasonable support services to workers with a psychological injury while and prior to their workers compensation claim being determined. This is important because, while the time period to determine claims for physical injuries is on average less than two weeks, the average time to decide often more complex psychological injury claims is more than six weeks.

Access to support services is critical during this early period, before their claim is accepted or not. Without it, the end result for workers and employers can be increased time off work, increased medical and rehabilitation costs and, often, poorer return-to-work outcomes because they are not getting support and assistance early enough. This new requirement will ensure early intervention for those with psychological or psychiatric injuries, minimising the impact and duration of their injury. In turn, this is likely to lead to reduced claim costs and improved return-to-work outcomes, which is exactly what we hope to see. I note that the bill will also ensure that the costs of providing early intervention will only be borne by employers should the claim be subsequently accepted.

The bill also provides a new discretion for insurers to accept claims made more than six months after the injury event in circumstances where workers have chronic, insidious or psychiatric injuries and attempt to manage their injury at work before deteriorating and taking time off. This amendment does not provide an automatic right to make an application outside of the normal time limit. Rather, it allows the insurer to exercise discretion to accept a claim outside of the normal time limit if specific criteria are met. This acknowledges that it is preferred that a worker apply for compensation as soon as possible after the event but also recognises that sometimes workers confronted with a challenging work related injury decide to continue working while able to do so. It is not until sometime later, as their condition deteriorates, that they become incapacitated for work and think about lodging a claim. Reasons for the delay might include workers not wanting to acknowledge that they have an injury because of social or workplace stigma, or workers not wanting to inconvenience their employer with a workers compensation claim. These are normal human responses that should not result in disadvantage to the worker and their family. That is why we have made this amendment.

The bill will also extend workers compensation entitlements to unpaid interns by considering them as workers under the act. The Peetz review found that a growing number of businesses are choosing to engage unpaid interns to perform work that might otherwise be done by paid employees; however, few of these unpaid interns have the same protection as workers, such as workers compensation coverage. Unpaid interns must currently rely on accessing the employer's public liability insurance if they are injured at work and can prove fault. Unpaid interns are also required to independently provide their own coverage for injuries sustained on journeys or recess breaks unless they are the result of the negligence of another party. The current situation is clearly unfair and unjust and is a burden on predominantly young people trying their hardest to enter the workforce. The bill

addresses this, in line with the recommendations of the Peetz review, by ensuring unpaid interns have the same protections as paid workers in terms of workers compensation. Obviously, workers compensation is a no-fault scheme and they will be fully covered.

The bill provides a renewed focus on ensuring that rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators are appropriately qualified. Large employers and high-risk employers are currently required to appoint an appropriately qualified person to undertake the functions of a rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinator. In 2013 the Newman government removed the requirement for these coordinators to complete an accredited course. Stakeholders are of the view that the skill level of coordinators reduced following this change and, as a result, injured workers are not being adequately supported in achieving early and durable return to work after an injury. To address this, the bill will require employers to notify their insurer of who their coordinator is, what workplaces they have responsibility for and how they are appropriately qualified for the work being undertaken at those workplaces. This will facilitate more effective communication with the coordinators and enable the regulator to undertake targeted compliance and education with coordinators, supporting them in undertaking their important role.

Rehabilitation and return to work is a fundamental part of this act. When a worker is injured—the awards during Safe Work Month in October showed this—they are so eager to return to work and prove any diagnosis they have incorrect. For example, the winner of our rehabilitation award was told that he could never walk again, but he walked on stage to receive his award. It is imperative that we have qualified people as coordinators who do the right thing by injured workers and ensure they have a smooth transition back to work following an injury. Having the right qualifications is necessary to support injured workers in the right way—not set them back by sending them back to work either too early or too late but work with them—with experience and knowledge, to ensure there are effective rehabilitation and return-to-work policies and practices operating in the workplace. I commend Professor Peetz on this particular recommendation.

I will refer to other key features of the bill as previously highlighted in my introductory speech. The bill will clarify that WorkCover Queensland can fund and provide programs and incentives encouraging employers to improve health and safety performance after consulting with the health and safety regulator. At the moment the act is a bit grey in this area. We want to make it perfectly clear that they have the ability to undertake this role. The bill will exempt expressions of regret and apologies provided to employees following workplace injury from being considered in any assessment of damages under the workers compensation act, allowing employers to say the three simple words that many injured workers desperately want to hear: 'I am sorry'.

The bill will introduce a mandatory requirement for insurers to continue providing rehabilitation and return-to-work services in cases where the injured worker's statutory entitlement has ceased but they have not yet been able to return to work. This is an important amendment, ensuring these workers are given every reasonable opportunity to achieve a durable return to work by providing that their rehabilitation support is not ended prematurely when their statutory claim ends. This is often a timing issue. Workers often feel that they are left stranded. Hopefully, we can address their concerns with this change. The bill will ensure that all workers diagnosed with a terminal work related condition have access to lump sum statutory payments under the act, removing the current provision that denies access to some workers with a terminal condition if their life expectancy is greater than two years.

The bill will also amend the Further Education and Training Act 2014 to enable the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to assist stakeholders to achieve a more equitable outcome in the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland. The amendments will help apprentices, trainees, training providers and employers in the event of contested cancellations, temporary suspensions or inadequate training. Since the proclamation of the Further Education and Training Act in 2014, stakeholders have raised concerns regarding contested cancellations, temporary suspensions and training delivery modes. These concerns are consistent with the findings from four Queensland ministerial round tables; *Review of group training arrangements in Queensland*, released by the Queensland Training Ombudsman in 2018; and the Jobs Queensland report *Positive futures: apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland*.

Young people entering into an apprenticeship or traineeship need to know the contract is fair and that they will be treated fairly throughout their training. This bill addresses a gap in the current legislation where there is no provision for the chief executive to decide contested training contract cancellations before an apprentice or trainee's employment is terminated. The bill will enable the department's chief executive to make the final decision on training contract cancellation applications initiated by just one party. It will enable all parties to make a submission to the chief executive which under fair procedures will be appealable through the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. The bill introduces a

temporary suspension provision relating to previous provisions under the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 which allowed for the temporary standdown of an apprentice or trainee from the apprenticeship or traineeship.

Other important amendments consolidate the requirement for a supervising registered training organisation to complete an employer resource assessment to determine the capacity of an employer to train an apprentice or trainee under a training plan. The bill also allows the chief executive to amend the delivery mode of the training plan if there are concerns over the quality of the training. We want to ensure that quality training is the outcome for apprentices and trainees. This may come out of inappropriate delivery for the training—for example, online delivery when face-to-face training is more suitable. With regard to trades, a lot of the time we want to know that the apprentice or trainee has had experience in doing that trade. I guess I would not want anyone to cut my hair if they had learned how to become a hairdresser online.

The bill also amends section 12 of the TAFE Queensland Act 2013 to establish Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation on the board of TAFE Queensland. This provides for the input of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to strategic decision-making, contributes to the leadership and the functions of the board, and for TAFE Queensland to benefit from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives. We want to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities right throughout Queensland and I believe that this change will make a significant way forward for us to do that. The bill will ensure there must be at least one person on the board representing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. It is fitting that the governing board of TAFE Queensland demonstrates leadership in meeting the needs of diverse communities.

The Palaszczuk government is once again delivering for all Queenslanders through this bill. The changes to the workers compensation scheme will ensure Queensland continues to have the nation's leading scheme by further improving injury management, rehabilitation and return-to-work outcomes for injured workers while maintaining the lowest average premium rate of any state or territory workers compensation scheme. I once again commend Professor Peetz for his report in conducting the five-yearly review. I commend the committee and the member for Nudgee for their role in examining this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (12.33 pm): The best way that government can have a good workers compensation scheme is to have a strong economy because, ultimately, small business owners pay for the workers compensation scheme. It is concerning that this state, as the ABS statistics show today, has the worst unemployment rate in Australia because that impacts on workers compensation schemes because it means that people do not have jobs and that means that small businesses are struggling, and when small businesses struggle they do not employ people. The only way we can have a scheme where the ratio is at the moment is to keep the economy strong and growth in the sector strong because, without small businesses, there is no workers compensation scheme and we would not be having this debate today.

The minister looks perplexed. Does the minister not know that the people who pay for the workers compensation scheme are the business owners? They pay their \$1.20 per hundred dollars of wages. I am not sure why the minister is so perplexed at the comment that I made—that is, that having a strong economy leads to strong businesses leads to a better workers compensation scheme. We all want a better workers compensation scheme because no worker should go to work with the fear or threat of having an injury or the worse case of a death on a worksite. On all sides of politics we want to do everything we can to prevent that.

I want to congratulate businesses around Queensland. Even when I was the minister for industrial relations—and I know that the current minister and I have had this discussion before—many businesses in Queensland were really doing good things in workplace health and safety because they wanted to prevent injuries to their workers. When the awards come up for the best workplace health and safety programs that people have, a lot of the successes are because of the money from the workers compensation scheme being reinvested into businesses and assisting businesses with innovation and technology to ensure that they have world-leading safe practices for their worksites. It does take time for many businesses to adjust because it costs money and some of them do not have the money. That is why it is important to have a strong workers compensation scheme to help those businesses that cannot afford it because, at the end of the day, we want to prevent injuries.

As the minister said, the workers compensation regime and the legislation are not necessarily about a compensation scheme; they are actually about rehabilitation and getting people back to work, not just making sure people are compensated for the rest of their lives. If people who are injured enjoy their job, we want them to be able to get back to work and do what they were doing. The only way we

can do that is to ensure businesses and practices are safe on our worksites right around Queensland, so I thank the businesses across Queensland that do invest in making their businesses safer for their workers.

As has been discussed today, the bill was introduced by the minister in August following the five-year statutory review undertaken by Professor David Peetz from Griffith University, who reported to the minister in May 2018. The review considered the performance of the scheme in meeting all of its objectives under the act, including maintaining the balance between providing fair and appropriate compensation for injured workers while having a reasonable cost for employers and the effectiveness of return-to-work programs. From the outset, I want to make it clear that the LNP will not be opposing this bill. We will, however, monitor the impact of these changes on the viability of the scheme in the short and long term. As the review points out—

The key characteristics of the workers compensation scheme in Queensland are that it is a centrally funded, 'short-tailed', no-fault scheme, with access to common law damages. The principal administrative parties in the scheme are the Office of Industrial Relations (OIR), which devises policy and acts as Regulator, and the insurers, WorkCover Queensland and 28 self-insurers.

He goes on to say that the system has undergone several review and reform changes since the early 1990s, including major rewrites of the legislation in 1996, 2003 and amendments by governments in recent years. The LNP strongly believes that we need a strong and sustainable workers compensation scheme that provides medical assistance and support to rehabilitate injured workers to help them to return to work as quickly as possible while ensuring the lowest of the low premiums for businesses. On that note I am very pleased to say that when the Liberal National Party was in government between 2012 and 2015 the changes that we introduced led to the lowest premium rate in the country.

Ms Grace: At the cost of workers' entitlements.

Mr BLEIJIE: The lowest premium rate in the country.

Ms Grace: At the cost of workers' entitlements.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Those on my right.

Ms Grace: At the cost of workers. Injured workers bore the cost.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my right.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Ms Grace: Injured workers bore the cost.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Ms Grace: At the cost of injured workers and their families.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members will cease interjecting.

Mr Nicholls: \$300 million in the red.

Ms Grace: Disgraceful!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, you have had your say.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Clayfield—\$300 million in debt. Our changes ensured small businesses were paying the lowest premiums in the country.

Ms Grace: Rubbish!

Mr BLEIJIE: At the time people said it could never be achieved.

Ms Grace: At the cost of injured workers and their families.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister interjected before saying, 'At the cost of workers.'

Ms Grace: And their families.

Mr BLEIJIE: No. Does the minister know what the cost was—

Ms Grace: Injured workers and their families.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister will cease interjecting.

Mr BLEIJIE: Injury rates decreased under our government between 2012 and 2015, so how can we—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I warn the minister under the standing orders.

Mr BLEIJIE: We achieved the lowest premiums in the country and a decline in injuries and workplace fatalities because of the changes the Liberal National Party government made to not only the workers compensation scheme but also the Workplace Health and Safety Act. Do members know why? We worked with businesses. We did not attack businesses. We worked with businesses. If businesses were going to invest and make their workplaces safer, they were going to get the support of the government, and they did. That is why we had a decline in workplace injuries.

At the time people said that we would not achieve the \$1.20 premium rate, but we did. I congratulate the former board. I might add that the board that achieved that lowest premium rate in the country whilst sustaining the ratio viability of the scheme where it sits at 171 per cent now—the target is 121 per cent and it sits at 171 per cent—this minister got rid of. There was a new chair. The minister claims all the credit for the \$1.20 per \$100 in wages premium, but then gets rid of most of the board members who achieved that lowest rate in the country. How bizarre is that?

When we conducted the statutory review in 2013 of the workers compensation scheme, we conducted a parliamentary inquiry. We said, 'We are not going to do it behind closed doors. We want a full parliamentary inquiry,' which was ably led at the time by the member for Coomera. That parliamentary committee looked at the scheme. Queenslanders had a say. There was a full parliamentary debate on it. There were hearings across Queensland, including in regional Queensland. It is worth contrasting that process with the closed shop review that was undertaken by the Palaszczuk Labor government.

When the Palaszczuk Labor government conducted its statutory review, it contracted Professor Peetz to do the review. No-one knew what would happen. No-one knew if they could make submissions to the review. No-one knew who to contact. Despite the fact that we have a parliamentary committee that is responsible for these sorts of matters, it was a behind closed doors review that people had no access to and there was no parliamentary oversight. When the LNP was in government, it let that parliamentary committee do its job. It did not hide behind the issues. It did not hide behind the reforms. The LNP made it clear that it wanted the best workers compensation scheme in the country for employees and employers. Guess what? The LNP achieved that in spades. I will never accept this government and this Labor minister claiming credit for the lowest workers compensation premiums in the country. It was the Liberal National Party government that achieved that, not the Labor Party.

The LNP conducted that parliamentary review in 2013. Who could forget that, since 2009, under consecutive Labor governments the average premium rate increased by 20 per cent? That was a 20 per cent increase for small businesses in Queensland under a Labor government. When the LNP came to government, it reduced that premium to the lowest in the country. Labor luminaries knew how difficult this issue was going to be. In 2010, the board of WorkCover Queensland, under former chairman Ian Brusasco, recommended that the previous government introduce a 10 per cent to 15 per cent threshold on common law claims. I do not know what other members think, but I can assure them that Ian Brusasco is more a friend of the Labor Party than he is of the Liberal National Party.

Mr Nicholls: Pretty close to royalty in the old Labor Party.

Mr BLEIJIE: Indeed. Ian Brusasco recommended a 10 per cent to 15 per cent common law damages threshold claim, which the LNP did not do. The LNP introduced a five per cent threshold. Guess what? That was the lowest in the country. All of those reforms led to a sustainable scheme, which this minister now cries from the roof was through all her hard effort and work. It is ridiculous. I will never let the Labor Party get away with that, because every time it has touched the workers compensation scheme it has trashed it, the scheme has gone backwards, businesses have suffered and employees have suffered and the fund has not been in as good a state of affairs as it is now.

Although this bill may have gone to a committee after the secret review, the original review certainly did not give every Queenslander an opportunity to have their say, like the 2013 review undertaken by the Liberal National Party did. Having said that, in looking at the submissions to the committee, I see that my good old friends in the Australian Lawyers Alliance did not get everything that they demanded of this minister. I see that the Australian Lawyers Alliance, Shine Lawyers and the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union put in some ambit claims in this review and I am pleased to say that they did not get everything that they wanted, because that would have put an unusual stress on the scheme. When stress is placed on the scheme, employees suffer, because there is not the money there for the return-to-work programs so that the scheme can invest in businesses to achieve safer workplace health and safety practices. If the money is not there and the scheme is in debt, the ability to help those businesses is not there.

The explanatory notes outline the objectives of the bill. It states that it covers numerous pieces of legislation and implements the 12 recommendations that were made by Professor David Peetz in his report titled *The operation of the Queensland workers' compensation scheme: report of the second five-yearly review of the scheme*, which was completed in May 2018. As I said, it was a statutory review. The bill clarifies WorkCover Queensland's ability to fund and provide programs and incentives that support employers improving health and safety performance—as I said, the Liberal National Party supports that—after consulting with the regulator or any other relevant health and safety regulators. The bill also exempts expressions of regret and apologies provided by employers following a workplace injury from being considered in any assessment of liability for damages brought under the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003, to align with the approach taken in the Civil Liability Act 2003.

I take some issue with this objective of the bill and ask the minister in her response, if she could be so kind, to alleviate the concerns raised by the Queensland Law Society that it raised in its submission to the committee with respect to expressions of regret and ensure that employers who have those expressions of regret and apologies have legal protection. I would appreciate it if the minister could address that matter in line with the Law Society's concerns.

The bill also provides an additional way that employers can ensure that rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators are appropriately qualified and requires employers to provide details of their rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators to insurers to support compliance and the provision of advisory services to coordinators. I am fine with that.

The bill requires insurers to provide ongoing rehabilitation and return-to-work services if the injured worker has been unable to return to work after their entitlement to weekly benefits and medical expenses ceases. The employer's obligations for rehabilitation and return to work are also aligned with their insurer's obligations.

The bill requires self-insured employers to report injuries and any payments made to injured workers to their insurer. It clarifies that insurers have a discretion to accept claims submitted more than six months after the injury is diagnosed if the injured worker has lodged a claim within 20 days of developing an incapacity for work from their injury.

The bill also extends workers compensation coverage to unpaid interns and amends the meaning of injury for a psychiatric or psychological disorder to remove 'the major' as a qualifier for employment's 'significant contribution' to the injury. I want to address this issue. This issue has gone back and forth from parliament to parliament—whether a psychiatric or psychological disorder is a major or a significant contributing factor to the injury. The reason the LNP changed that definition is that there are many mental health issues affecting Queenslanders and Australians. When we are dealing with a workers compensation scheme, the employer should have to pay out of their insurance fund only for psychological or psychiatric injuries that are caused at the workplace. There are other issues in people's lives that may contribute to their mental health. We have to give all those people all the help and support we can, but not to the detriment of the employer. The employer, their business, or the practices of that business may not have contributed to that psychiatric or psychological disorder.

In fact, when the LNP was in government it changed that definition, the rejection rate went from just over 62 per cent up to 68 per cent for a few years but then went down to just about 63 per cent. I question the need for this change considering that, as at today's date, percentage wise, the definition is not having a greater impact on rejection of people who are claiming psychological or psychiatric compensation. The bill also requires insurers to take all reasonable steps to provide claimants with psychiatric or psychological injuries access to reasonable support services relating to their injury during their claim determination.

The explanatory notes also describe the objectives of the amendments to the Further Training and Education Act 2014, one of which is to protect the positions of apprentices and trainees who are vulnerable workers and do not have the same bargaining powers as employers. Originally I was concerned when I read that in the bill. When we talk about bargaining powers I thought it was an open-door policy to unions to come in and get their hands on these sorts of things. I am questioning the minister. As I understand it, that is not the case. It simply allows the department and the regulator more administrative powers to intervene on those matters. I see the minister nodding and that is acceptable. I would be keen for the minister's department, during the debate, to do some research in terms of how many interns and apprentices we are talking about here. I cannot see in the explanatory notes of the costings associated with this and the impact it will have on the scheme and the financial viability of the scheme exactly how many we are talking about.

In terms of the Further Education and Training Act, the bill aims to minimise continuing adverse impacts on apprentices' and trainees' training arrangements to improve quality training outcomes and to give apprentices and trainees the best chance to complete their apprenticeship or traineeship, and the best chance for the employer to emerge with a skilled worker, hence realising the economic benefits for all parties and the community generally. It addresses the existing legislative gap that exists in the Further Education and Training Act to enable an employer or an apprentice or trainee to seek permission from the chief executive to cancel the training contract. It provides greater clarity to enable the chief executive to resolve any issues related to issuing an apprenticeship or traineeship completion certificate.

Finally, it clarifies the obligations of the supervising registered training organisation to complete an employer resource assessment and resolve practical implementation issues with certain provisions of the Further Education and Training Act 2014. I will defer to the member for Maroochydore for more comments on those changes as the shadow minister for skills and training. There are also amendments to the TAFE Queensland Act and the bill also repeals the Commonwealth Games Arrangements Act 2011.

The Peetz review made 57 recommendations, 15 of which are for legislative change, of which 12 are being implemented in this bill. The review found there is a major gap in the scheme regarding unpaid commercial interns as a relatively recent change in labour markets. The bill provides workers compensation coverage to unpaid commercial interns. Volunteers at non-government organisations and charities are specifically exempted from these changes, as is a person providing unpaid assistance as a favour. While we will monitor the impact of these changes, which on the face of it seem fair, we hope this will not become a barrier to businesses engaging interns as a valuable tool for gaining experience and future employment opportunities.

I recall when I first started looking for employment opportunities. It was not about money for me. I just wanted to get my foot in the door and volunteer as an intern or anything for an employer to get skills and training. That skills and training led me to work in a chicken abattoir for 12 months, for which I was paid because you had to pay me to keep me there, I can tell you that. I fundamentally believe that those sorts of skills and training are invaluable to people in terms of hands-on work and learning at a young age.

The scheme will also see additional costs because of changes in the legislation that will lower the threshold of accepting psychological claims that are lodged. These are often some of the most difficult claims to determine, given what needs to be considered as part of what some may call 'reasonable management action'. In saying that, the department told the committee—

In terms of the change of the definition from 'major' to 'significant', prior to 2013 the term 'significant' was used in relation to a psychological injury. At that time about 61.5 per cent of psychological injuries were being disallowed. When the change to 'major' came about, there was very little difference in the rejection of offers; it went to 62.1 per cent. We do not really think there will be a significant change in the number. There may be a spike at the beginning, but over time it seems to balance out.

We will continue to monitor the impact of the changes proposed to this definition. In relation to the changes being made to the workers compensation scheme in this legislation, the explanatory notes indicate the cost to implement the amendments will be \$18.6 million per annum. That equates to approximately 1.5 cent to the average premium rate, \$1.20 per \$100 wages. However, that does not take into account some of the benefits that may be achieved through these amendments as a result of behavioural change. WorkCover's current funding ratio is 171 per cent thanks to the Liberal National government of 2012 to 2015. That is well above the target of at least 120 per cent.

The profit for 2018-19 was \$77 million after tax, substantially lower than the \$324 million recorded in 2017-18. I always say when we talk about the ratio and WorkCover that it is good but when a Labor government is in charge there is always a danger to the ratio of the scheme because it only goes down. It only goes down when Labor gets its hands on the scheme. The minister has been very careful to change the scheme little by little, but I fear that little by little changes will lead to the detriment of the scheme, to not having a financially viable scheme, as it was when the LNP left office in 2015.

We also support the changes in relation to latent onset claims, issues like silicosis and coal workers' black lung disease, by giving greater flexibility and removing the two-year arbitrary timeframe. I want to comment on the negative impact that silicosis has. Recently in my office I met with two constituents who are stonemasons who have been diagnosed with silicosis. The prognosis is not good for people diagnosed with silicosis. They came to see me and they brought their boss who owns the stonemasonry business. They all recognised the issues. The business owner has now implemented all

the recommendations that the new regulations put in in terms of no dry cutting on site, no dry cutting in the factory—they can only use wet cutting—the new masks they have to wear and the sealing of the premises.

It is really scary for this industry. We have seen over the years the dust that it generates and every time these people were breathing in they were slowly killing themselves and they did not know it at the time. It is good to see that there is now, in the last two years in particular, a real focus nationally on this issue of silicosis and stonemasons. The stonemasons who have been diagnosed with silicosis love their industry. They want to keep doing it because it is what they do, it is what they have always done and will continue to do, but they will do it under safe practices despite the adverse consequences of being diagnosed. They want to do it safely. We will continue to monitor the impact of all these changes.

In relation to the changes being made to the workers compensation scheme in the legislation, the explanatory notes indicate the cost to implement the amendments will be \$18.6 million. As I reminded honourable members, most of these beneficial aspects of the workers compensation scheme are from Liberal National Party changes.

Ms Grace: Oh rubbish!

Mr BLEIJIE: I will take that interjection. It is not rubbish, it is absolutely true. It is true because the stats reveal it. In 2016 the Labor government, in the first year after they won the election, were claiming credit for all the work they did in opposition to have the best workers compensation scheme in Australia. As I said, they were the most effective opposition, apparently, for getting that workers compensation scheme down to \$1.20. I do not recall the Labor minister sitting around the cabinet table when we looked at these changes, were briefed by WorkCover and actually implemented the changes. In fact, I remember them opposing the changes we introduced and now they claim credit for the benefits of the scheme, despite the fact they opposed the changes which led to the scheme being in the great shape it is in today. What hypocrisy! As Jack Dempsey used to say in this place, how do you spell hypocrisy?

Opposition members: A-L-P!

Mr BLEIJIE: Sometimes he did not say that. He said L-A-B-O-R A-L-P. Anyway, we knew what he meant to say. There are two types of claims that can be made under the Queensland scheme, statutory claims and common law claims. Compared with last year, the number of accepted claims decreased by over 1,000, which hopefully means less Queenslanders are getting injured at work and need to lodge a WorkCover claim. However, in saying that, the amount of compensation paid increased to \$1.3 billion from an increase in statutory claims, while common law payments decreased by \$12 million. The annual report also noted that WorkCover's 2018-19 average premium rate remained at \$1.20 per \$100 of wages for the fifth consecutive year. That is since the LNP made changes to the scheme after massive premium increases under the Bligh Labor government.

In the last few minutes let us look at the record. As I said at the outset, the LNP supports a strong and sustainable workers compensation scheme that ensures injured workers are rehabilitated and can return to work as quickly as possible while maintaining low premiums for businesses. Whilst in government the LNP reduced the workers compensation average premium rate to be the cheapest in Australia whilst ensuring injured workers were assisted and could promptly return to work.

I am reminded that we were one of the only jurisdictions to keep journey-to-work claims. We were one of the only jurisdictions to make the changes, not only to the common law and the statutory claims but also we kept journey-to-work claims because we believed it was important. The LNP ensured the scheme was viable over the long term while reducing the average premium rate for Queensland businesses by 17 per cent. Compare and contrast that to the Labor Party which has introduced or increased 10 new taxes in Queensland. The Liberal National Party government in three years reduced taxation.

Ms Grace: Relevance.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister cries 'relevance'. A 17 per cent reduction in the workers compensation scheme is pretty relevant, I would say. The Liberal National Party reduced tax for Queensland businesses. The achievement of the Liberal National Party government was a 17 per cent reduction.

Debate, on motion of Mr Bleijie, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member for Toohey

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (2.00 pm): Over the past few months we have seen a government absolutely engulfed in a spate of integrity scandals. We have seen Premier Palaszczuk with her head in the sand on those integrity issues. The weakest Premier in Queensland's history oversees the weakest government in Queensland's history. Labor members of parliament are continually breaking the integrity rules without consequence. In fact, when the Deputy Premier breaks the rules she is promoted to acting premier without consequence, other than losing Cross River Rail which she had lost three weeks earlier.

The latest integrity scandal engulfing the government involves the member for Toohey. The member for Toohey's explanation this week that he complied with the pecuniary interest rules is nonsense. Mentioning an additional income of an entire law firm is not acceptable. It has now been revealed that the member for Toohey's firm, Russo Lawyers, is a preferred supplier for Legal Aid Queensland. They refuse to tell us how much money Russo Lawyers is making from Legal Aid Queensland.

Two days ago the member for Toohey stood in this place and said that he has not acted as a Legal Aid lawyer whilst he has been a member of parliament. What he failed to say to the people of Queensland is that his firm has. He owns the firm. Is the member for Toohey saying that he has not derived an income from Russo Lawyers since being elected in 2015? If that is the case, he should explain himself. Why are the Attorney-General and the Premier unable to say how much money the member for Toohey's law firm has actually made?

The member for Toohey has failed to declare the total amount of income generated from Russo Lawyers acting as a Legal Aid firm. He invites members of parliament to a Legal Aid function without mentioning on the invitation that his firm receives money from Legal Aid. He debates legislation that directly impacts Legal Aid, but fails to declare under the standing orders his financial pecuniary interest in Russo Lawyers. At the estimates hearing he even asked questions of the CEO of Legal Aid, without declaring that he was the principal solicitor of Russo Lawyers.

This is very serious and so many questions remain unanswered that today I have written to the Speaker of the Parliament requesting the Speaker investigate this matter and refer the entirety of the matter—the member for Toohey, his law firm and alleged breaches of the standing orders—to the Ethics Committee. I table a copy of that correspondence and attachments.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 17 October 2019, from the member for Kawana, Mr Jarrod Bleijie MP, to the Speaker, Hon. Curtis Pitt, regarding a referral to the Ethics Committee [[1866](#)].

The opposition will not rest until the member for Toohey explains how much money his firm has made from Legal Aid.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Shark Control Program

Mrs GILBERT (Mackay—ALP) (2.03 pm): Coastal North Queensland residents value our beaches and we value our lifestyle. In 1962, with bipartisan support, drum lines were put in place to protect swimmers from rogue sharks. That was done to save human lives. Fifty-seven years later, a Federal Court ruling has been made to remove the Shark Control Program drum lines from our coastal waters. That is astonishing to say the least. In the wake of that decision, the Queensland government has been forced to remove the drum lines.

It is no longer possible to safely comply with the conditions that apply to the program following the Federal Court decision. The new permit conditions require that the drum lines are checked every 24 hours. Any sharks found alive on the drum lines must be safely removed and relocated away from the drum lines. Currently, the contractors are not equipped and have not been specifically trained to safely meet the requirements. The sharks being caught on the drum lines are getting larger and larger. Sharks that are caught have to be tagged, which requires that a vet is on board the vessel to undertake the tagging. That all comes at a huge expense to the Queensland budget. Why should Queensland families and farmers pay for the incompetence of the federal LNP, which has failed to legislate this issue away?

Those opposite have become shark lovers. They are happy to support the trial of smart drum lines and play Russian roulette with people's lives. There are not too many second chances when it comes to sharks. How many shark attacks on swimmers do we need to see in the trial before they agree with the Cardno report?

Smart drum lines are not suitable for the waters of the Great Barrier Reef. As the permit to carry out the program is issued by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority under federal legislation, it is vital that the federal government urgently changes the legislation and allows Queenslanders to go back to the original shark program in the marine park. Federal members of parliament are elected to legislate, so they need to roll up their sleeves and put the legislation in place. Those opposite need to get in touch with their federal counterparts and they must do so quickly.

This is really important to my community and to every community up and down the Queensland coast. We need to ensure that our beaches are safe. We need to ensure that those opposite stop being the LNP greens, but call on their federal counterparts to make—

(Time expired)

Hospitals, Emergency Departments

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.06 pm): Today Labor's health crisis continues with more bad news for patients and hardworking nurses, paramedics, doctors and midwives across the state. The *Gold Coast Bulletin* front-page headline says it all: 'Careful in the corridor—ambos wait with patients as ramping pressure intensifies.'

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Are you tabling that, member for Mudgeeraba?

Ms BATES: I table that document for the benefit of those who have not seen it.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, dated 17 October 2019, titled 'Carefull in the Corridor' [[1867](#)].

The article states—

Paramedics are being left waiting with patients in hospital corridors for hours as the ambulance ramping crisis reaches a new low.

On the Gold Coast, 41 per cent of patients are waiting in the back of ambulances for longer than 30 minutes whilst trying to get emergency care at both of our major public hospitals. This flies in the face of the Palaszczuk Labor government's promises to provide better local health services.

This is what happens when you waste hundreds of millions of dollars worth of taxpayers' money on failed IT projects and you have the wrong priorities, such as renaming hospitals and shutting regional maternity services. This is what happens when you cut the hospital building budget by \$203 million this year and play petty political games with national partnerships that would deliver billions of dollars in new funding that is desperately needed now.

It has prompted a call from the Queensland Nurses and Midwives Union for an urgent review of emergency departments across the state. As a nurse, I feel for the hardworking nurses, paramedics, doctors and midwives who are at their wit's end with Labor's health crisis. The *Gold Coast Bulletin* reported that an emergency services source said yesterday—

'We wait with them (patients) along corridors or around corners. Some are put in chairs. We have waited up to two-and-a-half hours with category two, chest pain patients. There is some confusion about who is in charge of their care.'

The media article also noted comments from another health source that on occasions ramping at Robina Hospital is so bad that there are not enough ambulance bays. It states—

'They are left in the corridor. It goes on all the time. We have ambulances parked outside the ambulance bays. There is no room for them', the source said.

Queenslanders do not need yet another politically charged review, they need a change of government by voting for the LNP because our health priorities will always be on better patient care.

I want to also completely discredit the wild and completely false claims from the health minister that he repeats in the media and in the chamber. The LNP will not be privatising the public health system. Anything said to the contrary is just another Labor falsehood and another health scare campaign from a desperate Palaszczuk Labor government trying to distract from Labor's horrendous record.

We will cut surgery waiting lists and improve emergency care. There is no point sick and injured Queenslanders sitting on long waiting lists when there are empty beds and capacity in private hospitals to cut wait times. Our focus will be on better patient care and providing support to frontline health services. Unlike Labor, we will not be wasting money renaming hospitals or using hospital budgets to fix IT glitches.

World Mental Health Day; Townsville, World Record

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.10 pm): It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Mudgeeraba with positive commentary. Thursday, 10 October was World Mental Health Day. A special event was held in our home city of Townsville, Mr Deputy Speaker. In fact, on that day Townsville created a new world record for the most people to ever gather in one place in high-vis vests. Why would we do that, some may ask? It was to bring people together some eight months after the monsoonal flooding event. We gathered in one of the worst hit areas, the Fairfield shopping precinct, which only eight months ago had over a metre of water go through it, devastating businesses.

On World Mental Health Day some 2,499 people stood together in the Bunnings Fairfield car park to do more than break a world record, which was previously held by a province in Japan. Our Townsville region has certainly seen its share of challenges in terms of dealing with mental health and wellbeing. We have endured high suicide rates and been through some very challenging times.

The community came together to help break the stigma often associated with depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. In our proud garrison city, 2,499 people literally stood side by side. We were joined by a representative from the Guinness World Records for our attempt. I, along with others, like Mayor Jenny Hill, John Asiata from the North Queensland Cowboys, Joe Williams and Johnny Ruffo, spoke at the event. I said that it was more than attempting to break a world record; this gathering of people from across our community was symbolic of who we are.

We come together in times of need to help a mate, neighbour or friend when the chips are down. There was plenty of that demonstrated earlier this year. This event was about raising awareness about mental health. At the event I spoke with members of the Defence Force from 3RAR and 27 Squadron RAAF base personnel, young people, veterans and some people with a disability. It was great to see you there, Mr Deputy Speaker, and Minister O'Rourke. I also acknowledge my entire family who came along as well.

I would like to thank Mental Health Australia and Patricia Schluter from the Queensland Alliance for Mental Health for helping to put this event together. We are a resilient and strong community. I want to thank all those who came along and all those who helped organise the event like Michelle Bond, Mark Lassig and the team from Bunnings Fairfield—they deserve to be commended—the Kirwan Scouts, Townsville SES volunteers, Minty, Pricey and Chooky from Triple M who emceed and all the supporting community groups that put on the sausage sizzles and informed people of services when they need help. We broke a world record that day and it is a day that we should all be very proud of.

Unemployment

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.13 pm): Today's unemployment figures show that once again Queensland has lost the interstate contest. Under the Palaszczuk government 178,000 people in Queensland are looking for employment. This is the highest figure in Queensland history. Queensland's unemployment rate is 6.6 per cent compared to the national rate of 5.3 per cent and our New South Wales and Victorian counterparts rate of 4.5 per cent and 4.8 per cent respectively. These figures speak for themselves.

It is no wonder that unemployment is as high as it is in this state. Under the Palaszczuk government, for the last five years they have introduced or increased 10 taxes, taking \$3.5 billion out of the economy. This affects confidence and a lack of confidence means there is a lack of business investment, which means there is a lack of jobs. These figures are astonishing. We have been now stuck around 6.5 or 6.6 per cent for month on month. That is simply not good enough.

There are other figures that are extremely alarming. Over the past year Queensland has also had the largest increase in the number of long-term unemployed residents of any state in this nation. While the number of Queenslanders who have been looking for work for more than a year has increased by 13 per cent over the last year, the number in New South Wales has decreased by 19 per cent and the number in Victoria by 18 per cent.

These figures are damning and they speak to the economic performance of the Palaszczuk government. This government is the least popular government with small and medium size businesses. They are sick of the government changing the goalposts. They are sick of the length of time it takes to get approvals. They are sick of the undue influence of trade unions.

We now have the highest unemployment rate in the country. We have passed Tasmania and the ACT, which held that disgraceful position before these last figures. Only the LNP will stimulate the economy and create the jobs that Queenslanders are desperately looking for.

Northern Transitway

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (2.16 pm): The Northern Transitway is a \$53 million public transport project we committed to at the last election. During the first year of operation, the project will deliver up to a 50 per cent reduction in bus travel times for certain trips during peak evening and morning times and up to a 40 per cent reduction in bus travel times for certain trips during off-peak times.

It was disappointing to read this week that the LNP council is opposing this project on the north side—a project they are not contributing a single cent to, mind you. Their colleagues in the state opposition have also said they want to revisit the project if they get back into office. We know what revisit means when the LNP are talking about public transport projects. It means they want to cut it. They oppose Cross River Rail and they did not commit to any new rail or busway projects when they were last in office. The less said about the BaT Tunnel the better.

They have no real solutions to congestion on the north side. They are just opposed to this. The member for Chatsworth said just last week that the LNP, if it won office next year, would revisit the project. The same party that scrapped the full busway to Bracken Ridge in 2012 is now also going to scrap the Northern Transitway.

Going back to 2012, what ended up being their solution to congestion on the north side? I quote from a July 2012 Australasian bus and coach industry article. It states—

The alignment of future stages of Brisbane's the northern busway will now follow the arterial Gympie Road ...

...

Rather than resume houses, Emerson will push a path that uses the Gympie Road corridor ...

It goes on—

Emerson has asked the transport department to provide short-to-medium term options to improve bus travel along the section of Gympie Road between Kedron and Chelmside—including bus priority.

I say that again: including bus priority. The former transport minister was directly quoted in the article as saying—

Using Gympie Road as the area's major transport corridor is a sensible decision.

Who was the assistant minister for transport when these decisions were made on the corridor? It was the current shadow minister for transport, the member for Chatsworth. The member for Chatsworth now wants to revisit a project that he helped develop. It was a route drawn up by the LNP—solutions proposed by the LNP themselves when they were in office.

When it comes to the crunch, when construction is about to commence, they change their tune and decide that they want to scrap the project. The LNP have never seen a public transport project they did not want to scrap, whether it was Cross River Rail, Gold Coast Light Rail or the Northern TransitWay. The LNP simply do not understand public transport, and they simply do not understand public transport users. They dislike public transport so much that not only do they oppose our public transport projects but they are now opposing their own.

Local Government, Voting

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.19 pm): The tweetie bird is back. In fact, the tweetie bird has been chirping overtime about local government. The tweetie bird advised that the Minister for Local Government was rolled by his own caucus on the compulsory preferential voting proposal for local government. The tweetie bird was not surprised that the minister was rolled by his party. Why? It is because the tweetie bird knows how to count votes in local government. The little tweetie bird could work out that Labor would lose more seats to the Greens in Brisbane City Council and is absolutely dumbfounded that the minister could not understand this. The tweetie bird knows that the Palaszczuk Labor government have their priorities all wrong for local government. Inevitably we saw this week the Palaszczuk Labor government fall on their sword and scrap the compulsory preferential voting proposals for councils.

The tweetie bird is still listening and waiting, just like local government. Local government would like to hear a commitment from Labor that they will not introduce any legislation during the rest of this parliamentary term for compulsory preferential voting at the 2024 local government elections. Local governments are looking for that longer term certainty. They need to plan for the future, so they need to hear that commitment from this government.

This constant flip-flopping is an embarrassment for this Labor government, whose argument at the beginning was all about the consistency of voting systems. The only consistency this weak Labor government has given local government is inconsistency. This is yet another failing from this minister, of which there are many. We know that it was this minister who presided over rail fail. We know that it was this minister who took three attempts to sack the Labor Ipswich City Council. Also deserving of mention is how the mayors and councillors were sacked by press release before the minister's legislation was in place. The tweetie bird knows that this minister presided over the Eagle Farm racetrack fail.

Now it is this minister who has done the year's biggest flip-flop, with the great council vote-rigging renege, after being rolled by his own Labor caucus. Sadly, there has been debacle after debacle—a poor track record, a complete embarrassment to the Palaszczuk Labor government. Beware of the tweetie bird. The tweetie bird is definitely the black-throated finch for the Palaszczuk Labor government.

Port of Townsville

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (2.21 pm): I stand today to talk about the Port of Townsville, the powerhouse of exports in north Australia. When everyone came to God's country for regional parliament in Townsville, they all saw the port. Since the last sitting, the Port of Townsville have released their report for the 2018-19 financial year. I have to say that it is a very good report card. They are the largest general cargo port in north Australia. As I said in my opening remarks, this is the powerhouse of exports for north Australia. Thirty-two different commodities are traded through our port including fuel, minerals, sugar and vehicles, just to name a few.

There are 143 full-time equivalents directly employed at that port. In fact, there are 8,000 jobs in North Queensland that depend directly on the functions of that port. This is the powerhouse of exports for north Australia. There were 7.68 million tonnes of total trade throughput. That is an increase of 4.7 per cent through the Port of Townsville. There was a 24 per cent increase in bulk tonnage which is a new record for the port. There was a 10 per cent increase in sugar exports.

There were a record-breaking 20,000 cruise visitors to the Port of Townsville! This is the Port of Townsville owned by the Palaszczuk government. We did not want to sell it. Those opposite wanted to sell it. You can see that we are kicking the goals now. Have a look at these records. Have a look at how we are kicking the goals. This is the powerhouse of exports for north Australia. We are kicking goals and you wanted to sell it!

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members!

Mr STEWART: I am a little passionate, Mr Deputy Speaker. The North West Minerals Province relies on getting its product to port. When the rail line was damaged through the floods earlier this year, mines became very concerned as the commodities were being stockpiled and not exported when our prices were exceptionally high. Thanks to the work of Queensland Rail, the 300 kilometres of damaged line was repaired in 11 weeks rather than the nine months predicted. It took those rail workers 11 weeks to repair that line. Had they taken the time that it would normally take, we would only be seeing the rail line back in service now.

The Treasurer announced \$80 million to offset the costs of rail freight over the next four years to promote greater use of that rail line. That has been very welcomed by those in the North West Minerals Province. There is \$30 million for the intermodal transport terminal, such is the significance of the Port of Townsville. It is the heart that pumps the lifeblood of the economy in the north. Our commitment to widening the channel will increase the capabilities of the larger ships that we see sailing over the seas.

(Time expired)

Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (2.24 pm): The people of Bundaberg and Hervey Bay regions are entitled to public transparency and answers on the disastrous circumstances of the chief executive officer of the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service being stood down. Our community deserves answers from the board chair and the minister.

Was Adrian Pennington, the chief executive officer, put on special leave or terminated as claimed in a 30 September email to 4,000 staff? Why after seven years of excellent service was the Australian chief executive of the year marched out of the hospital and treated so poorly? What reasons were given

for his dismissal and did they directly relate to a mental health crisis? Will the minister call for a review of events prior to Mr Pennington's crisis event and Facebook post and how was he managed leading up to his dismissal?

Can the minister confirm that this was not a personal vendetta and that any complaints used to terminate the chief executive were thoroughly investigated independently of the board chair? Did the appointment of Lisa Desmond, the former CEO of the Fraser Coast Regional Council, have anything to do with Mr Pennington's dismissal?

Exactly what mental health support was provided to Mr Pennington since he was escorted from the Bundaberg Hospital last week? Sources have indicated that, contrary to statements made by the board chair last week in the media, Mr Pennington has been offered no support by the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service at all and his mental health is in a fragile state. In addition, the board chair has banned anyone in the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service from contacting Mr Pennington, and I ask: how does that provide support?

In an organisation that should be about health and wellbeing of staff and the public, I cannot believe that the board chair of the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service was talking about this employee's mental health in the media, especially during Mental Health Week. It is widely understood that, on the days after the chief executive was released from hospital after a three-hour session with a psychologist, the board chair demanded he attend her personal residence to apologise for a Facebook post and suggested the chief executive consider leaving his employ. The way this issue has been handled was designed to cause the maximum damage and to destroy his credibility and future prospects. To be stripped of a phone and car and given a Cabcharge and then marched to the hospital entrance destroyed any dignity left in this sordid affair.

We need a full external investigation of the chair's actions in the so-called sacking of the chief executive. This is going to get a lot worse before it gets better. The Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service will lose staff who will not tolerate working under this board chair. Losing two board members already is bad enough. I say to those staff, particularly in executive positions, 'Hang in there. Things will change, and remember that we do respect you.'

I know that when the performance of this high-performing health service starts to slide in my region—and it will—it will be the minister's fault for not acting sooner. It is easier to find a new board chair than to find another high-performing chief executive. Why would any health professionals or executives now come to Bundaberg to work if this is the new low standard that we have set for ourselves?

With all the issues of concern, the main project—our new hospital—has now stalled. The acting CEO was the project team leader on the new hospital business case. With no-one doing the job, all meetings have been cancelled and the new hospital project is in real danger of future delays. I ask for those questions to be answered on behalf of my community and, more importantly, in the interests of the health and safety of all those involved.

Construction Training Centre

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (2.27 pm): I rise in the House this afternoon to speak about the Construction Training Centre situated at Salisbury in my electorate. A lot of what I am going to talk about this afternoon comes from a history of the centre written by Mr Greg Shannon titled *Catalyst for Change?—the development and growth of the Construction Training Centre, Salisbury, Queensland (1992 to 2011)*.

This is where the journey begins. The Construction Training Centre at Salisbury was established in 1994. In the 1990s the concept of vocational training was nothing new. During the 1980s the need that drove change was the state of the Australian economy. Another feature of the eighties was the growing number of private training providers and the growth of group training companies, the latter providing an alternative to the traditional employer and employee relationship. Flexibility in approach to vocational training was to become the norm.

Whilst the search for suitable premises went on for some time, the premises at 460-492 Beaudesert Road, Salisbury, was where the Construction Training Centre finally found its home. Not so long ago I was invited to the centre to meet engineering students from different universities around Brisbane who were completing their final day of training at the centre.

Over a period the students constructed a replica of Brisbane's Story Bridge as part of their practical training while obtaining their engineering degrees. I understand this is an ongoing project, so someone must also have to dismantle the replica.

You may be asking what the significance of this is. The site of the Construction Training Centre in Salisbury was previously the Evans Deakin site where the Story Bridge was constructed before the steel beams were transported to Kangaroo Point and put together to construct the bridge we drive over today. The head instructor advised me that, as it was Friday, they were finishing at two o'clock to have a cold beer—you guessed it—at the Story Bridge Hotel.

The centre is a far cry from what it was when it was first purchased in 1990. I was lucky enough not only to meet the students on the day but I was also well looked after by the chief executive, Phil Diver, who gave me a full tour of the site. One of the principles of the centre is that apprentices are used on as much live work as possible. To this end, some of the projects or live work that the apprentices have worked on include: Browns Plains State High School; restoration work at the historic God's Acre Cemetery in Archerfield; the Acacia Ridge Bikeways project; the Wellers Hill Guide Hut; and renovating youth accommodation in Lawnton.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Before I call the member for Surfers Paradise, joining us in the public gallery today are students and staff from Dutton Park State School in the electorate of South Brisbane. Welcome to the people's house!

Racing Integrity Commission

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (2.30 pm): I rise as the shadow minister for racing to catalogue the carnage caused by Queensland Labor's feckless management of integrity measures in the racing industry. Under Labor, the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission is demonising people—good people and working people. Time and again they are charged without adequate evidence as the Queensland Racing Crime Squad—joined at the hip to Labor's QRIC—does not come up with the goods.

Do not take my word for it: just look at the 2018-19 QRIC annual report. There is a conga line of failed and amended prosecutions in each of the three racing codes: thoroughbreds, harness and greyhounds. QRIC notes the number of offenders and the number of offences, but there is not a word about the number of convictions—we know why—and no expansion on how much it spent on legal fees, and again we know why. In cases brought for judgement to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, only 7.4 per cent of the original decisions that were subject to an external review were confirmed. This is a success rate of 7.4 per cent—I would say a failure rate of 92.6 per cent—and this is for the \$30 million that QRIC is costing us.

I cite the case of Stan Johnston, who could justifiably be called the 'grand old man' of Queensland country racing. He is a great worker for charity and a charitable supporter of country racing who conducts the Craiglea Stud at Kenilworth. Stan is a 70-year-old man. QRIC and its partner, the Racing Crime Squad, charged him last year with animal cruelty. He and his wife, Marilyn, looked on as four QRIC officers and six police officers arrived at their home and searched everywhere, including the drawers in their bedroom. Now, 12 months after being charged, he has had the charges withdrawn. He was not found not guilty as a result of some fancy 'lawyering': the charges were withdrawn due to a lack of evidence. Nobody in racing has a better reputation than Stan Johnston. Now that good name has been sullied forever thanks to the incompetence of Labor's QRIC and the Racing Crime Squad. His daughter, 24-year-old Krystal Johnston, is a well-known young trainer. She was arrested and charged. She had to attend the Nambour courthouse. She was fingerprinted, mugshots were taken, and then 12 months later—just like her dad—there was no case to answer and the charges were dismissed. No wonder Krystal has since been diagnosed with depression.

In press releases on its website QRIC lists licensees charged, but when those charges are either dropped due to a lack of evidence or proven not guilty not a word is said by QRIC. Forget 'We're sorry': they are not mentioned again. The same thing has happened to harness racing trainer Vicki Rasmussen. Last month the District Court found she had no case to answer. Other licensees charged by QRIC and the Racing Crime Squad include: Dayl March, no case, lack of evidence; Peter Poulsen, no case, lack of evidence; Mathew Nelson, no case, lack of evidence; Leonard Cain, no case, lack of evidence; David Gafa, not guilty on all charges. One of those cases involved 16 court appearances and took more than a year at a cost of \$50,000 to the charged party. The case was thrown out in five minutes, with the magistrate ruling there was no case to answer. Something needs to happen when it is fine for the Deputy Premier to call the CCC commissioner, but no-one else gets an apology.

Year of Outback Tourism

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (2.33 pm): In December of last year the Premier declared 2019 the Year of Outback Tourism. The Premier said—

The best present the outback can get is rain. While we can't make it rain, we can fill those hotel rooms and camping grounds with tourists.

The announcement was supported by a \$10 million Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund to attract new visitors to this magical part of Queensland. As tourism minister, Kate Jones, said—

Outback Queensland has something for everyone—from rich Indigenous cultural experiences to some of the world's rarest dinosaur bones and some of the most picturesque landscapes on the globe.

Tourism in outback Queensland is already worth more than \$350 million and supports 3,700 outback jobs. Our government is supporting these local communities to see numbers continue to grow and create sustainable jobs for people in the outback. Grants from \$1,000 up to \$100,000 were made available as part of the campaign to support regional events, festivals, art and cultural performances and installations promoting the outback. A revamped calendar of events in Western Queensland was released to coincide with the Year of the Outback and investment in new attractions which are so critical to diversifying the outback economy to sustain communities, particularly through volatile weather events like drought.

The latest National Visitor Survey data shows that this investment has delivered dividends, with local visitor expenditure at an all-time high. From June 2018 to June 2019, outback Queensland visitor nights spiked by over 23 per cent. There is nothing quite like an outback festival, muster, horse or camel race, but it is the land and its people that will always call you back to the bush. I was born in a regional city, spent five years in the Territory, and grew up spending time every year on the family farm. My two young boys were born in the city and are growing up on the bay, but I want them to similarly grow up with an appreciation of the vastness, beauty and at times harshness of our great state and country.

In the school holidays just past my husband and I took the opportunity to take our boys on the road to support the Year of Outback Tourism and our regional towns. Many hours were spent on the road travelling through Boulia; Barcaldine, to the Tree of Knowledge; Longreach, to the Qantas Museum and the Stockman's Hall of Fame; Winton, to the Outback Film Festival and Age of Dinosaurs Museum; Hughenden and Richmond, to complete the dinosaur trail; and even a quick overnight stop in Camooweal before starting the journey home.

There are far too many highlights to mention, but watching the sun start to set while stopped on the Landsborough Highway and seeing a quintessential Australian drover run cattle west to Winton has to be one of them. I take this opportunity to thank those regional towns we visited for their hospitality, for the invaluable memories and lessons they gave our two boys, and to encourage all Queenslanders to explore our beautiful Queensland outback.

Hinchinbrook Electorate, Crime

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (2.36 pm): The most expensive thing most Queenslanders will ever get to own is their own home; the second most expensive thing is most likely their car; thirdly, most Queenslanders would love to own a small business or hold down a profitable job so they can afford the first two. At the moment property crime is rising in Queensland and, unfortunately for those hardworking people out there who just go to work every day to pay for the things they enjoy, there are perpetrators out there who, day in and day out, are trying to take these things away from them.

People go to bed at night concerned that when they wake up in the morning their vehicle may not be in the driveway or their house or business may have been broken into. There were 240,000 property theft crimes in Queensland in 2017-18. Just looking at the greater Townsville region, there were 32,000 property crimes. That means 32,000 people either had a property or a business broken into or had their car stolen. What is that doing to Queenslanders and people in the northern region, especially in my electorate of Hinchinbrook? The Deeragun BP had its windows smashed in and perpetrators entered and stole items from that business. Last week in Ingham there was a spate of property crime. Not only hardened adult perpetrators but also hardened juvenile perpetrators are coming in and taking people's livelihoods.

It is the little things that add up. The juvenile delinquents who are breaking into these places are only stealing the float, a couple of drinks and those sorts of things, but it is the \$600 door that has to be replaced every time this happens or the cash register that has been ripped out and stolen. This hit home

to me last night when I saw images on Channel 7 of the BP in Cardwell being robbed. The lady behind the counter was robbed by men with a screwdriver. That is what was used and that has taken away her right to feel safe in her workplace. That hit home to me because my mother works in the service station only two doors down. She was held up at knifepoint some years ago while working behind a service station counter. My mother lost 12 months of her life because of the stress that put on her. These people are out there taking that away from people. They do not deserve to be out there. If we do not come down harsh on crime, all we are creating is a gangsters' paradise for these perpetrators out there.

Small Business, Policies

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (2.39 pm): What we have heard this week is the LNP whinge and whine about the government but we have heard them offer no alternative. It is clear that they have no real plan. All they have are some slogans. They have a dearth of real policies. Queensland needs to know that they have no plans and no ideas. In particular, I want to say today that the LNP are offering nothing new at all for Queensland businesses. They are a policy void, as the member for Maryborough said earlier today.

For example, the LNP have said they would pay contracts up to \$1 million within 20 days instead of 30 days for government suppliers. We are already doing that. We have been doing that since 1 July. The Minister for Small Business announced in May 2019 that small businesses would be paid within 20 days instead of 30. The LNP are way behind us.

Secondly, the LNP have said they want to open up government procurement to Queensland small businesses. We are already doing that. The Buy Queensland policy is already proving very successful. Under Buy Queensland, if your workforce is within 125 kilometres of a job and you are doing the right things by apprentices and trainees, the criteria is going to be weighted in your favour. We are starting to hear some great success stories about Buy Queensland, but the LNP are saying that Buy Queensland does not benefit small business. What I would say is that they need to look at the Food and Beverage Supplier Directory that we introduced. They will find that 224 local suppliers, local small businesses, many based in regional Queensland, now get a chop of the \$100 million worth of catering that the government buys each year.

Thirdly, the LNP have said they want to support young entrepreneurs. We are already doing that. The Palaszczuk government's Ignite Ideas program provides innovators, start-ups and entrepreneurs with the chance to get up to \$200,000 to help them market and commercialise their ideas. Ignite Ideas has supported over 1,000 Queensland jobs. Listen to the LNP's policy on young entrepreneurs: 'We will ignite the spark in Queensland youth.' Does that sound familiar? It should because it is plagiarism. That is the real crisis we are seeing this week; it is plagiarism. What is in that policy of the LNP? A promise for training. Once again, we are already doing that; it is called the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program.

We have examined the meagre LNP policies for small business in Queensland, and indeed they are woeful. They have no plans and no ideas. All they are doing is copying a few of ours. Half of their policies are plagiarised from us. Who would want this mob in government?

Caloundra Electorate, Community Awards

 **Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (2.42 pm): I have great news for Caloundra.

Government members interjected.

Mr McARDLE: They err. I want to indicate that last Friday I held the Caloundra Community Awards. We all have heroes in our communities. We all have people and organisations who are silent in what they do and how they go about it. We have businesses which work silently to provide for themselves and their families. We have young people who are working hard to achieve their own goal. More importantly, we have a community that works together. That is right across Queensland. Every community is the same, but the best is Caloundra. There is no question about that.

Last Friday, we handed out the following awards: Young Achiever of the Year, Samantha Hutton from Pacific Lutheran College; Young Sport Achiever of the Year, Holly Lubcke from Glasshouse Christian College; Sports Achiever of the Year, Dane Hogan of the Sunshine Coast Falcons; Community Volunteer of the Year, Dianne Clapp of Resolve Fitness; Community Group of the Year, Gateway Care Ltd; Community Event of the Year, Velvet Country Music Charity Concert; Environmental Achiever of the Year, Boomerang Bags Beerwah-Glasshouse Country; Business Achiever of the Year, Landsborough Pool Supplies; and Caloundra Hall of Fame Identity, Graeme Bowden.

Holly Lubcke is a student at Glasshouse Christian College. In 2019, she was recognised as the Young Sport Achiever of the Year for her achievements in cross-country mountain bike riding. This year Holly competed in the junior world series held in South Africa where she achieved third place. She was selected on the Australian cycling team and competed in the world championships held in Canada. She placed second in the Australian national championships and is currently in the lead of the national series.

Velvet Country Music's annual charity concert each year raises funds for the community. In total, they have donated \$32,000 to worthwhile causes across the community, including Dove Cottage, LifeFlight and Ronald McDonald House.

Graeme Bowden came to Caloundra with his wife 31 years ago for a weekend trip and decided to stay there and he now runs an independent bookstore in Bulcock Street. The bookstore was an Angus & Robertson store. That went belly up but he stayed on and fought and now runs an independent bookstore very successfully in Caloundra. He is a man involved in the community and also in Rotary—the same club that I am in, therefore he must be good. At the end of the day, he is a man who is worthy of the title of a hero of Caloundra. I congratulate him and all other members who were awarded on that day. More importantly, I recognise all volunteers in our community for the great work they do.

Speld

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.45 pm): Tonight here in parliament a very special organisation celebrates 50 years of supporting Queenslanders who have learning differences. The organisation is Speld, and it stands for supporting people experiencing learning differences. I want to emphasise the word 'difference'. People do not have a disability or a difficulty; they have a different way of learning. The dedicated staff and volunteers at Speld use evidence based practices to adjust learning and to unlock the potential of every Queenslander.

In 1969 Pat Savage set up an organisation to support people who were experiencing learning differences. At that time, there was nowhere else to turn. Many people will think about dyslexia, but there are many other learning differences. Regardless of why someone cannot read, we know that 34 per cent of poor readers in year 3 are still poor readers in year 9 and that 80 per cent of our prisoners have an identified learning difference.

In the past, many of the people who experienced learning differences were perhaps labelled disabled, difficult, stupid, lazy or worse. That is certainly what happened to my brother Pete. There are no doubt many people in the community who have been touched by Speld who do not even know it. I count myself in that category, finding out only recently that my brother Pete was supported by Speld to learn to read in the early 1970s. My mum told me that she and dad were worried about Pete until Speld helped him to read and he has not stopped reading since. Nearly 50 years later, that sense of relief that my mother felt at that time when my brother learnt to read is still very apparent.

Take a moment to think about how many people Speld have helped over those 50 years to discover the joy and power of reading, how many parents have felt that sense of relief and how many people have discovered that joy of reading. I would like to thank all of the volunteers and staff who have created and sustained Speld over the past 50 years, but particular thanks goes to the CEO, Marion McMahon. I would also like to acknowledge the students and their families.

There could perhaps be no greater way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Speld than to continue to grow and serve more people. I would like to thank Minister Grace Grace and Education Queensland for recognising the value of Speld and backing that with increased funding. The CEO, Marion McMahon, has revitalised Speld and supercharged the growth of the organisation. In 2019 Speld has responded to 24,500 calls, conducted over 500 assessments and delivered 60 professional development sessions throughout the state. It has a book and resource library that supports students, families and teachers throughout the state.

Pat Savage could hardly have imagined in 1969 that the organisation she founded would still be growing 50 years later. She started the organisation because there was nothing to support people experiencing learning differences. To this day, Speld regularly deals with people who tell the staff and volunteers they were completely lost and alone before they found Speld—floundering around for a solution and support. Tonight Speld celebrates 50 years of being the organisation that people continue to turn to for support if they have a learning difference. Speld celebrates 50 years of unlocking people's full potential around this great state.

Whitsunday Electorate, Drought

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—Ind) (2.49 pm): If there was ever a time that Queensland—indeed the nation—was crying out for visionaries, it is right now. As we all know, two-thirds of Queensland is gripped by drought. In fact, the vast majority of the Whitsunday local government area is drought declared. Two-thirds of the state is ravaged by drought, and aren't they struggling?

Queensland's latest unemployment data from the ABS, hot off the press today, makes for some sobering reading: 6.6 per cent in the state compared with the national rate of 5.3 per cent. It is particularly bad in the outback. There are empty shops in our cities and towns, including in Proserpine in my own electorate, and more and more people are struggling to get ahead. Is it any wonder that I have started my own political party, NQ First? The matter of registration is currently before the Electoral Commission of Queensland and I look forward to that process being finalised in due course.

One area of public policy that we will be pursuing vigorously relates to water infrastructure. This I raise in the lead-up to National Water Week as the drought continues to bite. People are fed up with the blame game between Canberra and Queensland and between Labor and Liberal. All they want is action and they want action now. By building dams we combat the scourge of drought, we boost water security, we create jobs and industry; in essence, we create prosperity.

Can honourable members imagine Emerald today without the Fairbairn Dam? We all know it is at an alarmingly low level, but it will rain again and we should be harnessing that water. We should be building dams as we speak—dams like my pet project Urannah, 60 kilometres south-south-west of Proserpine and 90 kilometres west-north-west of Mackay. It has been championed by many people, most notably by Sir Peter Delamothe, the legendary Collinsville medico and former member for Bowen. It should be happening right now instead of conducting another feasibility study. It was always expected as a sister dam to the Burdekin Falls Dam. I might add that it should have its dam wall raised—and not just by a little bit but the whole hog—in keeping with the specifications as per the design going back to the 1980s.

Four years ago I visited the Urannah Dam site with my uncle, who worked on Urannah Station many moons ago. We were joined by two journos from the *Bowen Independent*, where I started my own journalism career in 1989. We had a wonderful day. There were some amazing pictures of the landscape, but incredibly the images that they captured just disappeared off the system at the newspaper office—abracadabra! Honourable members can draw their own conclusions. This is a newspaper that has long pumped up one of my political rivals in Mike 'Moscow' Brunker, who is the real mayor of the Whitsundays as opposed to the puppet that we have today.

Ipswich Region, Jobs

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (2.52 pm): The jobs boom in the Ipswich region is well and truly underway. Around 2,000 new jobs have been created or are in the pipeline across the Ipswich region as a result of new major construction projects commencing or completed this year. According to labour market predictions released by the federal department of jobs and small business, Ipswich will be among the top two regions in South-East Queensland leading jobs growth over the next five years. What the data shows is that Ipswich will have an additional 18,200 jobs by 2023, a growth rate of 11.3 per cent. This is phenomenal news for the growth areas within my electorate of Jordan like Greater Springfield and Greater Flagstone, where families are choosing to create homes and wish to work closer to them.

The city is already meeting the challenge of creating new jobs through a collaborative approach between industry, the Ipswich City Council and the Queensland government. The Ipswich region is recognised as a major growth region with compelling advantages relating to workforce, connectivity, available land and supply chain services. The industrial sector is certainly showing increased interest, with many companies choosing to invest in the region. Australia Post has transitioned their operations to a purpose-built 50,000 square metre distribution and sorting centre, capable of handling 700,000 parcels per day, bringing with it about 500 jobs. Coles is well advanced on their main distribution centre for Queensland in a new, purpose-built 75,000 square metre warehouse, with another 500 jobs coming on line in 2020.

Of course, as part of the Queensland government's defence strategy, we are seeing strong investment from that sector with Ipswich advanced defence manufacturing company TAE Aerospace upgrading to a 15,500 square metre facility to service Super Hornets, strike fighters and tanks. Around 200 jobs will be based on that site. The Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence being established by

Rheinmetall is well underway as part of a \$5 billion defence contract awarded last year. When completed, it will be home to 400 new jobs as Rheinmetall begins rolling out the first of its 200 Boxer combat reconnaissance vehicles.

Of course, there was much excitement with the opening of Costco in our region. I have my membership. As important as those savings are, it is the 280 new jobs created that I am mostly interested in. Today's jobs figures that were released are even more welcome news, with more than 200 jobs added every day in September 2019 in Queensland. This massive increase in job creation means more than 226,800 jobs have been created under the Palaszczuk government. This shows our economic plan is working, creating nearly eight times as many jobs as the previous LNP government.

Outer metropolitan regions of South-East Queensland like Ipswich, Logan and Moreton Bay have some clear advantages in attracting industry. The advent of more technology means the ability of businesses to locate in places that suit them, their workers and customers. Importantly, in growing areas like mine, affordable land for businesses and housing will increasingly make these regions a compelling choice for Queensland's ongoing job creation.

Manufacturing Industry

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (2.55 pm): Labor's anti-business and anti-jobs agenda is bleeding Queensland's once proud manufacturing sector dry. A sector that used to be a cornerstone of our state's economy is now haemorrhaging jobs at an unprecedented rate. As fewer products are made in Queensland, as our factories shut down and as our workers lose their jobs to other states and other countries, all this Premier does is bury her head in the sand. It is little wonder that many have labelled her the weakest Premier in Queensland's history.

It was reported earlier this year that under her leadership and since her election as Premier more than 18,000 Queensland manufacturing jobs have been lost. It was stated that under the Palaszczuk Labor government the number of manufacturing workers in Queensland was at its lowest point since the 1990s recession, nearly three decades ago. However, it gets worse. Instead of helping Queensland's manufacturing industry, this Palaszczuk Labor government appears to be hell-bent on destroying it. The latest data available shows that over the past 12 months nearly 14,000 more Queensland manufacturing jobs have been lost. In just one year, as this Labor government lurches from scandal to scandal, 14,000 Queensland manufacturing workers have lost their jobs.

Instead of working to save Queensland's manufacturing industry, Labor's manufacturing minister chooses to spend his time playing petty partisan politics. Instead of being a voice for Queensland manufacturers, he spends his time spreading misinformation. On numerous occasions the member for Woodridge has fabricated statements that the LNP will reduce manufacturing program funding. Without a skerrick of evidence to back up his claims, he has put out a media statement and made numerous statements to this House. This misinformation is yet another example of the all-show and no-substance ethos of Labor's Minister for Manufacturing.

Unlike Labor, the LNP knows that manufacturing is a crucial part of Queensland's economy and the LNP will encourage new businesses to start while giving existing companies a better future. A future LNP government elected in October 2020 will launch an additional \$20 million Built in Queensland funding program to support heavy engineering and manufacturing in this state. We will use Queensland money to help Queensland firms develop new markets in Australia and overseas. To deliver Queensland's manufacturing sector from its darkest hour, the LNP will be providing more resources, not less.

For the minister to say anything else is simply untrue and shows how desperate he is for any distraction away from the thousands of jobs that continue to be lost under his watch.

State Schools, Air Conditioning

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (2.58 pm): I was doing some yard work at my house at Woodend at Ipswich on the Queen's Birthday holiday when I received the wonderful news that two of my state schools, Ipswich State High School and Ipswich North State School, would be air-conditioned under the priority school air-conditioning program. This affects 54 classrooms at Ipswich State High School and about 13 classrooms at Ipswich North State School. On the day I received this information Ipswich was experiencing over 40-degree temperatures, so this news could not have come at a better time. I would like to thank the Minister for Education, Grace Grace, for her ongoing support for my electorate and for visiting Ipswich State High School to outline this wonderful announcement to students and staff.

It had previously been announced in the state budget that an additional \$100 million would be provided over four years to air-condition classrooms outside the existing Cooler Schools zone. Currently, more than 350 air-conditioned classrooms in 390 state schools are in the hottest and most humid parts of the state, commonly referred to as the Cooler Schools zones. The additional \$100 million allocated in the budget will be aimed at those schools outside the Cooler Schools zones and brings the total budget for air-conditioning Queensland state schools to \$191 million over five years. Some 400 classrooms across 15 schools are included in the first tranche of schools to be air-conditioned as part of the priority air-conditioning program. This first tranche of schools includes not only Ipswich State High School and Ipswich North State School but also 13 other schools mainly located in the south-east corner of Queensland.

The government expects to announce more air-conditioning projects over coming weeks. This is great news for students, teachers and parents in these school communities as well as for the local air-conditioning companies engaged to do the work. The government's investment is expected to support around 300 jobs across the state over four years. The choice of schools is based on an audit carried out of schools outside the Cooler Schools zone. The Palaszczuk government has taken a measured and fiscally responsible approach to air-conditioning schools outside the Cooler Schools zones. While others in this House make all kinds of unbudgeted promises that could cost billions, the Palaszczuk government is rolling out this program in a sensible and economically sound way. I was proud to wear the tie for Ipswich State High School when I made this wonderful announcement.

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

Resumed from 22 August (see p. 2515), on motion of Mr Russo—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 40 titled *Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman* tabled on 4 July 2019.

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.01 pm): I rise to speak on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee oversight report on the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman. I am the deputy chair of the committee and broadly concur with the account given earlier by my honourable friend the member for Toohey, the chairman of the committee. I also acknowledge the other members of the committee, the members for Mansfield, Macalister, Lockyer and Mirani.

Happily, we have had a fair bit to do with the Ombudsman since the start of the parliament. They have been very accommodating and we have been able to visit them and interact freely with the officers of the Ombudsman. I thank the Ombudsman, Phil Clarke, and his staff for their care of the public good because many people—and I am sure we understand it ourselves—sometimes find it difficult to get some progress. Having a cop on the beat like the Ombudsman who can deal with some of the difficulties in public administration and complaints of people is very comforting. I note that, when the Ombudsman appeared before us late last year for a public briefing on progress in implementing its strategic review, the Ombudsman, Mr Clarke, reported—

I would report to the committee at this point in time that, of the 72 recommendations made in the report, 36 of them are either complete or ongoing. In other words, they did not require a substantial change to what we did in the office, so we continued to support them. Above and beyond those 36 there are a further six where I have written to the Attorney-General. They are those recommendations requiring legislative reform ...

He sought the Attorney-General's support for this. The remaining recommendations are in train. I am satisfied that the Ombudsman is well and truly on top of that.

One issue I recall particularly from that briefing was that the Ombudsman was able to reveal some very good key performance indicators about how the Ombudsman is dealing with complaints. The mean time to deal with a complaint and finalise it was only 10 days, a remarkable achievement considering the volume of work that the Ombudsman faces.

The Ombudsman also was able to point out that there had been a significant reduction in the number of outcomes from investigations which required corrective action by the public sector agency involved. I asked the Ombudsman whether he felt that could be because of the work they had been doing at some length to educate public sector agencies and to go out and do presentations and so forth on good administrative practice to avoid conflicts and disputes and whether that had some bearing. I was pleased to hear him say that he thought it might. I also joked that at the rate things were going we may not require an Ombudsman! But I do not think that that will happen any time soon. My honourable friend the member for Lockyer probably remembers that exchange.

I have had occasion to deal with the Ombudsman a fair bit in terms of constituent issues. It is very good for me as a local member who does not have the expertise in all the fields of public administration involved to be able to refer complaints to the Ombudsman. I know that Mr Clarke would agree that he does receive a lot of correspondence from me. I congratulate him on his ongoing stewardship of the Ombudsman's office. I thank him and his staff for their courtesy and openness with us.

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.05 pm): I rise to speak to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 40, *Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman*, currently on the table. The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee has oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman. This oversight includes but is not limited to monitoring and reviewing the performance of the Ombudsman and its functions and examining each annual report tabled in this parliament. The Queensland Ombudsman's annual report was tabled in this House on 28 September 2018. The Queensland Ombudsman and senior staff attended a public meeting with the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee on 25 February 2019.

Before I go into some aspects of the committee's report and the annual report that I would like to comment on, I note that, before consideration of this report adjourned in August this year, the member for Toowoomba South made some pointed remarks about this Ombudsman's report. He was unimpressed with the member for Toohey's assessment of the report, indicating that he did not believe people would be interested in how many people checked the Queensland Ombudsman website in the last 12 months. Perhaps the member may not be interested in that, but, considering the growth in complaints which the member also pointed out was attributed by the commissioner to an increased awareness of the Ombudsman's role, perhaps it is important to note the work the Ombudsman's office is doing to increase public awareness of its role.

Back then, the member also remarked that he wanted to look at the overall number of complaints and the fact that there has been an increase 'that is up to 4,844 complaints relating to statutory authorities' and 'the significant shift in the number of complaints to the department related to child and family services.' The beauty of being on this committee is that we get to look at the entire committee report and the entire annual report. If the member had done so in quoting those statistics, he would understand why there has been an increase in those numbers. The annual report states—

Since the closure of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian in 2014, the Office has had a more significant and immediate role in overseeing the management of child safety complaints ...

It was even referenced in our committee report. I suggest that the member continue looking a little closer into the reports. More broadly, the member's points about the increased number of complaints—this was something we canvassed during the public meeting; in fact, it was the member for Lockyer who asked a question of the commissioner about the increase in public interest disclosures—were addressed in the public meeting. If the member would like to have a look, the transcript of that meeting states—

... there has been an increase in the number of public interest disclosures being reported by agencies over the last two to three financial years. I do not suggest that that is indicative of an increase in wrongdoing by public sector officers in public agencies.

Further—

What I am suggesting is that hopefully through the outreach work that the office has been doing—

and that may include the website—

agencies are much better equipped to identify wrongdoing and to identify matters that fall within the parameters of the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

The Ombudsman himself went on to elaborate on this. Additionally, when appearing before the committee the Queensland Ombudsman tabled a paper providing a snapshot of the office's performance over the first and second quarters. Of note was that, for all of those complaints, the number of recommendations for improvements in public administration saw a 17 per cent decrease, so the agencies are on the right track.

One of the other metrics the committee paid particular attention to was efficiency dealing with interactions. Some 7,244 complaints were finalised during the reporting period within 10 days of receipt. That is an amazing statistic. I thank the Ombudsman and his staff for the work they are doing. As has already been commented on by the member for Southern Downs, their work in completing the recommendations from the strategic review has been ongoing. There are only six recommendations outstanding.

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (3.10 pm): I rise to speak on the report titled *Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman*. On 25 February 2019 the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee had the opportunity to direct questions to representatives of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman in relation to their activities over the previous financial year. This inquiry, together with a review of the Ombudsman's annual report, formed the basis of our review into their activities.

It is critical that in its role as the state's primary investigator into administrative bodies the office of the Ombudsman provides a thorough and timely service to any Queenslander who calls for its assistance. This hearing provided the opportunity for the committee to see whether or not these objectives are being met. I am pleased to say that, in terms of time frames, in 2017-18 it took an average of 10.3 days to finalise a complaint, compared to 13.3 days in the 2016-17 financial year. Notably, 80 per cent of complaints were finalised within 10 days during 2017-18, compared to only 69 per cent during 2016-17. Further to this, the average time of investigations has reduced from 53.4 days in 2014-15 to 45 days in 2017-18.

In terms of the quantum of complaints, I have no criticism of the Ombudsman's office. In fact, I thank them for discovering the increase in complaints made about state Labor agencies and departments. It is further evidence of the lack of confidence in this Labor government. During the 2017-18 financial year the office of the Ombudsman was contacted by 10,990 Queenslanders, each seeking advice or assistance or hoping to have a complaint resolved. Of the 8,167 of these contacts that were within the office's jurisdiction, 7,244 were resolved within the year, with 95 per cent of these being resolved within a month of first contact. Complaints received varied widely across a range of areas; however, 67 per cent related to the actions of state government departments, authorities and agencies, with the second largest group of complaints coming from local government.

In the last 12 months there was a four per cent increase in the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman about state agencies—up to 4,844. Most startling was a 24 per cent increase in the number of complaints received about child and family services. Of the complaints received about statutory bodies, 21 per cent were about the Public Trustee. With the biggest transfer of intergenerational wealth ever seen about to go down the path, it is critical that we have a public trustee that is highly functional and that people can trust. Unfortunately, under this Labor government we have seen the Public Trustee CEO suspended while senior staff walked out. I commend the shadow Attorney-General and member for Toowoomba South, David Janetzki, on writing to the Queensland Ombudsman asking that he consider undertaking a report on the systemic challenges that are now being seen throughout the operation of the Public Trustee.

Interestingly, the Ombudsman received almost the same level of complaints as in the previous year; however, as discussed, the office received an additional four per cent of complaints against Labor state government agencies. I note, however, that educational efforts have contributed to a 17 per cent decrease in matters outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman. The annual report points to two key initiatives—the recorded message telephone service and the office's refreshed website—which have assisted the office to deal with out-of-jurisdiction matters.

Ultimately, the office of the Ombudsman should be commended for not only meeting but also exceeding most of the targets outlined in its 2015-2019 strategic plan. Improvements can always be made, and the Ombudsman's office is well on track to achieve their recommendations from the strategic review completed this year. The day-to-day management appears both professional and competent. I thank Mr Clarke for his dedication. I also thank my fellow committee members for their efforts with regard to discovering this increase in complaints, which is further evidence of a lack of confidence in the state Labor government.

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (3.15 pm): The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman forms a key part of the Palaszczuk government's integrity agenda. Report No. 40 of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee provides oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman. The report notes the excellent achievements, as noted by the member for Lockyer, of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman. The committee was fortunate to have met with the Ombudsman, Mr Clarke, and some of his colleagues to have them update us on the achievements of the office of the Ombudsman. The office of the Ombudsman has to deal with an extraordinarily wide array of subject matter. It receives referrals for investigation from the public and the Legislative Assembly and is able to instigate its own investigations.

Despite the significant workload, the office has been able to finalise complaints on average three days quicker than it did in the 2016-17 year. This efficiency has allowed the office of the Ombudsman to complete 1,344 investigations, resulting in 262 total or partial rectifications, and to provide 156 training sessions to public sector officers. Seventy of these were held in regional Queensland.

The absence of a backlog of cases allows the office of the Ombudsman to engage proactively across government to assist agencies to effectively manage compliance and minimise risk, ensuring that the decisions of agencies reflect the Palaszczuk government's integrity agenda. I commend this report to the House.

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (3.17 pm): I rise as a member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to speak to report No. 40, *Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman*. This report confirms that the Queensland Ombudsman finalised 7,244 complaints and made solid progress towards reducing the average time clients are having to wait for resolution. This report also shows that the number of people visiting the Queensland Ombudsman's website rose by 37 per cent, while the effort invested into improving online systems is demonstrating positive efficiencies and providing timely and accurate self-help to clients reaching out for assistance. The value of the Queensland Ombudsman's service to the wider community is also demonstrated by the remarkable figure of 100 per cent of the 296 investigation recommendations made by the office being accepted by the respective agencies.

Looking further into the detail of this report, whilst the level of complaints received by the Ombudsman about state government departments rose marginally, the level of complaints against statutory authorities rose an alarming 14 per cent during the past year. The report lists the Public Trustee, TAFE Queensland and the Office of the Health Ombudsman as having very significant rises in the number of complaints dealt with by the Queensland Ombudsman's office. Furthermore, a 13 per cent rise in complaints against local councils should sound a very loud alarm bell. What this report makes abundantly clear is that local governments, state departments and statutory agencies must put a renewed priority on repairing their tarnished reputations. Since 2014 the Queensland Ombudsman has assumed the oversight role formerly managed by the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. The case load has risen from 358 complaints in 2016-17 to 421 complaints in 2017-18. This undesirable trend suggests that the performance of the primary child safety agencies is slipping.

Furthermore, the 726 complaints received by the Ombudsman in relation to the actions of Queensland Corrective Services adds further evidence to a growing crisis within the wider justice and criminal corrections space.

The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 40 details the Queensland Ombudsman having published two major reports: the *Cairns Regional Council councillor conflicts of interest report*, which has since led to recommendations for amendments to the Local Government Act 2009; and the *Indigenous birth registration report*, which found that 15 per cent to 18 per cent of births to Indigenous mothers were not registered and that the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages had taken inefficient action to remedy the disparity between the registration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous births.

The ongoing investment in staff training as well as public outreach from within the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman appears to be well justified. I commend the quality of the performance discharged by the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman and its 64 officers. I commend this report and its contents to the House.

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (3.20 pm): I also rise to make a short contribution to the report titled *Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman*. I also thank committee members for all of their work on this issue and also the work of the Ombudsman. Whilst it is certainly a very busy task overseeing and investigating government departments, it is required and needed. I want to highlight issues that I regularly hear in my electorate office, and they are to do with the Public Trustee. I noted in the Ombudsman's report that 21 per cent of complaints relate to the Public Trustee. I want to echo the previous comments from the shadow Attorney-General that there needs to be a review into the Public Trustee by the Ombudsman to see how we can improve its work processes so that information can get out to constituents more efficiently and more effectively.

Recently I have had quite a few residents come into my office expressing their frustrations in terms of dealing with the Public Trustee. There was confusion about the process and what can be expected, because people felt that the process was quite slow and unwieldy. The Ombudsman does need to look into this to streamline these processes. When it comes to Public Trustee matters, they are obviously very emotive given the issues. For instance, just recently I had a lady come to see me about her elderly mother who she felt was being subjected to elder abuse by another sibling. She went to the Public Trustee because her elderly mother was not able to look after herself. She felt that the process was very hard, very slow and she was not getting the satisfaction she required. Therefore, she went to the Ombudsman to try to get things moving along. She certainly did appreciate the work that the Ombudsman did on the matter, but again I echo the comments that there needs to be a review into

these processes to ensure that the information is out there so that the processes are not confusing. There needs to be a way to ensure people are educated about the role of the Public Trustee so that people know exactly what it should be doing.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.23 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 41 titled *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner* tabled on 4 July 2019.

I rise to speak about the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's oversight report on the Information Commissioner and her office, with a focus on 2017-18. The committee is required to monitor and review the performance by the Information Commissioner in terms of her functions under the Right to Information Act and the Information Privacy Act. The committee is also required to annually examine reports and strategic review reports of the OIC. The committee must report to the House on any changes to the functions, structures and procedures of the OIC that the committee considers desirable.

In conducting its oversight, the committee met with the Information Commissioner, the Right to Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner at a public oversight meeting on 25 February 2019. The transcript is available on the committee's web page. The committee's oversight report examines the OIC's annual report for 2017-18, focusing on external reviews, privacy advice, complaint and mediation services, and financial performance. I also want to take this opportunity to highlight some of the key features from the public hearing that was held on 25 February 2019, and, as I have stated previously, the transcript is available on the committee's web page.

I first want to turn to the opening statement of the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner noted that the office continues to experience significant demand for its services, with increasing record demand for external reviews. The Information Commissioner noted that its support and audit roles are critical to improvements in agency practices which lead to better government and service delivery outcomes but that this then leads to downward pressure on demand for oversight, external review and privacy complaint functions. It was also noted in the public hearing that it included events which draw significant responses in relation to how agencies deal with mobile apps. The office stated in the public hearing that the privacy audit in relation to agencies' use of mobile apps made recommendations for all agencies about conducting privacy impact assessments before adopting and refreshing technology. It was also noted in the public hearing that community expectations have changed as a result and that government agencies seeking to take advantage of opportunities and challenges associated with technology must have the appropriate safeguards in place as set out in the OIC's audit reports and resources.

It should be noted that the Office of the Information Commissioner celebrates 10 years of right-to-information and privacy legislation in Queensland and, to celebrate this significant milestone, the Office of the Information Commissioner ran several campaigns and events throughout 2019 between Privacy Awareness Week in May and Right to Information Day in September. I was pleased to attend the Office of the Information Commissioner along with other committee members for a morning tea to meet the hardworking staff of the office and celebrate this significant 10-year milestone. Congratulations!

In the time remaining I also want to speak in relation to external reviews. External reviews have had a longstanding practice of continuous improvement, and that culture put the office in good stead as the office came to terms with a 21 per cent increase in workload over 2017-18. It was noted that the three tight-knit teams, with comprehensive management, progressed 624 external review applications and finalised 595. On behalf of the committee, I thank the Information Commissioner, the Right to Information Commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner and other staff of the Information Commissioner.

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.28 pm): As deputy chair of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, I also rise to speak on the *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner* report which is being debated and thank my honourable colleague the chairman, the member for Toohey, for his exposition of where the Information Commissioner is at.

I would like to look at one particular aspect of the Information Commissioner's operations and that is its stewardship of right to information. The member for Toohey spoke about that important milestone of 10 years of having a right to information. On, I believe, two occasions so far, but certainly

one, I have been able to question officers of the Office of the Information Commissioner—the Privacy Commissioner and the Right to Information Commissioner—about their dealings with public sector agencies. I put the question, for want of a better word, to the RTI Commissioner, 'Do you ever come across cases where public sector agencies persist in trying to obstruct access to information and are uncooperative or do not play fair?' I was assured that that never happens. That assurance surprised me, because my own dealings in my relatively short time as a member of parliament would indicate otherwise. I know that my honourable friend the member for Bundamba, whom I spoke to about this yesterday, agrees. Certainly, in her role in pursuing corruption in the Ipswich City Council, she would have experienced the difficulties that that council would have put in place to frustrate access to information that it did not want shared.

I would like to table an article that appears in today's *Southern Free Times*.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Southern Free Times*, dated 17 October 2019, titled 'Council attempts to suppress report' [1868].

It is about a public sector agency that has for more than 12 months fought to retain a report concerning the morale and status of the labour force in that agency. At the end of that period, the Information Commissioner has ruled that the information must be provided in the public interest. The agency involved has now gone to QCAT to appeal that decision. I am talking about the Southern Downs Regional Council.

I caution those involved that it is not, in my opinion, always the case that public sector agencies will cooperate. Sometimes those with advantage to be gained by concealing facts will use whatever means there are at their disposal to do so. If an agency is required to cooperate with the right to information people, how do we know that they are providing all the information? It can take a long time of appeals, where applicants are aware of the existence of documents, to demonstrate that. The example of 12 months for the *Southern Free Times* to obtain information is one example. I caution those involved that they ought to be alert to the possibility that not all people always act with the best of motives. I ask them to bear that in mind. Other than that, I support the report and commend it to the House.

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.32 pm): I rise to speak to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 41, titled *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner*. The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee has oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner. This includes, but is not limited to, monitoring and reviewing the performance of the Information Commissioner and examining each annual report tabled in the Legislative Assembly under the Right to Information Act and the Information Privacy Act.

The Office of the Information Commissioner's annual report 2017-18 was tabled in the House on 15 October 2018. On 25 February 2019 the Information Commissioner, the Right to Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner attended a public meeting of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

During the 2017-18 reporting period, the Office of the Information Commissioner finalised its implementation of recommendations from the independent strategic review. To remind members of the House who may not recall, the strategic review was finalised in April 2017 and tabled in this House in May 2017. The Office of the Information Commissioner identified it as a priority focus to implement these recommendations during the reporting period. In the public meeting, the Information Commissioner advised the committee that the office had finalised its responsibilities with regard to those recommendations.

Another area that the office of the commissioner focused on during the period was conducting a training needs analysis to identify the needs and requirements of stakeholders and, as a result, implementing new training communication and engagement and career growth strategies.

It was noted that the Office of the Information Commissioner physically relocated its office during the reporting period. The annual report noted that this move in October 2017 will bring savings to the office's leasing costs and outgoings. The relocation also provided an opportunity for the office to adopt more contemporary ICT technologies and printing services which will reduce overhead printing costs compared to that of previous years.

The areas of the Office of the Information Commissioner that were reported on included the external reviews, privacy advice and complaint mediation, and assistance and monitoring services. The external review service experienced a 44 per cent increase in external review applications finalised in the 2017-18 period. Sixty-six percent of the applicants were satisfied with the conduct of the reviews and 94 per cent of agencies were satisfied with the conduct of the review.

During the public meeting when we spoke about that 66 per cent satisfaction rate from applicants it was noted that, in many cases, the applicants were unhappy with the outcome and therefore associated that outcome with the overall process management. We found that the applicants could not separate the result from the process.

During the public meeting the Information Commissioner commented about the increase in the number of applicants who were individuals. She noted that the number of individual applicants would have doubled between 2015 and 2019. That increase was attributed to the growing awareness in the community of their information access rights. We discussed in the public meeting a number of high-profile personal information incidents particularly involving big organisations like Facebook. For a government that seeks to increase transparency in decision-making, it is a good thing that members of the public feel they have a pathway if they have concerns about privacy.

With respect to privacy advice and complaint mediation services, some great metrics were achieved. Eighty-eight per cent of agencies were satisfied with privacy complaint mediation and 100 per cent of privacy complaints were finalised. Assistance and monitoring service metrics were likewise impressive. One hundred per cent of agencies were satisfied with the information assistance provided and the quality of the information provided. I am especially pleased with the data on the training that was provided by the office, with 33 training activities provided during the period and 13,900 people undergoing training, whether online or face to face.

During the public meeting there was also comment about this increase. During the public meeting it was stated that it was reported to us in 2018, that if the Office of the Information Commissioner did not receive additional permanent funding for four review officers as recommended by the independent strategic review, there would be trouble keeping pace with the external review applications. I can report to the House that following this review period—if members can recall, in not this year's budget but last year's budget—there was an allocation of \$2.5 million over four years plus \$644,000 per annum—

(Time expired)

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (3.37 pm): I rise to speak to the report titled *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner*. An examination of the 2017-18 annual report and a public hearing held on 25 February 2019 by the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee were the foundations of this review. Before I go into the detail of the review, I would like to take this opportunity to once again congratulate the Office of the Information Commissioner and wish it a happy 10th birthday. So much has changed in the 10 years since it was established. It was a pleasure to be on hand for the recent celebrations.

During the 2017-18 financial year, the Office of the Information Commissioner recorded a self-confessed year of record demand. I know from my previous experience as an officer in charge of police and a local government councillor that, across the board, the expectations of right to information have increased year upon year. The doubling of individual applications since the establishment of this office is a further example of that growth.

Despite the complexity of these increased demands, the office has achieved a 95 per cent finalisation rate for the year and a generally high level of customer satisfaction. The office also made a number of critical submissions to parliamentary inquiries that have helped inform debate within this House.

It is helpful for the House to understand the identified priorities for the last financial year. The office focused on implementing training, communications and engagement strategies as well as career growth strategies for their own staff that were developed under recommendations of the independent strategic review. The office also reviewed training products and was intent on focusing on engagement with regional agencies, which I am very pleased about.

The office conducted the fourth self-assessed electronic audit across all Queensland government agency sectors and reported its aggregated results and findings to parliament. It is clear from the outcomes of this report that if an agency is going to do something electronically they should not just make a token effort of putting an app up; they need to make sure they do the research and it is a fair dinkum survey so that the community has confidence in the government agency running it. The office also progressed a number of key privacy developments, including a reference to the Law Reform Commission on surveillance, and is exploring issues arising from the broader review by the Queensland government of right to information and information privacy acts.

One of the highlights for me was the focus on training and delivery throughout the year via different channels. There were 13,197 participants who completed the Office of Information Commissioner's online training courses, with 98 per cent of training participants satisfied with the

sessions provided. The office also promoted awareness through activities including the right to information day, the Solomon Lecture and Privacy Awareness Week and also conducted their 10th birthday celebrations. Of note, the website received 204,962 visits.

The office should be congratulated for its success over the year, especially in light of the fact that it was forced to work with a reported deficit of \$484,000, which was an increase of \$160,000 on the prior reporting period. This is another critical public agency severely underfunded by this Labor government. Nonetheless, they will continue to do the work that they do to a high standard despite the difficulties they face and with less budget provided. I thank the Information Commissioner, the Right to Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner for their commitment and diligence in this important work in an ever-changing area.

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (3.42 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's report titled *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner*, June 2019, which was tabled in the House on 4 July 2019. In discharging this oversight role the committee reviewed the annual report of the Office of the Information Commissioner and held a public hearing on 25 February 2019 which was attended by the Information Commissioner, the Right to Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner.

As noted in the committee's report, the OIC is to be congratulated on its performance in the 2017-18 period. The OIC broadly exceeded its service delivery targets in key metrics such as total external review applications finalised, total privacy complaints finalised, agency review satisfaction and total review applications resolved informally. The OIC reported a record level of demand for its services, which makes its performance in the 2017-18 period all the more impressive. Additionally, the OIC undertook a range of community engagement activities, including 175 meetings, regional visits and information sessions.

I note that on 1 July 2019 the OIC celebrated the 10-year anniversary of Queensland's right to information and information privacy scheme brought in by a Labor government—another transparency measure Labor should be very proud of. At this 10-year milestone Queenslanders should be encouraged that the OIC continues to ensure government agencies are held to the highest standards of information management. This reflects the Palaszczuk government's strong commitment to integrity and transparency. I commend this report to the House.

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (3.43 pm): I rise as a member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to speak about report No. 41, *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner*. For the benefit of the House, might this report serve as further evidence as to what is so fundamentally wrong with the present government and aspects of the Public Service with regard to presenting as honest and accountable at all times.

The Office of the Information Commissioner appears to have been treated as a temporary appendage. It had been operating from temporary locations, with temporary resources and staff. The Office of the Information Commissioner reported a record demand through 2017-18 with increasing record demand expected for external reviews in 2018-19. This report highlights how delayed funding recommended by an independent review was literally granted at the eleventh hour. Fortunately, this belated granting of permanent funding allowed the Office of the Information Commissioner to retain temporary staff and the capability to stay, barely, within sight of its service delivery targets.

The Office of the Information Commissioner reported a 44 per cent increase in external review application finalisations. To quote from the public committee hearings—

The greatest increase in applicant type from 2015-16 to now has been individuals. It is projected that at the close of 2018-19 applications from individuals will have doubled across those three years.

With such growth in demand for services occurring, it is not unexpected that the median wait period of 102 days exceeds service delivery targets. The OIC cited factors in reduced expediency to include, No. 1, the challenging behaviour of applicants and the sufficiency of search issues at the agency level and, No. 2, agencies seeking multiple extensions of time to do these searches or provide submissions. Hence it comes as no surprise that only 66 per cent of applicants were satisfied with the conduct of reviews, as evidenced by the Office of the Information Commissioner being hamstrung by the acts and omissions of the other government agencies and third parties. Expending extra time and resources to achieve finalisation materially harms the resources the office can provide to delivery of privacy advice and complaint mediation services.

Most notably, the Office of the Information Commissioner is also tasked with assessing bills brought before this House for their potential impact on privacy rights, along with the formal submissions to parliamentary inquiries, commissions and government. If the Office of the Information Commissioner

remains underresourced and overworked the ramifications often manifest in added complexity, costly legal cases and lengthy pauses across all manner of proceedings. In concluding, I return to my opening comments and reinforce that the contents of this report are important and highlight the need for action by the Palaszczuk government.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.47 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report titled No. 42 *Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission* tabled on 4 July 2019.

I rise to speak about the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's oversight report on the performance of the Queensland Family and Child Commission and the committee's examination of the commission's annual report for 2017-18. The committee met publicly with senior officers of the Queensland Family and Child Commission on 25 February 2019. The hearing transcript is available on the committee's web page. At the meeting the committee considered staffing challenges faced by the QFCC and the QFCC's progress on implementing recommendations from the Anti-Cyberbullying Task Force. The committee also looked at the QFCC's progress in implementing recommendations from the blue card system report and an update on the implementation of the Our Way strategy.

The committee's oversight report examines the QFCC's annual report, child protection reforms and systems reviews aimed at promoting and advocating for the safety, wellbeing and best interests of all children. Appearing at the public hearing that was held on 25 February were Phillip Brooks, Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission; Ms Tracy Fogarty, Director, Office of the Commissioners, Queensland Family and Child Commission; and Ms Cheryl Vardon, Principal Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission. Ms Vardon, in her opening statement to the committee, noted that the commission is responsible for providing oversight of the child protection system, working with services and the sector to improve systems as much as they can to keep Queensland kids happy, safe and well.

In her opening statement Ms Vardon also noted that in Queensland there are 1.2 million children aged between zero and 18 years, and that that is a significant number of children. Ms Vardon went on to tell the committee that the commission does its work through connecting, reviewing and influencing, and that influencing is a key part of what the commission does. Ms Vardon said that the commission is proud of their real collaboration with other stakeholders, children, families, communities, the non-government sector and government departments. The commission recommends solutions for some of the most sensitive, critical and complex issues that one can imagine to do with children and young people and their families—issues in which no single department can assist alone.

One of the commission's areas of focus is raising awareness about what young people need as advised by the children themselves. The commissioner advised the committee about the commission's focus on monitoring, reviewing, evaluating and reporting on the child protection and family support system progress on reforms; and promoting the prevention of child deaths. That evaluation runs alongside a research agenda with up-to-date information and advice. At the hearing, the commissioner also advised the committee that they work with partners to strengthen capability, capacity and culture and, importantly, that they educate parents, families, communities and professionals on keeping young children safe.

The commissioner referred to work the Office of the Queensland Family and Child Commission has undertaken. She asked the committee to acknowledge that piece of work and I do so in my presentation today on report No. 42. The work is called the Growing up in Queensland project, otherwise known as *This place I call home*. In that piece of work, the commission gave a platform to more than 7,000 of the 1.2 million children and young people who call Queensland home. The work encouraged children to speak openly and honestly about their communities, their hopes and dreams and how they would like government and decision-makers to support their needs now and into the future. The work provided very significant statistical information in terms of policies around children and young people having their say. What the commission heard provides evidence to government and from government to industry on priorities such as giving all children a great start. On behalf of the committee, I thank the commissioner and the staff of the QFCC.

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.52 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's report No. 42, *Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission*. I acknowledge my fellow committee members: the chair and member for Toohey and the members for Mansfield, Macalister, Lockyer and Mirani. I acknowledge the great work that the committee does. The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is a very busy committee. I commend our acting committee secretary, Mary Westcott, for the great work that she and her staff do for us.

As a member of the LNP, I am very proud of the Queensland Family and Child Commission, which was an initiative of the LNP government. It arose from the findings of the Carmody inquiry, the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. When I look through the lines of activity that the commission has, it is apparent that they really do great work. That is obvious even from a cursory look at the sorts of things that they do on a day-to-day basis. The member for Toohey spoke about connecting, reviewing and influencing, which is exactly right. The Growing up in Queensland project is a particularly impressive one. The 7,000 or so young Queenslanders who had an opportunity to participate in that project are a great source of insight into how young people engage and how they see the world. Considering that they are the ones who will be taking over from us sooner or later, I think it is a very good thing.

Mr Krause interjected.

Mr LISTER: 'Not too soon', I hear from my friend the honourable member for Scenic Rim. I am going to try to live forever; I will give it a damn good try.

The insights that those children and young people provide are very important. It follows that the Youth Advisory Council that the commission hosts has recently had members appointed in the field of child cyberbullying, into which there has been a bipartisan inquiry. It is a matter that concerns all of us in all of our electorates in terms of the omnipresence of social media and the impacts that that has on young people. It is great that the Queensland Family and Child Commission is on the beat to gather information, educate and advocate in that space.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission is also doing important work in reviewing how things have changed since the Carmody report. It is vital that whenever you embark on a process of reform or some activity, you look back and say, 'What did we set out to achieve and have we achieved it?' It is very good to see that that is part of the Queensland Family and Child Commission's role.

I refer to the tragic death of Tialeigh Palmer. The work that the Queensland Family and Child Commission is doing in that space is important in informing how we deal with missing children. We never want to see those sorts of things happen again. Commissioner Vardon and her staff are doing excellent work there. I commend the report to the House.

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.56 pm): I rise to speak to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's report No. 42, *Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission*. The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee has oversight of the commission. This includes but is not limited to monitoring and reviewing the performance of its functions, examining the QFCC's annual report tabled in the Legislative Assembly and commenting, if appropriate, on any aspect of the report. The Queensland Family and Child Commission's annual report for 2017-18 was tabled in the House on 28 September 2018.

The commissioner, the principal commissioner and the director attended the public meeting of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee on 25 February 2019. During that public meeting we discussed with the commissioner a number of the bodies of work that the commission is currently doing. In relation to child protection reforms, the commissioner reported that nine of the 10 QFCC-led recommendations from the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry have been delivered and the remaining recommendation is on track for delivery.

Further, the QFCC had assisted in the implementation of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by providing advice to the lead agencies. They were also involved in providing submissions to Senate inquiries, the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board as well as this parliament in relation to relevant bills. During the public meeting, we also discussed in depth some of the systems reviews that the commission is currently undertaking. Of interest to the House will be the blue card and foster care systems.

I note that at the public meeting the commission mentioned the systems review of individual agencies' findings following the death of a child. They specifically noted the work that they are doing in assisting the Minister for Education with her water safety round table, stating that the prevention of deaths is key to their work. In relation to the water safety round table, I note that when it comes to

deaths of children with autism spectrum disorders aged 14 years and under, drownings subsequent to wandering accounted for 90 per cent. I note the comments that suicide and transport related deaths continue to be the leading causes of external deaths for children.

I note that both the member for Toohey and the member for Southern Downs commented on the work in the report on the Growing up in Queensland initiative. I would urge all members, even if it is not within their portfolio, to have a look at that report. It is an amazing body of work. In the public hearing the commissioner advised us that in Queensland there are 1.2 million children in the zero to 18 age range.

The Growing up in Queensland initiative was a massive undertaking by that organisation. They engaged through surveys and face to face with 7,000 children of all ages throughout Queensland. For those members who are wondering how that engagement works, for children of a younger age that engagement often occurred through drawings because obviously their ability to provide other information was somewhat limited. The report that has been provided as a result of that work is absolutely amazing.

Other engagement activities included the development of the youth participation strategy and plan. I note the commission has established the Youth Advisory Council. Obviously there is ongoing direct engagement through visits to schools and communities. The commission advocates for the safety and wellbeing of children. They are doing an amazing amount of work in areas that are not only rewarding but also, in many instances, quite confronting. I congratulate the commission on the work they are doing to protect our children and advocate for them.

Debate, on motion of Mrs McMahon, adjourned.

PRIVILEGE

Correction to Record of Proceedings

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (4.00 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I wish to correct the record. Yesterday during the private member's motion I stated that Minister Lynham's announcement was made on 24 May when in fact it was made on 24 September.

COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Portfolio Committees, Referral of Auditor-General's Reports

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.01 pm): I seek to advise the House of the determinations made by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly at its meeting today. The committee has resolved, pursuant to standing order 194B, that the Auditor-General's report to parliament No. 2 of 2019-20 titled *Managing the sustainability of local government services* be referred to the Economics and Governance Committee and the Auditor-General's report to parliament No. 3 of 2019-20 titled *Managing cyber security risks* be referred to the Transport and Public Works Committee.

MOTION

Amendment to Standing Orders

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.01 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That schedule 6 of the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended in accordance with the amendments circulated in my name effective immediately.

Amendment to Standing Orders to be moved by the Leader of the House

1. SCHEDULE 6 (PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES)—

Omit, insert

SCHEDULE 6—PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

- (1) In accordance with s.88 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, the following table establishes the Portfolio Committees of the Legislative Assembly and identifies their primary areas of responsibility; and
- (2) A reference to a Minister is deemed to include departments, statutory authorities, government owned corporations and other administrative units reporting to the Minister and parts thereof that report to the Minister with respect to the Minister's responsibilities as set out in the Administrative Arrangements.

Portfolio Committee	Area of Responsibility	Ministers	Oversight Responsibility
Economics and Governance Committee	Premier and Cabinet Trade Treasury Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs	Premier and Minister for Trade Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	Auditor-General Integrity Commissioner Family Responsibilities Commission
State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee	State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning Natural Resources, Mines and Energy Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries	Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries	
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee	Justice and Attorney-General Police and Corrective Services Fire and Emergency Services	Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services Minister for Fire and Emergency Services	Electoral Commissioner Information Commissioner Ombudsman Queensland Family and Child Commission
Transport and Public Works Committee	Transport and Main Roads Housing, Public Works, Digital Technology and Sport	Minister for Transport and Main Roads Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport	
Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee	Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and Cross River Rail Environment, Great Barrier Reef, Science and Arts	Minister for Innovation and Tourism Industry Development and Minister for Cross River Rail Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts	
Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee	Health and Ambulance Services Communities, Disability Services and Seniors Child Safety, Youth and Women Domestic and Family Violence Prevention	Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services Minister for Communities and Minister for Disability Services and Seniors Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence	Health Ombudsman

Portfolio Committee	Area of Responsibility	Ministers	Oversight Responsibility
Education, Employment and Small Business Committee	Education Industrial Relations Employment and Small Business Training and Skills Development	Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development	

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 3357, on motion of Ms Grace—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.02 pm), continuing: Just prior to the lunch break the honourable minister—

Mr Krause interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will take that interjection. The honourable Minister for Industrial Relations was going to move that I be further heard because she loved what I was saying about the Liberal National Party's strong record when it comes to industrial relations and our reforms to the workers compensation laws.

Mr Krause interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: One would not want to filibuster, member for Scenic Rim. The Liberal National Party's industrial relations and workers compensation reforms led to, as I said before the lunch break, the lowest rate of premium for business owners for workers compensation. In fact, it was \$1.20 out of \$100 of wages. Under Labor it used to be \$1.47. The LNP reduced it to \$1.20. We ensured the scheme was the most viable over the long term. We reduced the average premium rate for a Queensland business by 17 per cent. The Liberal National Party reduce taxes and Labor increase taxes. Labor add more taxes and the LNP reduce taxes. We will do it again. We will reduce taxes and introduce no new taxes from November 2020.

We also maintained high return-to-work outcomes for injured workers to ensure a well-balanced scheme. In 2014-15 it was 93 per cent. We lifted the target from 90 to 95 per cent to continue to raise the bar on safety standards and help injured workers get back on their feet. As I mentioned earlier, we will monitor the impact of the changes put forward under this legislation and look forward to the next statutory review which will be due by 30 June 2023. We look forward to a Liberal National Party dominated parliamentary committee conducting that statutory review in 2023.

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (4.04 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The bill gives effect to recommendations arising from the second independent review of the Queensland workers compensation scheme as required under the review provisions of the act, contained in section 584A. This is the second such independent review, with the last one completed in 2013. Of course, while only the second formal review, the Queensland workers compensation scheme has undergone frequent review and reform since the early 1990s.

The objective of the five-yearly review at its core is to report on whether the scheme is maintaining a balance between providing fair and appropriate benefits for injured workers or dependants, and ensuring reasonable cost levels for employers. This is not always an easy balance to strike and is one that is contested to varying degrees by relevant stakeholders. It is a balance vital to the proper operation and continued confidence in a scheme that is called upon when workers are often at their most vulnerable. As a government, we have provided employers with premium savings of over \$75 million

over the past two years alone through the early payment discount and premium discount for employers who take on apprentices, while at the same time delivering significant reforms such as the NIIS and restoring the common law rights of injured workers in this state—rights unjustly taken away by the former Newman LNP government.

The review completed by Professor David Peetz of Griffith University—and I commend Professor Peetz on his thorough report—indicated that stakeholders continue to view the scheme as financially sound, as involving low costs for employers and as providing fair treatment for both employers and injured workers. Stakeholders to the review included unions, employer and legal representatives, medical and allied health associations, and insurers.

During the review some stakeholders also commented on the high level of stakeholder engagement that characterises the scheme, indicating a commendable culture of conciliation that should continue. This is not to say, however, that the scheme cannot be improved. It is to these necessary improvements that the bill turns.

The Peetz review made 57 recommendations—15 proposing legislative amendments, of which 12 are given effect by the bill before us. Key among these is amending the meaning of injury for a psychiatric or psychological disorder to remove ‘the major’ as a qualifier for employment’s ‘significant contribution’ to the injury. This amendment signals a return to the definition and threshold that was in place prior to changes made by the former LNP Newman government in 2013.

The 2013 change resulted in a higher, though marginally so, rejection rate for psychological and psychiatric claims. The review concluded that the 2013 change was probably made for its symbolic value for the parties rather than its practical impact. I think it is symbolic—symbolic of the LNP’s consistent diminishing of worker rights and of workers generally in the employment relationship.

The review found that there seemed no good reason for Queensland to be out of step with the other jurisdictions in Australia, none of which appear to require work to be the major contributory factor because surely work being a significant contributor to a worker sustaining a psychological or psychiatric injury in the workplace is a high enough threshold to facilitate access to the scheme. Certainly it is for a government that sees people as valuable and human resources rather than mere numbers to diminish when calculating employer premiums. As I said earlier, it is about finding the balance.

The bill also amends the act to require that insurers take all reasonable steps to provide reasonable services to support workers with a psychological injury during their claim determination on a without prejudice basis. Research clearly shows that early intervention for injuries and prompt claims determination both assist to minimise the impact and duration of an injury and improve return-to-work experiences. Six of the eleven submitters to our committee inquiry process specifically supported the new requirements, including the Australian Industry Group and Shine Lawyers.

Sincere apologies issued by employers to an employee following a workplace injury have also been shown to assist to minimise the impact and duration of an injury and improve return-to-work experiences. However, the review found that fear over such apologies being interpreted as an admission of liability are reducing their use. The bill exempts expressions of regret and apologies provided by employers following a workplace injury from being considered in any assessment of liability in a civil action brought under the act.

I note the support from both Shine Lawyers and the Australian Lawyers Alliance in regard to this amendment, as well as the concerns raised by the Queensland Law Society in regard to potential evidentiary use of an apology in criminal proceedings. The Law Society raised interesting points—but points to my mind that only a criminal court deliberating on the facts of a case can truly determine. Time will further inform this discussion.

The bill also extends workers compensation coverage to unpaid interns, requires employers to demonstrate that their appointed rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators are appropriately qualified, and enhances rehabilitation and return-to-work outcomes for injured workers. It allows insurers to waive the six-month time limit on lodging a claim if a worker lodges a claim within 20 business days of developing an incapacity for work from their injury. They are all sensible, measured and fair improvements to a system that must equally balance the needs of employees and employers.

The bill also makes amendments to the Further Education and Training Act 2014 to address concerns raised in the Queensland Training Ombudsman review of group training arrangements in Queensland and in its 2017-18 annual report pertaining to an imbalance in the employer/apprentice/trainee relationship created by legislative amendments again unsurprisingly made by the previous LNP government.

Once again, it is a Labor government, our government, that will restore protections for apprentices and trainees—who are vulnerable workers, who do not have the same bargaining powers as employers to ensure fairness in the workplace. The proposed amendments will make an appreciable difference to trainee and apprentice outcomes, particularly in respect of contested cancellations, temporary suspensions or circumstances of inadequate training.

The bill also amends the TAFE Queensland Act 2013 in regard to diversity on the board and repeals the Commonwealth Games Arrangements Act 2011 following the successful delivery of the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and the dissolution of Goldoc on 31 December 2018.

I take this opportunity to thank the individuals and organisations who made written submissions on the bill or appeared before our committee hearing. I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations for bringing in these improvements to the scheme, the departmental officers who briefed the committee, our committee secretariat and my fellow committee members. A special thank you to my colleague the member for Bancroft, who kindly stepped into my role as chair of the committee while I was interstate.

An honourable member: What about the member for Pumicestone?

Ms LINARD: I did. I did acknowledge my fellow committee members—which means all of you. The committee made one recommendation—that the bill be passed. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs WILSON** (Pumicestone—LNP) (4.12 pm): I rise to speak on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, which was introduced on 22 August 2019 by the Minister for Education and the Minister for Industrial Relations and referred to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, of which I am a member, for detailed consideration.

From the outset I would like to thank my fellow committee members, the committee secretariat and the Hansard reporters for their work on this bill. I also acknowledge and thank the 11 organisations who made submissions to the committee. I also thank officers of the Department of Education and the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training who worked on putting this bill together and for their contributions during its consideration.

Section 584A of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 requires a review of the operation of the scheme to be completed at least once every five years. Professor David Peetz was appointed to conduct the second review of the scheme, and his report was tabled in parliament on 29 June 2018. During his review, Professor Peetz found that the scheme was performing well. It was financially sound and involved low costs for employers, in addition to providing fair treatment for both employers and injured workers. The Peetz review did not find the need for major reform. Rather, opportunities to improve the process and experience for injured workers were identified. Fifty-seven recommendations were made, of which 15 proposed legislative amendments.

The objective of the bill is to implement 12 of these proposed 15 legislative amendments, which the LNP will not be opposing. As the minister explained during her introductory speech, three of the proposed 15 legislative amendments involve the potential extension of workers compensation coverage to the gig economy. Therefore, these three recommendations will be considered separately and, as I understand it, work is currently underway. Perhaps the minister can extend on this during her wrap-up.

The amendments proposed in this bill before us primarily focus on enhancing claims management processes along with enhancing the experience of injured workers. In addition, the amendments will provide increased support for vulnerable workers, particularly those with psychological injuries. The objectives of the amendments give greater protections for apprentices and trainees. I can say as a mother of five sons who have and will make their way into apprenticeships and traineeships that I am particularly pleased to see these important amendments make their way through this parliament.

The overall objective of this bill includes the following: protecting the positions of apprentices and trainees who are vulnerable workers and do not have the same bargaining power as employers; minimising continuing adverse impacts on apprentices and trainees' training arrangements to improve quality training outcomes; giving apprentices or trainees the best chance to complete their apprenticeship or traineeship and the best chance for the employer to emerge with a skilled worker, hence realising the economic benefits for all parties and the community generally; addressing the existing legislative gap that exists in the Further Education and Training Act 2014 to enable an employer or an apprentice or trainee to seek permission from the chief executive to cancel the training contract; providing greater clarity to enable the chief executive to resolve any issues related to issuing an apprenticeship or traineeship completion certificate; and clarifying the obligations of the supervising registered training organisation to complete an employer resource assessment and resolve practical implementation issues with certain provisions of the Further Education and Training Act 2014.

I am very proud that the LNP supports a strong and sustainable workers compensation system in Queensland. We support a system that ensures injured workers are rehabilitated and can return to work as quickly as possible, whilst at the same time promoting low premiums for businesses. It was, after all, the LNP government that made significant progress in ensuring that the scheme was viable over the long term and reduced average premium rates to Queensland businesses by 17 per cent. It was the LNP that made Queensland premiums the cheapest in Australia, and we achieved this whilst ensuring injured workers were assisted and could promptly return safely to work. The LNP will continue to monitor the impact of premiums that businesses are paying to ensure that we are providing the best workers compensation scheme in Australia.

The purpose of these amendments directly addresses the key findings of the Peetz review around gaps in return-to-work processes. The review identified a particular gap that exists in relation to insurer responsibilities. The report states—

... after a worker's entitlement to compensation ceases (for example, an injured worker receives their notice of assessment and accepts a lump sum payment and is no longer entitled to compensation but may still not be able to return to work). Insurers already have in place programs of some type to support those who have not returned to work at the end of their statutory claim, and those who are not working when they lodge a common law claim. However, there is no support at all for those who lose their jobs sometime after insurers administratively closed their claim because they had returned to work.

In wrapping up, the committee's task was to consider the policy to be achieved by the legislation and the application of fundamental legislative principles. On both counts the committee was satisfied. We were tasked to consider whether the bill had sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and to the institution of parliament. After examination of the bill, including consideration of the policy objectives to be implemented, stakeholders' views and information provided by the departments, the committee was united in its recommendation that the bill be passed.

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (4.18 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I congratulate the minister, the member for McConnell, and her ministerial staff and departmental staff for the information we received from the department and the minister's office. I thank the 11 stakeholders who came to the public hearings. I also thank my fellow committee members: the chair, the member for Nudgee, and the other members of parliament who were on the committee.

The workers compensation scheme is a great Labor policy and something that we believe in very strongly on this side of the House. As a former employer I had some great relationships with my staff through the workers compensation scheme. It is a very good scheme. If you look at the record it is probably, if not the best in Australia, the best in the world. This side of the House, the Labor side, is very proud of this scheme. Queensland's return-to-work rate increased to 93.6 per cent last financial year. I am pleased to see that the bill continues the Palaszczuk government's and Labor's commitment to ensuring Queensland's injured workers receive the rehabilitation support and assistance they need to return to work. That is a big thing in getting people back to work and helping them get over their injuries.

Rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators have long held a critical role in large businesses and high-risk industries in supporting positive return-to-work outcomes. Coordinators are a key communication point between employers, insurers and workers and facilitate our injured workers at the workplace level through their practical understanding of injuries, rehabilitation and the workers compensation process. The Newman government—there we go again—removed accreditation requirements for rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators in 2013. How well did that go? Stakeholders, including employers and workers, have raised concerns that removing these accreditation requirements has impacted the skills being developed by the coordinators.

This bill recognises the critical skills needed by coordinators by requiring that employers must demonstrate their coordinators are appropriately qualified to perform their roles. To assist employers in demonstrating their coordinators are appropriately qualified, the Workers' Compensation Regulator will be able to approve industry developed training courses and qualifications for coordinators. These courses are not mandated, but rather provide employers with another way of being satisfied their coordinators are appropriately qualified. Employers will also be required to notify their insurer with details about the coordinators and how they are appropriately qualified. This information will in turn be used by the Workers' Compensation Regulator to deliver tailored education and support directly to them. The administrative burden of these notifications has been minimised by streamlining these notifications with an employer's annual insurance premium renewal. There will also be a transitional period to provide employers and coordinators a reasonable time in which to comply with these requirements.

To further assist in achieving meaningful return-to-work outcomes the bill includes important amendments that ensure that the rehabilitation and return-to-work progress of injured workers is not interrupted or stopped at crucial times either during, or at the end of, the worker's statutory claim. That is very important. The bill includes a mandatory requirement for workers to be referred to an accreditation rehabilitation and return-to-work program by their insurer if their statutory compensation ends but they have not yet returned to work because of their injury. Workers will also be able to make a request for a referral to these accredited programs at any time during their claim.

Overall, the initiatives in this bill will further contribute to Queensland's excellent record in improving rehabilitation and return-to-work outcomes for injured workers while providing flexibility and balancing costs for Queensland employers. What a great scheme this is! As I said earlier, I would like to thank the minister because this scheme protects workers. That is something we do on this side of the House. I have noticed that that side of the House takes credit for looking after workers, but I am afraid it is only this side of the House that stands up for workers in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (4.23 pm): I also rise to add my support and the KAP's support to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, of which I am a member, had the opportunity to look at this bill in detail and conduct public hearings. I would like to thank our chair, the member for Nudgee; the deputy chair and member for Currumbin; the member for Maryborough; the member for Pumicestone and the member for Cairns. This bill required a considerable amount of—

Mr Healy: Attention.

Mr DAMETTO: Attention; that is right. I will take that interjection. There were only a couple of things I had concerns about, but these were put to rest as a result of the committee process and asking stakeholders questions. In relation to workers compensation claims in Queensland, some of the pushback I receive from employers about the current scheme is that they are concerned that, if a worker presents to a doctor and the doctor ticks off, 'Yes, you have been injured,' they automatically go to workers compensation. The next step is the employer or workers compensation itself has to prove if the claim is fraudulent, which is a bit of a concern to some employers. One thing that concerns me is the part of the bill that includes mental health injuries, which will now be taken into consideration.

When I worked in the mining industry you always had a pre-employment medical. The pre-employment medical pointed out if you had a back, leg or other injury that prevented you from working to your full capacity. What concerns me about the mental health side of things is: will we now be doing psychological testing of employees before we engage them in our workplaces? We support the fact that mental health injuries are now going to be recognised under the workers compensation act, but at the same time I have a concern about that. It worries some employers out there, and I want to put that on the record.

In relation to expressions of regret and apologies to workers, I am glad that is now in the bill. It will mean a lot to the many people who have gone through a workplace injury to have the employer make those apologies without taking on any onus or risk of being sued later down the track. As I said, that is a good change to the legislation. It is also good to see that the bill takes into consideration some of the rehabilitation processes and the fact that we will be able to see more people looked after better while going through the rehabilitation process.

As someone who has been through the workers compensation process—as some people may know, I lost a finger in the workplace—having the correct rehabilitation all the way through your process and not being worried about the fact that—

Mr Healy interjected.

Mr DAMETTO: Yes, it is definitely gone.

Mr Healy: Who did you give it to?

Mr DAMETTO: My wife. She wears it around her neck. I am joking. She takes a bit of me wherever she goes. The fact that there will be uninterrupted rehabilitation will put a lot of workers who have suffered an injury at ease. I will wind up now but, as I said, this bill has our support and, by the looks of it, that of both sides of the House. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (4.27 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which should come as absolutely no surprise, but I was surprised to hear the member for Hinchinbrook lost a finger. I was not aware of that. I must pay a little bit more attention. He has been appearing in the media a fair bit recently, but they did not focus on his hands.

Mr Dametto interjected.

Mr HEALY: I will take that interjection. Section 584A of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 requires the minister with responsibility for workers compensation to ensure that a review of the operation of the scheme is completed at least once every five years. As one would expect, not only is a review needed but also it ensures that the legislation is effective and efficient.

An independent reviewer, Professor David Peetz, was appointed to conduct a second review of the scheme, and he was required to present the review by 30 June 2018. The terms of reference for the review were to report to the parliament on the following: (1) the performance of the scheme in meeting the objectives of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act; (2) emerging issues facing the scheme; and (3) the effectiveness of current rehabilitation and return-to-work programs and policy settings, including ways to increase the current return-to-work rate, which is absolutely fundamental and essential to this process.

The professor conducted targeted consultation and obtained written submissions from key stakeholders, including unions, employer and legal representatives, medical and allied health associations, and insurers. That can best be described as fairly extensive. The review was tabled in parliament on 29 June 2018. The review found that the scheme is performing well; is financially sound; involves low costs for employers, which is important; and provides fair treatment for both employers and, most importantly, injured workers. This is a win-win for both parties. While major reform was not recommended, opportunities were identified to improve the process and experience for injured workers. This review is about ensuring we increase the efficiencies and we have better outcomes. As we have heard from previous speakers, the review made 57 recommendations including 15 proposed legislative amendments.

The objective of the bill is to implement 12 of the review's legislative recommendations focused on improving the process and experience of injured workers, including the following: clarifying WorkCover Queensland's ability to fund and provide programs and incentives that support employers improving health and safety performance, after consulting with the regulator under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 or any other relevant health and safety regulator; exempting expressions of regret and apologies provided by employers following a workplace injury from being considered in any assessment of liability for damages brought under the act to align with the approach taken in the Civil Liability Act 2003, which is very important; providing an additional way that employers can ensure that rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators are appropriately qualified, and requiring employers to provide details of their rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators to insurers, to support compliance and the provision of advisory services to coordinators; and requiring self-insured employers to report injuries and any payments made to injured workers to their insurer, aligning their obligations with the existing obligations on employers insured with WorkCover Queensland.

There are a range of other recommendations that I will not go through, but one important one is amending the meaning of injury for a psychiatric or psychological disorder to remove 'the major' as a qualifier for employment's 'significant contribution' to the injury. Everybody inside this chamber and outside this chamber recognises the issues we have with mental health, so to see it recognised in this review is fundamentally important. As stated, these changes will see improvements to the process and, more importantly, a better outcome for injured workers.

This bill also makes amendments to the Further Education and Training Act 2014. This is vitally important not just in my electorate in Cairns but also in other regional areas throughout Queensland. TAFE is an important driver. It qualifies our kids and moves them forward into better jobs—it is not just our kids, but all members of the community.

In 2014, the Vocational Education Training and Employment Act was repealed and replaced with the Further Education and Training Act 2014. This act was introduced to provide a legislative framework to allow the parties to a training contract—that is, employers, apprentices and trainees—to directly negotiate key training and employment issues. This is about enhancing and progressing the opportunities and ensuring the communication between the employers and those in the training sector.

However, since the introduction of the legislation, it has been recognised that the relationship between an employer and an apprentice or trainee has not always been equal. This is something that I believe personally and it is a Labor value: we have to have equity in the labour force. This may result in those who are most vulnerable not being properly equipped or assisted in understanding, navigating or utilising the remedies available to them.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman released the report *Review of group training arrangements in Queensland* in January last year. Following extensive stakeholder consultations, the report identified deficiencies in areas, such as cancellation practices of group training organisations as

well as the inappropriate use of suspension instead of the standdown provisions of awards. I have had people come into my office who have faced issues in relation to this particular matter. The Queensland Training Ombudsman also identified in their 2017-18 annual report a number of complaints from apprentices whose employment had ceased and training contract cancelled who may have benefited from earlier departmental intervention. If we had picked up on some of these things earlier, we may have averted some of the disasters we have seen. Targeted consultations in March 2018 indicated that some provisions of the act should be amended to restore previous provisions in the Vocational Education Training and Employment Act 2000, taking into account Queensland's legislative limitations.

The objectives of the amendments are: to protect the positions of apprentices and trainees, who are vulnerable workers and do not have the same bargaining powers as employers—that is important; to minimise continuing adverse impacts on apprentices' and trainees' training arrangements to improve quality training outcomes—that is important; to give apprentices and trainees the best chance to complete their apprenticeship or traineeship and the best chance for the employer to emerge with a skilled worker, hence realising the economic benefits for all parties and the community generally—this is a win-win situation and this is the targeted outcome; to address the existing legislative gap that exists in the Further Education and Training Act 2014 to enable an employer or apprentice/trainee to seek permission from the chief executive to cancel the training contract; to provide greater clarity to enable the chief executive to resolve any issues related to issuing an apprenticeship or traineeship completion certificate; and to clarify the obligations of the supervising registered training organisation to complete an employer resource assessment and resolve practical implementation issues with certain provisions of the Further Education and Training Act.

Accordingly, the bill will enable the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to assist stakeholders in achieving more equitable outcomes in the case of contested cancellations or temporary suspensions or to address inadequate training. In addition, other minor amendments have been identified to resolve practical implementation issues with sections of the Further Education and Training Act.

These are positive changes and I support these amendments. I would like to acknowledge all of those who made submissions. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of our chair and my fellow committee members. What a lovely bunch of people they are. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work and the tolerance of the secretariat; they have also put up with us. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (4.36 pm): In rising to speak to this bill, I want to particularly pay tribute to not only the brave individuals who say they want to go into a trade—that they want to go into a range of occupations that require them to dedicate themselves to taking on an apprenticeship—but also the small businesses who predominantly employ them. The majority of apprentices and trainees are in fact employed in the private sector across many small businesses. Those small businesses really are the champions of our economy, because when they decide to put somebody on it is often with the risk that they have their own home loans on the line to run that business.

We want to see small businesses get ahead and succeed, and we want more and more apprentices and trainees to also see that they have an opportunity in the future to not just be employed but be the employer. Those apprentices and trainees have an opportunity to establish themselves and grow the true wealth of Queensland through the mum-and-dad businesses and family enterprises that are the lifeblood and hub of our communities throughout this great state.

In speaking to this bill, I note that there has been a lot of focus on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act. As my colleagues have already covered most of those aspects, I would like to concentrate on the aspects relating to training. In this case, I refer to the amendment to the Further Education and Training Act 2014 to clarify the obligations of the supervising registered training organisations to complete an employer resource assessment, with the stated intention of resolving practical implementation issues.

This is welcome if the intention translates practically. The feedback I have had from businesses and people in the training sector is that these employer resource assessments have in many cases been quite cumbersome and unnecessarily bureaucratic. We understand the need for probity, but some of the examples that were given to me by one training organisation when we were in Townsville for the regional sitting of parliament showed just how difficult it was to have these forms changed—sometimes weekly—and be kept up to date. I certainly look forward to seeing the implementation of these changes with regard to employer resource assessments because people want to be compliant, but they do not want to be changing the forms every week, which was the case due to the way some of these forms were drafted. We look forward to seeing how that is implemented.

I want to also address aspects related to the importance of this sector and the government's claims about what it is doing with traineeships and apprenticeships. Since March 2015, completions have fallen by nearly a third. That is a 29 per cent fall in the completion of traineeships and apprenticeships under this government. In the last two years alone the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training missed its target by 23 per cent, or a total of 5,300 apprenticeship completions. A recent report by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research found that group training organisation completion rates for trade and non-trade apprentices and trainees are substantially higher than they are for small and medium employers. GTOs play a very important complementary role in the sector to assist small businesses by becoming the employer and taking on the responsibility to supply the apprentices to the workplaces. Any work to strengthen group training organisations, particularly throughout the regions, to increase completion rates is to be commended. We want to see the completion rates increase across all sectors and small business operators.

Furthermore, under the Labor government there are almost 13 per cent fewer students in training. In the last year alone apprenticeship and traineeship commencements fell by over five per cent. Other performance measures in the department's latest annual report also indicate that no improvements have been made, including the proportion of employers satisfied with graduates or the proportion of VET graduates in employment or further study. Compared to the previous year, TAFE numbers and performance measures are also decreasing, including staff satisfaction and unique student numbers, which decreased by almost 8,700 students. TAFE employee expenses have blown out by more than \$10 million.

Vocational education and training in Queensland is in crisis under Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk with TAFE Queensland set to lose about \$38 million this year alone. As we heard this week, under the Palaszczuk Labor government, Queensland has the highest long-term unemployment numbers in the nation. Labor's Back to Work program was meant to tackle the problem, but figures show that only one in three workers supported by the scheme had been out of work for more than a year. New figures released today show that Queensland has the highest trend unemployment rate in the country, at 6.6 per cent.

Labor has created this shameful unemployment crisis by hitting the economy with more than 10 new and increased taxes in the past two years. Everyone knows that this sort of increase in taxes is toxic for the economy. The result—and we are seeing it now—is more unemployed, more long-term unemployed and less confidence in the economy.

In relation to amendments to these acts, where there are aspects that support the employers and support the employees, they will be supported. However, with respect to what we have seen with this state government putting a burden upon businesses and closing the door on many more people taking up traineeships and apprenticeships and completing them, those things must be condemned. We want to see the state flourish rather than Queensland getting the wooden spoon with respect to unemployment statistics and the fact that there has been such a decrease in the number of people completing traineeships and apprenticeships.

If this state is to flourish, we need not only small businesses being in a position of confidence to employ people but more and more people seeing these pathways as their opportunity to get a job, to flourish in that job and hopefully also take the opportunity to create their own job in the future as small business people.

 **Mr POWER (Logan—ALP)** (4.44 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, as you know, when you go door to door you never know who you will meet. It could be someone young or old, wealthy or poor. One of the most difficult things is when you meet someone who is chronically ill or sick, and that happened to me when I was doorknocking. I came across an old man who opened the door with his oxygen tank because he was suffering from the effects of asbestosis, a long-term chronic disease that he picked up through his workplace. It was unfortunately slowly killing him. However, he had a great spirit and recognised that, although his condition was not something he wanted, he lived in a state where people supported those who were hurt through the process of work.

I also want to recognise a constituent of mine, Andrew Ramsay, a long-term defender and fighter for workers. He has also worked very hard with the Asbestos Disease Support Society providing extra support through counselling, fighting and advocating for those who suffer from that terrible chronic disease. We need to continue to recognise people, especially those in our union movement, who fight for those suffering from these diseases.

I was really disappointed when I heard the member for Kawana speak because it seems for those opposite workers are just another commodity to be plugged in like electricity, iron ore or any other piece of the manufacturing process. All they want to do is cut the costs involved with workers—even those

who have been injured. This would not be a quick process because we know that our society would not accept it. In fact, workers would not accept it. We know employers do not want to accept it because they want to create respectful workplaces that look after workers, not use them simply as a commodity. The LNP would slowly cut back and hurt the ability of workers to have a dignified and respected place in our society when they are injured at work.

I have spoken about the asbestos diseases. I want to support the amendments in this bill as they relate to workers who suffer from work related, chronic or terminal illnesses. This bill makes two important improvements for those injured workers. Firstly, under the workers compensation legislation, a claim by a worker must be made within six months after the entitlement to compensation arises, that is, the date the worker is diagnosed with an injury or an illness by a doctor. We know—and we have heard repeatedly in this place—that many workers who sustain some injuries or chronic illnesses may not be immediately incapacitated or unable to continue working. The condition may stabilise for some time or even go into remission when they first get treatment. It is common for workers in these circumstances to manage their condition or illness and keep working. They want to continue to be productive and try to do the right thing. They do not want to be seen as someone who is suffering. However, it is this very stoicism that can disadvantage the worker down the track.

Following a 2015 judgement of the Industrial Court of Queensland, workers compensation insurers—that is WorkCover Queensland or a licensed self-insured employer—must consider the six-month time limit to lodge a claim to have started from the date the doctor assesses the worker as having a work-related injury even if there is no incapacity to work at that point. We can see the logical problem here that this interpretation works against those workers with a chronic, insidious illness, including psychiatric or psychological conditions. This is because it is usually not until a worker becomes totally or partially incapacitated for work that they require the assistance of the workers compensation scheme. If this is to be six months or more after the initial diagnosis, workers may find themselves out of time to lodge a claim.

This bill makes an important amendment by providing insurers additional discretion to accept claims submitted more than six months after the worker's injury is diagnosed if the injured worker has lodged a claim within 20 business days of developing an incapacity to work due to their injury.

The second improvement concerns workers with a terminal work related illness, workers with a terminal and latent onset illness who have existing entitlements to lump sum compensation. This includes an entitlement for a worker's dependants and a payment in respect of the worker's funeral expenses. The act defines a terminal condition as one expected to terminate a worker's life within two years after terminal diagnosis. Thanks to advances in medical treatments, some workers with terminal illnesses now live five years or more post diagnosis. This means terminally ill workers may not have access to lump sum entitlements if they exceed the two-year limit. Importantly, this anomaly will be removed by this bill. Latent onset terminal entitlements will be available for all workers certified by a doctor as having a latent onset injury expected to end the worker's life. This will provide workers with more certainty about their family's future in these most difficult times. These are sensible changes to the workers compensation scheme and will be of enormous benefit to Queenslanders and their families at minimal cost to employees. I have maintained faith with that gentleman I doorknocked in that I said I would support people in his condition through the workers compensation scheme.

Separate to these issues, I also refer to an apology not being considered. I thank the minister for taking the time to consider a specific case—and I know that she responded to a letter I put forward—about a gentleman who suffered a psychological injury at the workplace. If an employer had the discretion simply to say, 'We are so sorry that you are hurting in this way; we may have not got everything right but we are so sorry and we value you,' it may have mitigated the psychological damage. This is an essential human and worthwhile change that I think everyone in this House should support. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (4.51 pm): I, too, rise to speak to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. As always, I thank the committee for its work in presenting the report. The LNP supports the bill. We share the view that a great workers compensation scheme is important. The member for Logan mentioned the contribution of the member for Kawana. I refer to his contribution as well in that I thought it was fantastic that he highlighted a number of strong points of the LNP's stewardship of WorkCover in Queensland.

Having the lowest premiums in the country is a really great thing for the bottom line of businesses. This can be ploughed back into the productive part of the economy to create more job opportunities. The injury rates had fallen. The best thing for a workers compensation scheme is that business is

confident and strong and that we have a healthy business environment, because more people participating in the scheme makes it more economic. Self-evidently, all of this is true. I also share the member's perplexity in terms of how the scheme could have achieved such great results during the LNP's period in power but when, on assuming power, the current government replaced the board. I would love to know the minister's thinking in doing that. Nevertheless, I have some nice things to say about this bill.

In particular, I have corresponded with the minister in the matter of a constituent whose daughter injured herself at work. She worked at a hospital. Sadly, at the time she was unaware of how severe was the injury. She persevered and did not become incapacitated sufficiently to apply for WorkCover until the six months were over. As I say, I corresponded with Minister Grace on that matter and am aware that she would have liked to help in the situation but the act prohibited action in that case. I am really glad that, although it is too late for that particular constituent, this is a real step forward for those in particular who have soldiered on—as do many of us when crook—only to find out that the situation was more serious or due to become more serious over time.

I also commend the change to enable businesses to offer an apology to staff. I heard a number of members talk about their business experience in the past and how they have had a great relationship with staff. There is nothing more tragic than legal or liability reasons preventing an employer from expressing heartfelt sorrow for a much valued employee injured at work. The ability to express that regret and say 'I am sorry' is a great step forward. I absolutely applaud that. It is a good bill that the LNP supports, and I commend it to the House.

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.54 pm): At home in my house we have a rule: if somebody gets hurt while you are playing, even if it is not your fault, you say sorry. That is a rule which is always abided by—and sometimes it is me saying sorry. My son, Heath, is seven. Frequently, he has 'accidents' that result in injury, usually to himself, but occasionally his loving big sister, Allegra, cops it. Last week, they were racing around the yard. He caught her and she slipped. She has just had a growth spurt and is pretty clumsy right now. He reached out his hand, helped her up to her feet and said, 'I am sorry. Are you okay?' He did this not because he tripped her but because he knows that it is really important to me that my children show each other compassion and that an apology does just that. As I said, saying sorry is not an admission of wrongdoing in my household; it can be an expression of compassion, of recognition of hurt—both emotional and physical. Sometimes I find that it is me making those apologies. My young daughter is going through a particularly sensitive phase. I often say things that hurt her feelings and I will always apologise, because it is important to me that I maintain that trust with my children. It is fantastic that this bill provides those provisions.

As a former small business manager, I am especially delighted that the changes outlined in this bill provide protections in terms of apologies and expressions of regret from being considered in liability determinations under the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003, specifically in the common law claims. As I said, for many of us an apology is a natural human response when another person has been harmed or injured, even if that harm was unintentional and blameless. In very few words, an apology shows respect. It shows empathy for that other person and it can also, as a previous contributor said, lessen that person's feelings of despair and anger, prevent further misunderstandings and help repair relationships. The positive impact of an apology is supported by a body of literature that suggests apologies play a strong role in resolving disputes and providing a mechanism for achieving justice between parties.

Unfortunately, we know that many employers are hesitant to apologise to an injured worker because they fear that it will be interpreted as an admission of liability, rather than the things that I have previously outlined. This is such a shame because a short statement to that effect could really improve things for the worker. If a worker has been injured in the course of their duties, it could help resolve that dispute and perhaps mitigate the possibility of a worker feeling the need to seek common law damages. Last year, 2,825 common law claims were lodged across the Queensland scheme. The five-year review of the Queensland workers compensation scheme conducted by Professor David Peetz found that the absence of an apology can be a significant driving factor in whether a common law action is pursued against an employer.

It is also important to note that these protections are widely used in other areas of injury law. Of note, the amendments seek to parallel the protections for apologies and expressions of regret contained within the Civil Liability Act 2003. These provisions allow for apologies with respect to personal injury matters and have been uncontroversial since their introduction. In summary, these amendments will provide clarity and comfort for employers seeking to demonstrate compassion and concern for their

workers without fear of litigation. I congratulate the minister on this approach to help resolve disputes early. Such an approach will ensure Queensland continues to have Australia's best performing workers compensation scheme, which balances good benefits for injured workers with affordable premiums for employers. Like my accident-prone seven-year-old, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (4.59 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill as in the last parliament I was a member of the Finance and Administration Committee that examined the previous workers compensation bill. We all recognise the importance of workers compensation. I think that has been expressed by members on both sides of the House. The role of workers compensation is to facilitate recovery. If somebody is injured at work it supports them in their time away from work. There needs to be support around that person to get them back into the workforce as soon as practically possible.

The seat of Condamine has a lot of industries, some of which are high risk. We have sawmills. We know the reputation of sawmills in years past. They have improved a lot, but they still are high risk. Condamine has two large abattoirs. They have a very large workforce, so their expenses are very high. The member for Kawana talked about the \$1.20 cost that came in under the LNP government. For businesses in those high-risk categories the cost for workers compensation a few years ago was frightening. We need to provide the service, but it is important to monitor it and try to make it affordable.

I mentioned abattoirs. A week ago I met Pat Holmes, who worked at Oakey. He told me that he was in an accident in which he injured his leg. He had to have an operation. He was off work for 12 months. He said that in that time he let himself go a bit. I think it was a fair bit. After 12 months he decided that he had to get his health back in order and to do that he needed to lose a lot of weight, which he had gained while he was injured. He took up mountain biking. He has lost 57 kilos—an enormous amount of weight. He said that he feels like a young man again.

Mental health is included in these reforms. The member for Hinchinbrook mentioned mental health. It is good to see mental health recognised. I was not on this committee, but I would be interested to see how the system will operate. The minister might talk about that in her speech in reply. In our jobs no doubt we have all seen cases of workplace bullying. Recently I saw a claim for workplace bullying that had severe impacts on the mental health of the person involved. It is very tragic. As we know, mental health issues are probably some of the slowest to cure. It takes a long time to fully recover from a severe mental health episode, depression in particular. Business will not want to bear the cost for a mental health issue that has been carried into their business. How that works I do not know. I have had experience with people who have unfortunately gone into drugs, and I know the battles they face. They last for a long time. It takes a long time for them to get over it and there are often relapses. I applaud the inclusion of these provisions, but I am curious as to how they will be enacted.

I refer to the provisions relating to apology. Business owners are very wary of making a statement that will come back to haunt them in court. That an apology is not an automatic admission of guilt I think will be very warmly welcomed in the business world.

Obviously, farms are high-risk areas. About 12 months ago I talked to the minister about quad bikes. I brought in a gentleman from Clifton who has worked on a helmet for use on quad bikes. He is working with the University of Queensland and other groups on that. He builds a rollover bar for quad bikes. In fact, a rollover bar probably saved the life of the former member for Southern Downs, Lawrence Springborg. He told Dave Robinson that he had rolled his quad bike.

Ms Grace: And Vaughan Johnson.

Mr WEIR: Vaughan Johnson is another former member who was severely injured. Unfortunately, a teenager in Condamine was severely injured in one the other day. Quad bikes are wonderful assets on a farm, but they are dangerous. I am a very strong advocate for crush bars and for what Dave Robinson is doing with helmets. The LNP supports this legislation. I do not think one side of the House has ownership of concerns with workers' welfare. I know that I have that concern. We will be supporting this bill.

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (5.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendments in the bill as they relate to workers who suffer from work related chronic or terminal illnesses. The bill makes an important improvement for these injured workers. Under the workers compensation legislation, a claim by a worker must be made within six months after the entitlement to compensation arises—that is, the

date the worker is diagnosed with the injury or illness by a doctor. Many workers who sustain some injuries or chronic illnesses may not be immediately incapacitated and are able to continue working. The condition may stabilise or go into remission in response to treatment.

It is common for workers in these circumstances to manage their conditions or illnesses and keep working, as was the case for the late Ian Flamank, a good friend and mentor of mine whom I will talk about shortly. However, it is this stoicism, like Ian had and displayed, that can disadvantage the worker down the track. For example, a worker may develop a melanoma from occupational exposure to the sun, as was the case with Ian. A worker in this situation may attend a doctor and have the melanoma removed, often without the need to have any time off work or incur any medical expenses if the procedure is bulk-billed. The worker then continues on with life and may not even consider the need to make a workers compensation claim. Some years later the worker develops another melanoma; however, this time the melanoma is malignant and the worker is diagnosed with a latent onset terminal condition.

Because the melanomas are from the same injury event, the worker was required to have lodged a workers compensation claim within six months of the diagnosis of the original melanoma. As the worker did not make a claim for the original melanoma, the worker is now not eligible to make a claim for the latent onset terminal condition. This is patently unfair to the worker and their family. The current requirement to make a claim within six months of the first diagnosis can be challenging for workers with chronic or insidious illnesses such as melanoma. This bill makes an important amendment by providing insurers with additional discretion to accept claims submitted more than six months after the worker's injury is diagnosed if the injured worker has lodged a claim within 20 business days of developing an incapacity for work from their injury.

Mr Ian Flamank was a PE teacher at Mount Archer State School. He started teaching at Mount Archer back in 1983. Sadly, he passed away this year. We paid tribute to Ian at his funeral in June. Mr Flamank was my PE teacher. His wife, Mrs Flamank, has been my mum's teaching partner for almost 30 years. Mr Flamank had taught PE at Mount Archer since 1983. He also coached Rugby League teams there from 1988 to 2004. He was also the secretary of the Rockhampton primary school Rugby League for 24 years, organising countless exchanges, fixtures and trials and even a national championship. He coached my brother and a number of young boys who went to Mount Archer State School. He was a really amazing PE teacher. I loved his classes because it was not just about playing sport or being active; there was always an educational element. I think as a PE teacher he really got the link between gross motor skills and cognitive development. He was a wonderful teacher. He was very patient. He commanded respect from his students.

Mr Flamank always had a great lesson planned. He loved music and loved to dance. He would often have music playing during our PE lessons. He was just a great mentor and a top bloke. He left behind two daughters, Jessica and Rebecca, and I know that they miss him terribly. He did not get the chance to see them have children or obviously meet his grandchildren. He was taken far too early at only 56 years of age—far too early for a man who did not drink, did not smoke, looked after himself, was physically active, had lots of friends and was, as I said, a top bloke. It was terrible when Mr Flamank was first diagnosed with melanoma, but he is one of those people who were not eligible to continue their claim because the claim was submitted more than six months after the original diagnosis. I was incredibly pleased when the bill was introduced into this place to see that people in Mr Flamank's situation from here on in will be able to make that claim. It is not like he was lazy or did not make the claim in time, because he did not have time. He did not make the claim in time because he did not know at the first diagnosis of melanoma it would end his life, that he would lose his life as a result.

These changes are incredibly important for people like Ian, who worked as a PE teacher out in the sun for many years and at a time before we really understood the impacts of the sun on our skin and the risk of skin cancer and the risk of melanoma. I am incredibly pleased that this bill is before this House and hopefully we will see these provisions changed this evening because these sensible changes to the workers compensation scheme will have an enormous benefit for Queenslanders and their families—like Ian, his wife, Tanya, and daughters Jessica and Rebecca—at little or minimal cost to employers. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (5.11 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill before the House. I acknowledge the committee and the work that it has done. I note the recommendation that the bill be passed. The LNP will be supporting the bill. The bill makes amendments to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003, the Further Education and Training Act 2014 and the TAFE Queensland

Act 2013. It also repeals the Commonwealth Games Arrangements Act 2011. It is only to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 that I want to address my comments, and in particular to section 2.3 of the committee report titled 'Employer expressions of regret, apologies and liability'. The report refers to the Peetz review, which considered in part workplace support as a component of injury prevention and management, and states—

Related to this is the need to ensure employers are aware of the manner in which, in the absence of adequate workplace support, physical injuries can lead to subsequent complications through additional psychological problems, and the way in which good workplace health can be promoted through good management practice.

The committee's report identifies that under the Civil Liability Act 2003 an apology cannot be used as evidence of fault or liability but the act generally does not apply to injuries for which compensation is payable under the workers compensation act. The Peetz review recommended an alignment of both acts to ensure that an apology could not be used in any legal proceedings either for civil or common law claims or under the workers compensation act. I again quote the committee report—

This would address the apparent anomaly between the protection provided by Civil Liability Act and workers' compensation legislation. It would reduce the distress experienced by injured workers, and would likely lead to savings in employer costs.

We all know of people who have come to our office or friends or family members whom we are acquainted with who have suffered an injury at work. That worker may well have been employed for 10, 15, 20 or 30-odd years and they often say to us, 'They never even bothered to apologise. They never even bothered to take the time to ask me how I was going or how my family was coping.' That has a twofold impact. Firstly, they see the loyalty they gave over those years being for nought. Secondly, it certainly can compound any psychological injury that they suffered and adds to the burden of stress they and their families go through and also delays the time by which a recovery can occur. Under this bill, there is a rationalisation in proposed sections 320A to 320H of the workers compensation act. Those sections deal with an expression of regret. In proposed section 320C that means—

... any oral or written statement expressing regret for the incident to the extent that it does not contain an admission of liability on the part of the individual or someone else.

An apology under proposed section 320G means—

... an expression of sympathy or regret, or of a general sense of benevolence or compassion, in connection with any matter, whether or not it admits or implies an admission of fault in relation to the matter.

Those words would cover an employer showing the compassion that I think our society demands these days to ensure employees understand that the employer sympathises with them and recognises what they are going through. Indeed, the Peetz review made that quite clear—that is, Peetz believed that that would assist in the recovery of the injury. Both Shine Lawyers and the Australian Lawyers Alliance stated that that was a positive step forward, that that was something that would assist employees who have suffered an injury to recover quickly.

The only concern was raised by the HIA and the Queensland Law Society in relation to any implications that may arise from wording that is used in the manner considered by the terms of the bill as they relate to criminal proceedings and they pointed out that their concerns were raised during the consultation with the government. The Queensland Law Society was concerned that such an apology could be used in a criminal proceeding to establish liability or guilt. The Office of Industrial Relations, however, made it clear that its point of view was to the contrary and it said—

Australian courts that have considered this issue ... [have] ... found that an apology cannot amount to an admission of liability because this is a determination for the court to make in accordance with the relevant legal standard. Facts contained in an apology can be taken into account by a court when it is considering whether the legal standard is established.

There is a difference between the two. However, the OIR is of the opinion that the words used would not constitute guilt but they may constitute facts under which guilt could be established. However, the OIR has made it quite clear as well that it will issue guidance materials and advice which—

... will make people aware that in a criminal proceeding it is up to a criminal court to determine that [the statement may be persuasive] but it will be governed by what is in the statement and facts that can be derived out of that statement ...

I ask the minister in her reply if she could address the anomaly between the Queensland Law Society, the OIR and others who may have similar concerns. That is the only thing I wanted to say about this bill before the House today. I want to emphasise the importance of employers understanding the role they have in assisting their employees to recover. If this bill helps only one particular employee on a better and quicker road to recovery, then the bill has been a success. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (5.18 pm): I rise to speak in support of the changes contained in the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, which will ensure that all workers have the same injury management and rehabilitation experience and services regardless of how their employer is insured. In my region there are many large multinational companies operating in the Bowen Basin and some of them have quite a range of insurers. I am not saying that there is anything wrong with the insurers, but they are different. At times, this causes some confusion and angst for workers.

Currently, the workers compensation scheme exempts employers who are not insured with WorkCover Queensland from reporting injuries sustained by their workers to the workers compensation insurer. This exemption results in the underreporting of injuries occurring in Queensland workplaces and creates the potential for some employers to avoid their workers compensation obligations to workers. The amendments in this bill will remove this exemption and require all employers to notify their insurer of compensatable injuries that have occurred in their workplaces and advise their insurer of any compensation or services provided to the injured worker and the cost of those services. This amendment will ensure that there is transparency in the nature of the injuries occurring within all Queensland workplaces and that the true cost of injuries is being recorded. It is important to have transparency. It is really important to know where the injuries are occurring in workplaces. We need to be able to see where the patterns are occurring so that we can put in place procedures to make sure that those injury patterns do not continue.

These amendments will ensure that the Workers' Compensation Regulator is able to effectively undertake its legislative functions to monitor the compliance and performance of insurers and maintain a database for scheme-wide reporting. The maintenance of the scheme-wide database of injuries is essential to ensure the efficient allocation of government resources. The informed targeting of resources to the industries, workplaces and work practices that create the greatest risk of injury to Queensland workers is essential to reduce the work related injury and fatality rates in Queensland. The recent injuries and fatal accidents that have happened in our mining industry and in our quarries are in the back of everybody's mind. We are all aware of them, so we know that this legislation is so important. As a result of those injuries, we have undertaken a safety reset of the mining industry to ensure that every worker is safe.

The requirement to notify injuries will also have a positive impact on the scheme's costs, administration and claims, which will facilitate early injury intervention and improve return-to-work outcomes. For example, if an insurer has received an injury notification report from an employer, the insurer can promptly accept a claim made in relation to the event and initiate early medical and rehabilitation support that will facilitate the worker's early return to work. In turn, that has the potential to reduce the worker's time off work and reduce claims and the scheme's costs.

Rehabilitation is such an important part of getting a worker back to work. This bill includes the mandatory requirement for workers to be referred to an accredited rehabilitation return-to-work program by their insurer if their statutory compensation ends but they have not yet returned to work because of their injuries. Workers will also be able to make a request for a referral to these accredited programs at any time during their claim.

In my time with the Queensland Teachers' Union I found that, if workers are supported and they get the right treatment, it is so much easier for them physically and psychologically to be able to return to work. The requirement to notify injuries will also limit the potential for employers to encourage that a worker participate in an in-house injury management program instead of making an application for workers compensation.

There can be serious consequences if the worker's injury is not appropriately managed. For example, if a worker agrees to participate in the employer's in-house program and after a period of six months their injury returns, they require further medical intervention and time off work, the worker will not be able to make a workers compensation claim as the legislative time frame in which to lodge a claim would have passed. Further, workers will be denied access to review, appeal and other rights and protections provided under the legislation. Removing the exemption for some employers to not report compensatable workplace injuries will ensure that, regardless of who an employer is insured with, an injured worker can expect to receive the same treatment for their injury. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (5.25 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. Now more than ever we must ensure that all businesses in Queensland are able to thrive. Broadly speaking, no business can

thrive, let alone survive, unless its workers are nurtured and look after, particularly during times of accident or injury. That is why in Queensland it is vitally important that we assess the operation of the Queensland workers compensation scheme and ensure that it is fit for purpose—not only serving its intended purpose but also that it meets the expectations and requirements of businesses, workers and other relevant stakeholders.

In May last year, Professor David Peetz reported on the operation of the Queensland scheme, making it the second five-year statutory review of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003. I would like to thank Professor Peetz for his comprehensive examination and subsequent report. This legislation seeks to, among other changes, implement 12 legislative recommendations made by Professor Peetz. In my contribution today, I would like to briefly reflect on just a few of those recommendations.

I note that this bill seeks to amend the act to extend entitlement to latent onset terminal entitlements, including terminal conditions relating to silicosis and black lung disease by removing the reference to 'two years' and replacing that with an assessment that the insurer is satisfied that the worker has a latent onset condition that is terminal. In Queensland's recent history, we have seen some truly horrific examples and statistics, particularly when it comes to the diagnosis of the deadly disease that is silicosis, which is caused by the exposure to silica dust through the cutting and workmanship of stone benchtops. Tragically, silicosis is an incurable condition. Just less than five months ago, Queensland learned of the 22-year-old Gold Coast man who became our state's youngest Queenslander to be diagnosed, having spent only three years working with the material. In February this year, an audit revealed that some 98 workers had contracted this disease, of whom 15 were terminally ill. Silicosis is truly a terrible disease and I am glad to see that such amendments have been made to ensure that such terminal conditions are better captured under the legislation.

As part of the review by Professor Peetz, and the committee's examination of this bill, I was pleased to see attention given to the issues of mental health and psychological injury. As the Queensland parliament's Education, Employment and Small Business Committee reported via the Peetz review—

... in the absence of adequate workplace support, physical injuries can lead to subsequent complications through additional psychological problems, and the way in which good workplace health can be promoted through good management practice.

As reported by the committee, employers can be hesitant to apologise to workers following a workplace injury, fearing that it may be interpreted as an admission of liability. As further evidenced by the Peetz review—

... there appeared to be significant evidence presented that employer responses to injuries could be very influential in determining whether a common law action was pursued against the employer. If a worker felt that the employer did not care about them, they were more likely to feel aggrieved and sue. This in turn tells us that worker distress is heightened if the employer appears disinterested or unhelpful after an incident. Such distress is likely to compound psychological injury, or even create a psychological complication to an initially purely physical injury.

This bill therefore seeks changes to allow an individual to express regret or make an apology without it being an admission of liability. This is very consistent with what happens with sentinel events and open disclosure and root cause analysis processes that occur within Health. As a former deputy chief medical officer and director of medical services having been involved in those processes of ensuring that people get an adequate apology, that there is an adequate process of investigation and in some cases appropriate compensation for things that have happened to them, the changes within this legislation are consistent with other industry standards, including those that are now well established within our health sector industry.

The importance of one's mental health simply cannot be overstated. It is as important as one's own physical health and it is encouraging that this importance and the effect a worker's loss or injury can have on their mental health has been recognised by Professor Peetz in the review he has undertaken and which was adopted within this legislation.

It is no secret that Labor often views business with scepticism, often bordering on disdain, and often likes to trumpet that they are the true friend of the worker. However, if we look at today's latest job figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics it shows that Labor is certainly no friend of the worker, particularly here in Queensland, with 178,000 Queenslanders out of work—the highest unemployment rate in the country. Queensland now can be described as the unemployment capital of Australia.

As my colleague, the shadow minister for industrial relations and the member for Kawana eloquently articulated earlier this afternoon, the devastating state of our local Queensland economy spells bad news for our businesses and their workers. This will undoubtedly have an impact on the

strength of the workers compensation scheme here in Queensland. That is the last thing that we would need when we are trying to have a robust scheme here in Queensland that will certainly support and look after those workers who may be unfortunately injured whilst at work.

In closing, the Liberal National Party supports a strong and sustainable workers compensation system that ensures injured workers are rehabilitated and can return to work as quickly and as safely as possible whilst maintaining low premiums for business. As such, the Liberal National Party will not be opposing this bill and will continue to monitor the impact of the five-year statutory review to ensure Queensland provides the best workers compensation scheme in Australia.

Finally, I know the Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Education, the member for McConnel, along with the shadow minister and member for Kawana, will join with me in congratulating the 2019 captains and vice captains of Kenmore State High School on their successful year. It was terrific to welcome Ben Nguyen, Kyu-Yeon Son, Aisha Schreiber and Jonathan Makinson, along with deputy principal Karla Pope, to the Queensland parliament for a celebratory dinner last night. I commend the legislation to the House.

 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (5.33 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. There have been a number of statements made during this debate, but it is important to note that the workers compensation scheme in this state is fundamentally about protecting people who have gone to work and unfortunately have not come back in the same state in which they left. They have suffered an injury, in many cases it is a serious injury, and in absolutely the worst case people lose their lives. That happens in workplaces in this state, and that is why it is vitally important that we have a strong and sustainable workers compensation scheme that delivers for working people and their families.

A lot of statistics have been cited but behind all those statistics are real people and real lives deeply affected by workplace injuries, in the vast majority of cases sustained through no fault of their own. That is why when we had that wideranging contribution from the member for Kawana earlier I shook my head. He talked about how he oversaw a scheme that delivered for employees. I have to say that it is a complete load of rubbish. He even cited the report from the member for Coomera, who we will hear from shortly. It is one thing for a minister to commission a report; it is another thing to actually act on it. I will be interested to hear what the member for Coomera has to say. It is a matter of historical record that recommendation 27 of the report of the member for Coomera's committee back in 2013 said—

The committee recommends that the existing provisions relating to access to common law be retained.

We heard from the member for Kawana about this report and how the committee was chaired by the member for Coomera. Of course, the member for Kawana did not listen to that recommendation at all and implemented completely unfair and arbitrary thresholds which denied working people in Queensland their rights. The member got up earlier today and said he delivers for employees. There is nothing further from the truth. I have to give credit to the member for Kawana for getting up in here and saying that with a straight face. He did his best to undermine the workers compensation scheme in this state despite the recommendations of one of his own members. I think it is important to let the record show that.

I am going to wind up because it is important that other members have an opportunity to contribute to the debate on such an important issue. When it comes to workers compensation in this state you cannot just talk the talk; you have to walk the walk. The historical records show that the member for Kawana as a minister was a complete failure in protecting working people in this state.

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (5.36 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to make a contribution to the debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I note the committee recommended that the bill be passed and made no other recommendations. There was no statement of reservation from non-government members either. In contrast, the 246-page report that was put together by the Finance and Administration Committee in 2013, report No. 28 tabled in May 2013, was a comprehensive report. I will read from the foreword—

The Committee consulted extensively on the terms of reference. It received 246 submissions, held public forums in Mackay and Cairns, held 14 public hearings in Brisbane, including five in-camera hearings, and held three public departmental briefings.

Throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard allegations that 'the government was going to do this' or 'the government was going to do that' with regard to the Workers' Compensation Scheme. I can assure everyone that it was a completely open and transparent process that the Committee went through in order to come to what we consider to be the right conclusions and recommendations for the Parliament to consider.

There was no statement of reservation in that report either. The report ran to something like 246 pages. There were 32 recommendations and those opposite have just picked out one recommendation of those 32. I think we can all agree that the review in 2013 has stood the test of time. I acknowledge the member for Kawana's comments in relation to the report and the job that was done by the committee back then as being open and transparent, in contrast to today.

The objectives of the bill are to implement 12 legislative recommendations made by Professor David Peetz in *The operation of the Queensland workers' compensation scheme*, the report on the second five-yearly review of the scheme, which was completed in May 2018—that is, the statutory review. Those amendments include: clarifying WorkCover Queensland's ability to fund and provide programs and incentives that support employers improving health and safety performance, after consulting with the regulator under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and any other relevant health and safety regulator; exempting expressions of regret and apologies provided by employers following a workplace injury from being considered in any assessment of liability or damages brought under the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 to align with the approach taken in the Civil Liability Act 2003; providing an additional way that employers can ensure that rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators are appropriately qualified, and requiring employers to provide details of their rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators to insurers to support compliance and the provision of advisory service to coordinators.

The amendments also include: requiring insurers to provide ongoing rehabilitation and return-to-work services if the injured worker has been unable to return to work after their entitlement to weekly benefits and medical expenses ceases—the employer's obligation for rehabilitation and return to work are also aligned with their insurer's obligations; requiring self-insured employers—and I think there are 25 in the state—to report injuries and any payments made to injured workers to their insurer, aligning their obligations with the existing obligations on employers insured with WorkCover Queensland; clarifying that insurers have a discretion to accept claims submitted more than six months after the injury is diagnosed if the injured worker has lodged a claim within 20 days of developing an incapacity for work from their injury; extending workers compensation coverage to unpaid interns; amending the meaning of injury for a psychiatric or psychological disorder to remove 'the major' as a qualifier for employment's 'significant contribution' to the injury; and requiring insurers to take all reasonable steps to provide claimants with psychiatric and psychological injuries access to reasonable support services relating to their injury during claim determination.

Regarding amendments to the Further Education and Training Act 2014, the explanatory notes describe the objectives of the amendments as, among other things, to protect the positions of apprentices and trainees, who are vulnerable workers and do not have the same bargaining powers as employers.

In May 2018, Professor David Peetz reported on the operation of Queensland's workers compensation scheme. That was the second five-year statutory review of the act following the LNP review in 2013, which I referred to earlier. As I mentioned earlier, the difference between the two reviews provides a stark contrast. Labor's review was required to look at the performance of the scheme, including maintaining the balance between fair and appropriate benefits for injured workers and reasonable costs for employers; ensuring injured workers are treated fairly by insurers; protecting employers' interests in relation to damages claims; and providing effective participation and opportunity in return-to-work programs. It also looked at emerging issues facing the scheme and the effectiveness of rehabilitation and return-to-work programs.

The key characteristics of the Queensland workers compensation scheme are that it is a centrally funded, short tailed, no-fault scheme with access to common law damages. The principal administrative parties in the scheme are the Office of Industrial Relations, OIR, which devises policy and acts as a regulator, and the insurers, WorkCover Queensland and 28 self-insurers. The system has undergone frequent review and reform since the early 1990s, including the 2013 review that I referred to.

The premium paid by an employer varies according to the size, claims experience and industry of the employer, and is calculated using the experience based rating system that is designed to reward employers with good injury prevention and management. In 2017-18, its average premium rate was \$1.20—it is thanks to the way the scheme was properly reviewed in 2013 that that has been able to be sustained up until now—with discounts averaging around \$1.17. It is anticipated that it will continue to remain either the lowest or second lowest amongst the state schemes.

The Peetz review made over 50 recommendations, 15 of which require legislative change. The bill proposes amendments to implement 12 legislative recommendations at this time. A consultation regulatory impact statement was released to seek public feedback on possible inclusions of some gig economy workers in the workers compensation scheme. Submissions on the consultation RIS closed in July 2018.

Workers with terminal conditions is an important area. Importantly, the bill amends the act to extend entitlement to the latent onset terminal entitlements—for silicosis, black lung disease et cetera—by removing the reference to two years and replacing it with an assessment that the insurer is satisfied that the worker has a latent onset condition that is terminal.

The explanatory notes indicate that the cost of implementing the amendments will be \$18.6 million per annum. That equates to approximately 1½ cents to the average premium rate. However, that does not take into account some of the benefits that may be achieved through these amendments as a result of behavioural change. WorkCover's current funding ratio is 171 per cent, which is well above the target of at least 120 per cent. The profit for 2018-19 was \$77 million after tax, which is substantially lower than the \$324 million recorded in 2017-18. That is something that really needs to be properly and carefully monitored over time.

I close by making the point that we will be monitoring the impact of the five-year statutory review to ensure that we are providing the best workers compensation scheme in Australia. Whatever this government says today, they cannot rewrite history. It was the good work of the LNP in government that makes the scheme the best in the country.

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (5.46 pm): I rise to support this important legislation. As well as making important changes to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act, the bill amends the Further Education and Training Act and the TAFE Queensland Act. Since I became the Minister for Training and Skills Development, stakeholders have raised with me their concerns about fairness for apprentices in Queensland, particularly around contested cancellations, temporary suspensions and the mode of delivery of training. Those issues have only arisen due to the introduction of the Further Education and Training Act by the Newman government in 2014. In that legislation, the balance clearly shifted away from supporting and providing fairness to our apprentices.

In January 2018, in his report *Review of group training arrangements in Queensland*, the Queensland Training Ombudsman outlined that a number of group training organisations were incorrectly utilising the suspension provisions of the Further Education and Training Act. The Training Ombudsman outlined that there was general confusion about how the provisions of the act regarding the suspension of a training contract were to apply. The Queensland Training Ombudsman recommended—

DET should continue to implement an effective communication strategy with GTOs and other key stakeholders that clarifies when suspension of the training contract in accordance with the *FET Act* is appropriate, and ensures the suspension of the training contract is not being used as a proxy for stand downs.

These amendments clarify standdown or suspension arrangements for our apprentices.

In ministerial round tables on apprenticeships and traineeships that I held in July and August last year, I continued to hear about issues relating to suspensions and standdowns, and that changes were needed to support our apprentices during their apprenticeship journey. Further, the report *Positive futures: apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland* prepared by Jobs Queensland outlined that concerns were raised about the removal of the right of apprentices to appeal a decision to cancel a training contract or a decision about standdowns to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. I am very proud that we are rectifying those issues in this bill and restoring rights to our apprentices.

Becoming an apprentice requires entering into and signing a training contract, a legal work document—a daunting experience for any person, let alone a young person starting their apprenticeship. We have a responsibility to ensure that the contract they are signing is one that is fair and that those apprentices have access to the protections and support they need throughout the course of their apprenticeship. The amendments will ensure that there is protection for young Queenslanders when there are changes made to training contracts at the initiative of the employer. In return, the employer is also protected as the obligations of the apprentice or trainee, or in some cases their guardian, is more transparent.

Just recently the Queensland Training Ombudsman received a complaint from a 19-year-old apprentice from regional Queensland who was in the final stage of their apprenticeship when their employment was terminated. In line with the current arrangements, the training contract was

subsequently cancelled. While the apprentice is taking action in relation to the termination of their employment, the Queensland Training Ombudsman has been assisting this apprentice to re-engage in their trade and complete the qualification.

Under the proposed changes to the Further Education and Training Act my department would need to be involved prior to the termination of the training contract and provide much needed support to the apprentice at an earlier stage of the most difficult of times. Submissions regarding decisions about cancellations of contracts will be able to be made to the chief executive and any decision will be appealable under fair procedures through the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

We also want apprentices to be protected when their employer has run out of work. We do not want the provisions of the FET Act to be used to suspend apprentices when that was not their purpose. Further changes to the act will provide clarity to stakeholders on when it is appropriate to use standdown and suspension provisions. These amendments restore fairness for our apprentices and will support and protect them through their apprenticeship.

In response to the member for Kawana's questions regarding the potential impact on the department's resources in intervening in contested cancellations, the amendments will allow the department to provide a more balanced oversight of the apprenticeship and traineeship market in Queensland and maximise the investment made by employers, apprentices, trainees and government in the skilling of Queensland's current and future workforce. While the current Further Education and Training Act 2014 does not have a similar provision, the proposed amendment is very similar to a provision within the former Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000—namely, sections 65 and 66.

The experience before the repeal of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 was a very small impact on departmental resources and it is expected that the proposed changes to the Further Education and Training Act 2014 will be managed within existing resources across the state. The proposed amendments will provide benefits to the parties involved in exploring options to remain engaged in the apprenticeship and trainee system. We know that this will maximise the outcomes for employers, apprentices and the industries they serve.

Our major training provider is also undergoing reform with amendments to the TAFE Queensland Act 2013. TAFE Queensland delivers training to almost 8,000 students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and around 1.8 per cent of its staff are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Last year TAFE Queensland launched its Reconciliation Action Plan. This recognises the role that TAFE can play in supporting reconciliation and closing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australian's participation in education, training and work.

The bill amends section 12 of the TAFE Queensland Act so that there must be at least one person on the board representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is fitting for TAFE Queensland, as a statutory body and the state's largest provider of vocational education and training, that the governing board of TAFE Queensland demonstrates leadership and reflects the diversity of its staff and its students. TAFE Queensland and its board have an important role in supporting the delivery of training and skills that lead to jobs for our First Nation people. The Queensland government committed to restoring fairness for apprentices and ensuring that our boards are representative of Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (5.55 pm), in reply: Firstly, I thank members on all sides of the House for their contributions on what is a significant piece of legislation. I welcome the confirmation from the member for Kawana that the LNP will not be opposing the bill.

The second five-year review of the operation of the workers compensation scheme undertaken by Professor David Peetz from Griffith University found that, while the scheme is performing well and did not require major reform, it identified opportunities to improve the process and experience for injured workers and to protect vulnerable workers. This bill before the House does exactly that. It picks up on the legislative amendments recommended in that review and we are here debating those today.

I have gone through the amendments in detail. Given the time, to try to get this through before the House moves to the adjournment, I will turn to matters raised during the debate. The member for Kawana always tries to make a valiant effort to rewrite history and relive past glories in his contributions. He conveniently forgets the LNP's sorry legacy of removing the rights of injured workers to seek common law damages and the fact that in doing so they completely ignored the recommendation of their own parliamentary committee.

He says that they did not recommend this. I will quote directly from the Finance and Administration Committee's report. The majority on that committee were from the LNP. It stated—

After considering all of the arguments for and against imposing an impairment threshold, the Committee considers that an impairment threshold should not be imposed. The Committee believes that the extent of the 2010 amendments—

the Labor amendments—

in addressing the increase in common law claims is yet to be fully realised as common law claims can be lodged up to three years from date of injury. As such, the Committee believes that there should be no changes to the current system.

What does the member for Kawana do? He rewrites history and says, 'We did this with full consultation.' He even went against the recommendations of his own committee.

What that meant was that hundreds of workers missed out on common law damages. With that five per cent threshold in there it would mean that workers who have coal workers pneumoconiosis would not be able to claim common law damages. It was Labor that restored the rights of injured workers in removing the arbitrary five per cent threshold introduced by the LNP.

We have made a number of changes for the benefit of workers. We do not improve safety and workers compensation statistics in this state on the back of injured workers alone. That is exactly what the member for Kawana did. They bore all the costs. It is like saying that we do not have a health and safety problem because claims are going down but making it impossible for workers to claim workers compensation. What a joke. Any worker can see through that, except the member for Kawana.

We have provided \$75 million in benefits to employers through savings in premiums. We have kept the premium rate at \$1.20 per wages paid and the funding ratio at over 170 per cent. I say to anyone who complains about the current board that they are providing all these benefits to workers and employers. To my mind that is a fairly fantastic board doing their job.

When it comes to the Law Society's issue around apologies, can I say that we have looked at that. I note that the proposed provisions are consistent with the provisions that currently exist under the Civil Liability Act and specify that making an apology or expression of regret does not constitute an express or implied admission of fault or liability by the person. The member for Caloundra said in his contribution that the department will provide guidance in relation to this. Members who spoke on this are right. Often workers simply want a thank you and want to be told, 'We are sorry.'

In relation to the cost for unpaid interns, we predict that that will be minimal. These are unpaid interns. Probably employers in the first instance will pay no premiums at all. If there is a claims history, they may get a claims history back on their premiums following on from that.

This bill continues to build on our significant record of achieving for vulnerable workers, particularly when they are injured. David Peetz did a fantastic job in relation to the review. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 27, as read, agreed to.

Clause 28—

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (5.59 pm): Clauses 28 to 32 represent the amendments to the TAFE Queensland Act 2013 that provide for particular members to be on the board. As I have always said, I believe that the best people for the job should be on those types of boards. When governments start appointing people by gender or race, they start accepting the fact that they have failed on this particular issue. I suspect that that is the case because over the years we have seen traineeships and apprenticeships decline under the Minister for Training and Skills Development's watch. Fewer people are participating because of the policies of the Palaszczuk Labor government. The government now has to say that particular members have to be on the board to have a say.

For the last five years this government should have been listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in terms of what they think about skills and training and not say now, 'We're going to have an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander on the board so we can hear their views of what we are not doing with respect to TAFE.' They should have been listening to their views. NAPLAN results for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders have been decreasing in the last five years because of the Palaszczuk Labor government policies. It is an absolute disgrace.

An amendment to this legislation simply saying, 'We are now going to have a board member who represent Indigenous Queenslanders,' will not fix the issues of NAPLAN and the education system that have seen 60 to 70 per cent of Indigenous children not exceeding the national average for reading and writing in year 9 across the country. It is a disgrace. It falls on the Minister for Training and Skills Development and the Minister for Education. That is why they have this amendment to the TAFE Queensland Act today.

Ms Boyd: Racist comments in disguise.

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find the comments made by the member for Pine Rivers offensive and untrue, and I ask her to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member for Pine Rivers.

Ms BOYD: I withdraw.

Clause 28, as read, agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Gympie Electorate, 150 Army Cadet Unit

 **Mr PERRETT (Gympie—LNP)** (6.03 pm): Last Thursday I was privileged to attend the Gympie 150 Army Cadet Unit dine-in night. The turnout of about 100 cadets, officers and guests was remarkable for an organisation that has only been running since May last year. It is Gympie's first cadet unit since World War II—three-quarters of a century wait. With 70 cadets ranging in age from 13 to 17 years, it reflects strong support for the ACU. More than 130 potential cadets indicated their interest when expressions were first called in 2017. In an age when we hear about youth not being interested in community events, addiction to technological devices and not engaging, the support for the ACU is impressive.

Gympie cadets are proving that not all students are obsessed with technology to learn life skills, and it is encouraging that traditions and survival skills are still valued by some youth. 150 ACU strives to empower local youth to achieve their potential through the values of courage, initiative, respect and teamwork. Cadets learn survival skills and how to navigate challenges without relying on technology. They are encouraged to take pride in themselves, their unit and their appearance. They are challenged by organising bivouacs that include life skill activities such as living in the field by sleeping under hoochies and cooking on hexamine stoves. They learn navigation by using maps and compasses—a change from using and relying on electronic devices. They learn first aid, and the fun part is adventure activities such as abseiling.

Currently, the unit relies on support from local businesses and cadet unit staff to fund basic equipment such as tents, associated gear and radios. Gympie RSL is its biggest supporter with funding and advice. While the unit is based at Gympie State High School, there are hopes to establish permanent roots. That will require financial support from local, state and possibly federal government bodies to enable this to happen. Ideally, they are hoping to have a shed to allow for classrooms and storage, bathroom facilities and security fencing to ensure the protection of the unit. It will also require electricity to the proposed site.

150 ACU is integral to Gympie's strong service culture. It provides support to numerous ceremonial and fundraising activities in the region. Cadets have participated in ceremonial events such as Anzac Day and Vietnam Veterans Day. This year they provided Anzac Day support in Gympie, Widgee and Tin Can Bay. They raised funds for Legacy and assisted war veterans and widows with clean-up activities at private residences. They assisted the RSL in recognising former military personnel in the Gympie cemetery and by laying flags and poppies on Remembrance Day.

Southern Moreton Bay Islands

 **Ms RICHARDS (Redlands—ALP)** (6.06 pm): Our islands are always a hive of activities and a strong community in the Redlands. It has been no different over the last few weeks. We had a small business forum hosted by Minister Fentiman. We had a fantastic turnout. Over 70 people attended the forum, talking about the opportunities to grow small business and looking at how we economically transition those islands in the tourism space.

We have some fantastic businesses that have just started. The Redlands Coast Lifestyle group is amazing. There is Gerard and the *Friendly Bay Islander*—what a great job he does in bringing our business community together. We had a lot of issues that came out of that. As a result, this afternoon I have met with Mayor Karen Williams and the minister to look at forming a Southern Moreton Bay Islands small business strategy. That is really exciting news for our island community.

Some of the other issues are in the federal space. There is nothing new there though, as we all know. Connectivity is a huge issue. There are still mobile blackspots. After two federal election cycle campaigns with promise after promise after promise, there is still no delivery. We need to have mobile communications and good internet connectivity to make sure that our small businesses thrive on the islands.

We had the SMBI CULT-ure map, which was courtesy of the funding from Minister Enoch's arts grants program. They put together an amazing grants program. We had a sunset social on Karragarra Island to launch the publication. It was a fantastic afternoon—again, a really strong community out enjoying our beautiful waters on the bay. It was a fantastic night that showcased all of the art and culture that exists across our islands.

There have been two breast cancer fundraisers—one on Russell Island and one on Macleay Island. The Russell Island fundraiser was another fashion parade op shop. I am wearing another great bargain from another fantastic op shop—a \$15 Easton Pearson jacket. You cannot beat that! They raised over \$8,000 on that day for breast cancer. Macleay Island had a ladies golf club day that was put together by Zan Howe—again, another terrific job raising a whole lot of money. I also thank Rhonda and Kay from Russell Island for putting together the fashion parade. It was fantastic.

Minister Miles came out to the Redland Hospital. We also met with our Macleay Island Local Ambulance Committee. I am really pleased to say that, as a result of that visit, Macleay Island is getting additional paramedic resources. This is fantastic for our islands in terms of making sure that we provide the services that are needed most. Two new police officers started three weeks ago on Russell Island. You cannot get any better than that. We are delivering in spades for our island community.

Mr Harper: Our government is delivering jobs.

Ms RICHARDS: Absolutely. You cannot beat that. Our islanders are thrilled with all of the work that the Palaszczuk government is doing across our islands. I also give a shout-out to Coochiemudlo Island. The Coochiemudlo Artisan Collective exhibition they had was fantastic. On opening night I got to see firsthand how our first responders respond to accidents. We had a young girl faint and pass out, but we did not realise that that is what happened. They were on the island within five minutes taking care of that young lady. It has been a fantastic effort across our islands.

(Time expired)

Broadwater Electorate, Railway Station

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (6.09 pm): As the M1 is in such a disastrous state, more people are looking for alternate ways to come to the state's capital. That is why rail is so important for people living in my electorate and, indeed, in the neighbouring electorate of Theodore. I am most heartened to see the construction of a station that will service my electorate. The government has called for public consultation on this. It is due to close on 8 November. I sincerely hope that this public consultation is better than that around the upgrade to exit 57, which has been nothing more than public conditioning. The public has been given what was served up. A set of solar panels have been pulled out and will be put back in exactly where a slip lane should be, but I digress.

The member beside me and I have received two bits of feedback, one overwhelmingly on the name. A poll from our councillor, William Owen-Jones, has come back in favour of the words 'Hope Island' being in the name—maybe Hope Island Road Station. To suggest that calling it Helensvale North would be the right way to go does not seem to make sense. We believe it would be confusing, particularly with nearby roads and the fact that most people associate that with Hope Island.

The second and most important issue is around parking. The suggestion that 174 car parks will be sufficient for that station is absurd and it must be scrapped. That car park already services workers from the Department of Education who work in the same complex where my electoral office is, and 174 parks will cause mayhem from day one. I urge the minister and the department to have another look at it. There appears to be sufficient room. When you consider that the neighbouring station to the north, Coomera, has 540 car parks and it is already at capacity and it is craziness—and the member for

Coomera has worked well with the federal government to get more money to put more bays in—when you consider that the neighbouring station to the south, Helensvale, has 900 stations and it is bedlam at times, to suggest that you should build a new station with only 174 bays from day one is absurd. It will be an abject failure. I ask the government to do something novel. Rather than build and then have a crisis and then look to fix it, do what good governments do: forward plan. Put the bays in place now and allow it to grow.

I will conclude by saying that both the member for Theodore and I will continue to advocate for this very strongly. It is a vital piece of infrastructure. It is a missing link in the process to ensure people can access rail more frequently, and a big part of that is having park-and-rides. If there is no park-and-ride it will not be efficient. It will not work. The government must deliver more bays.

Morayfield Electorate, State Schools

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (6.12 pm): The Labor Party is the party of education. We have continually reformed opportunities for people to participate in education and go on to live fulfilling lives; for example, think about the introduction of prep; the transfer of year 7 into high school; and universal access to kindergarten. These are successful Labor initiatives that have delivered benefits and made a difference to communities right across Queensland.

We continue to support growth in the education sector by investing in school infrastructure. The Morayfield state electorate is a great recipient of those investments in school infrastructure. Just recently the Caboolture State High School received almost \$2 million in funding for two new special education buildings; Caboolture Special School, \$700,000 for projects to improve works around the special school; Minimbah State School, \$250,000 for refurbishment works; and Morayfield East State School, \$350,000 for refurbishment works.

One of the most exciting projects at the moment is the construction of a new special school for Caboolture. This will be a secondary special school. The parents are very excited that the school has now been given its official name. It will be called the Lee Street State Special School. Progress is going very well. I had the opportunity to visit the construction site last week and talk to tradies. They are doing a fantastic job. The thing I found most impressive about the tradies on this particular construction project is that they appreciate it is more than just a building they are contributing to. They know they are contributing to a space that will make a difference to kids who need a little bit of help in their lives and their learning journey.

I am very pleased that the Minister for Education has approved additional works to happen at the Lee Street State Special School, and the reason why is because it has been so popular with enrolments. The school has not even opened yet but the education minister, Minister Grace, has approved stage 2A to start immediately. There will be an extra \$9.4 million worth of construction to deliver 10 extra learning spaces. With construction starting now, while the main construction is still underway, it is expected that that second stage, stage 2A, will be completed before the end of term 2 in 2020, providing additional space for the growing community that is Caboolture. Well done to the Lee Street State Special School community! I look forward to attending the official opening next year.

Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (6.15 pm): I rise this evening to commend a very important group in the Chatsworth electorate, B4C, which has raised a very important environmental concern that is present in my Chatsworth electorate. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the incredible work the Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee—affectionately known in our community as B4C—does in rehabilitating ecosystems and habitat to ensure that flora and fauna can continue to thrive in the south-east suburbs of Brisbane. Over the years I have seen firsthand the hard work these passionate staff and volunteers have put into creating positive changes. From organising educational forums to habitat rehabilitation events, they play a significant role in protecting our environment in Chatsworth and beyond.

The thing I truly admire about this group is that they are all about practical environmental solutions rather than supergluing themselves to roadways. This dedicated band of staff and volunteers is about working with others to change behaviours in the community while achieving positive outcomes for our environment. Over the years they have developed successful partnerships with the state government, Brisbane City Council and private enterprise to work on tangible solutions for communities. For this reason I think they are amazing at what they do.

In particular, B4C have promoted fauna movement solutions in the city for some time now, and they continue to work hard with state and local governments to improve road ecology in Brisbane. As the Chatsworth bushland corridor is a vital connector to surrounding habitats in Brisbane, it is especially important to create corridors for animals to migrate safely. I want to thank a few members of the B4C community who have showcased the positive difference fauna movement solutions can make in the electorate, in particular: Carly Murphy, environment and projects officer; Wayne Cameron, catchment manager; Stefan Hattingh, manager, B4C landcare services; and Heather Barns, project officer and secretary. They have worked tirelessly to create awareness of this issue. They held a very successful Barriers & Bridges fauna movement solutions forum with multiple relevant stakeholders in attendance.

During my most recent meeting with these B4C members, I was surprised to hear that the state government's fauna sensitive road design guidelines for Transport and Main Roads appears to have changed little since 2010. As it has obviously now been nine years since these guidelines were updated, I believe this is something that needs to be addressed so that transport and infrastructure projects can implement current best practice fauna movement solutions to preserve our precious habitat in the Chatsworth electorate.

Chatsworth is unique in that we are approximately 13 kilometres from the city CBD yet have so many important environmentally sensitive ecosystems running through our electorate. I want to ensure this continues so that future generations can also enjoy this for many years to come. I absolutely acknowledge the great work of B4C.

Mansfield Electorate, Infrastructure

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (6.18 pm): I rise to speak about the need for the Morrison government to loosen its purse strings and invest in the infrastructure promised to the people of the Mansfield electorate. Independent bodies from the Reserve Bank to the International Monetary Fund have repeatedly urged federal governments to spend money to stimulate the Australian economy. Earlier this month the RBA cut interest rates to just 0.75 per cent, the lowest level on record, and rates are likely to be cut again in 2020, but the governor of the Reserve Bank cannot act alone in his efforts to turn Australia's economy around.

Earlier this week the IMF downgraded Australia's economic growth forecast, saying 'monetary policy cannot be the only game in town. It should be coupled with fiscal support.' Australia needs a federal government willing to bring forward infrastructure spending to build and rebuild local communities and put money in the pockets of Australians. The IMF gets it, the RBA gets it, the Palaszczuk government gets it, but not the Morrison LNP government.

My Mansfield community knows that the Morrison government is not holding up its end of the bargain. We are still waiting for the delivery of significant projects promised at the last federal election. These include: the Rochedale Road and Priestdale Road roundabout upgrade to a traffic light intersection, which is a significant safety concern for local families; the Newnham Road and Wecker Road intersection at Mount Gravatt; and the lifting of Bernie's Place next door to the Mount Gravatt Community Centre, providing much needed additional space. These projects are listed on the Morrison government's never-never list—listed for 2023.

Research suggests that, when a government invests in infrastructure, unemployment falls, crime falls, currencies fluctuate less, business confidence improves, consumer spending increases and social harmony rises, but the Morrison government has never been strong on research. The Morrison government fails to do as we would expect of a federal government—that is, invest in and lead innovation; focus on industries requiring education and skills, including medical fields; focus on high-value niche industries where the market is not price sensitive; further the goals of foreign policy; and intervene in a declining economic market. The Palaszczuk government is doing all of the heavy lifting on infrastructure in Queensland, with \$12.9 billion in infrastructure planned for the next 12 months alone supporting 40,500 jobs—including jobs for the good people of Mansfield.

Pumicestone Electorate, Public Transport; Islam, Mr S

 **Mrs WILSON** (Pumicestone—LNP) (6.20 pm): Earlier this year, I spoke to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads during a parliament sitting week and then wrote to him as requested seeking a review of bus timetabling and routes in the Pumicestone electorate. After three months I got a reply from the minister and it was not a pleasant one. In fact, he outright rejected my request, indicating that

no changes will occur. Many residents in my electorate rely on bus services to stay connected to the community. Many of them do not own a car and others just cannot afford to run one. Therefore, getting from A to B on a bus can be their only lifeline. One elderly resident recently wrote to me and said—

... there is not a single bus service running in this area.

In the not too distant future there is going to be a major problem for all concerned when we are no longer able to drive a car.

We are really concerned for the future.

Public transport is about meeting the travel needs of Queenslanders, not the transport minister. For the sake of conducting a few simple reviews, locals may have a more reliable and efficient service that meets their needs, but not under this Labor government. Locals in my electorate feel cheated because not only are their roads being neglected but the public transport system is not working for them and the minister will not do anything about it.

Whilst I still have the floor, I wish to acknowledge the tragic loss of a young Queenslander this week. Shahid Islam was travelling home along the Bruce Highway late Tuesday night after cleaning the new home that he, his wife and their son were about to shift into. Shahid was one of two men killed in the horror head-on crash that should never have happened. Let us call it for what it is: Shahid lost his life because the car was stolen and driven on the wrong side of the road whilst the driver was escaping the police. Shahid was an innocent person doing nothing wrong, and I hope the full force of the law is brought upon those responsible for what happened to him and his family. To Shahid's wife and their four-year-old son I extend my deepest and most heartfelt sympathy.

Woodridge Electorate, Schools

 Hon. CR DICK (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (6.23 pm): When I was first elected as the state member for Woodridge, I made a commitment to our community to work hard to improve access to better health care, particularly better public health care, to create pathways to the dignity that only work can provide and to support our mighty local educators and schools. When it comes to education, 2019 is a special year for the Woodridge electorate as our community celebrates some significant anniversaries and milestones in our local schools.

In 2019 we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Regents Park State School, the 30th anniversary of Crestmead State School and the 50th anniversaries of Woodridge North State School and St Paul's Catholic Primary School Woodridge. Tonight I am delighted to welcome to the gallery of the Legislative Assembly principals, parents, teachers and staff from many of the primary schools in the electorate of Woodridge, including Berrinba East State School, Browns Plains State School, Burrowes State School, Crestmead State School, Kingston State School, Logan City Special School, Marsden State School, Woodridge State School, St Francis College Crestmead and St Paul's Primary School.

I was reminded of the importance and value of education in our community when I read the recently released history of St Paul's Primary School collated by the principal, Matt Mackinlay, and a long-term Queensland Catholic educator, Mr Brian Moffett. In their covering letter, Brian and Matt wrote that 'the history of Logan, of Woodridge and of St Paul's is replete with stories of people's goodness, bravery and resilience, generosity and humour'. Never have truer words been written about our community. One of the stories they share in the book is the day the Governor visited St Paul's Primary School—a story I would like to share this evening. The book states—

The Governor of Queensland was coming to visit one of the local State Schools. A Logan Councillor suggested that he might visit St Paul's. This would have been stretching his tight schedule but he did it. His entourage came to the back car park. All the children were lined up. The Governor and his wife came over to speak to the children. One child, confusing what her teacher had explained about the Governor's role, asked the Governor's wife, "Are you the Queen?" Meanwhile, just at that time, the Australia Post mailman arrived on his delivery round. The children turned and left behind all the formality and greeted the mailman enthusiastically with smiles, waves and voices! It was the Postman who received the Royal treatment! In the spirit of St Paul's, our common humanity is our great equaliser. Everyone counts. Everyone matters.

This is not only the spirit and tradition of St Paul's; it is the spirit and tradition of the Woodridge state electorate and the spirit and tradition of education in our community. On behalf of our community, in the people's house I thank all of the principals, parents, teachers and staff who contribute so much to the great education story of the Woodridge electorate. Thank you for ensuring that everybody counts and everybody matters.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): I would like to also welcome all of our guests in the gallery tonight. Welcome to the people's house.

Sexual Violence, Denim Day

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (6.26 pm): I rise this evening wearing my jeans in parliament not because I wanted to get away early from today's proceedings but rather in support of the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence, which is based in my electorate of Southport, and also in support of the victims of sexual assault. The centre does a fantastic job in supporting so many Gold Coast women.

As members would be aware, this month is Sexual Violence Awareness Month. I think it is important that everybody takes a stand against sexual violence in our community, so this evening I am wearing my jeans to support Denim Day, which is a way to use fashion to make a strong stand about sexual violence. Denim Day, which is actually tomorrow, began as a protest in Italy in 1999 when a judge overturned a rape conviction because he felt that, since the victim was wearing very tight jeans, she must have helped the rapist remove them, therefore implying consent. Denim Day has become a symbol of protest against the myth that sexual violence occurs because of clothing. On Tuesday I attended the launch of the Queensland Sexual Assault Network 'What were you wearing?' Exhibition here at the Parliamentary Annexe, and last week I attended the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence candle ceremony. It is always very moving to hear the stories of these incredibly strong women.

I would ask all members to join with me in supporting Denim Day tomorrow by wearing your jeans or your denim jacket—you may want to dust that off; I thought that may be a little too much for the chamber this evening—and also by taking a photo of yourself and uploading it to join the online campaign using the tags #denimday, #startbybelieving, #svam, #metoo or #gccasv, which is the abbreviation for the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence.

I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge some of the other local support services in my electorate for the work they do in support of sexual violence and domestic violence victims. I want to particularly mention Di McLeod and the team at the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence. Di was here yesterday for the exhibition and took a very lead role in that. I also want to acknowledge Rosemary O'Malley and the team at the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Protection Centre, which is also located in my electorate of Southport and provides services right across the city.

I also want to mention Victoria Shiel and the team at the Gold Coast Community Legal Centre, who also do a tremendous job in supporting so many vulnerable people in our community. Sexual violence is not acceptable in any circumstance. I am sure all those in the House will stand with me and those victims in supporting the very worthy cause of Denim Day tomorrow.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): It is a worthy cause, and I am sure you sought permission from Mr Speaker for your attire.

Pearce, Ms F; Member for Redcliffe, House Fire; Intrust Cup

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (6.29 pm): I would like to acknowledge the passing of a long-term Redcliffe resident, Frances Pearce. Frances was born in London on Wednesday, 4 October 1916 and, sadly, passed away on Thursday, 3 October 2019. That is right: incredibly she was 102 years, 11 months and 29 days of age—just one day short of her 103rd birthday.

A little over three years ago Frances enjoyed a very special birthday present when she was among the very first passengers on the Redcliffe rail line on 3 October 2016. Along with her son, John, who is an amazing SES volunteer in my community, Frances joined the Premier, the Prime Minister and myself in boarding that first train at Kippa-Ring station for the inaugural journey to Petrie station. Frances had been waiting a lifetime for the opportunity to board that train from Redcliffe, and it was an honour that she could join us. I pass on my best wishes and my condolences to John and the family. Frances was known as a very kind and generous woman and she will be sadly missed. She lived a very long life and was well loved by her family.

On a personal note, can I thank my neighbours, the Kippa-Ring and Sandgate fire brigade, the ambulance officers and the police who on Wednesday a week ago attended my house. I received a phone call in my electorate office from a neighbour saying that my house was on fire. It is not a phone call you want to get. I raced home and saw three fire brigade appliances, ambulance and police in my street.

My neighbours acted so swiftly when they heard the alarm going off in my house and used hoses and called triple 0. Although my garage was gutted my house was saved, and it is all because of their tremendous work, particularly company D at Kippa-Ring and Sandgate. I say thank you so much to

those fireys for their incredible work and for bashing down my front door to save the dogs as well. They were all fine. Once again, at a local level I realise the amazing work our first responders do. It has been a difficult time in terms of the clean-up at home, but we still have a house, we are all safe, our pets are safe, and that is what counts. I thank all of those people.

On a very happy note, can I say the Intrust Cup 2019 was held at Redcliffe. The finalists were the Burleigh Bears and Wynnum Manly Seagulls. I say well done to both teams and well done to the Bears for winning. Can I say the winner was the Dolphin Stadium for hosting the grand final. It was sold out and we are hosting it again next year. It was a fantastic event. I say thanks to the QRL for such a great event. I recommend honourable members buy their tickets early next year and I really hope the Redcliffe Dolphins are in that grand final.

The House adjourned at 6.32 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Andrew, Bailey, Bates, Batt, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Boyce, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Costigan, Crandon, Crawford, Crisafulli, D'Ath, Dametto, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hart, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Janetzki, Katter, Kelly, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lister, Lui, Lynham, Madden, Mander, McArdle, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mullen, Nicholls, O'Connor, O'Rourke B, O'Rourke C, Palaszczuk, Pease, Pegg, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Sorensen, Stevens, Stewart, Trad, Watts, Weir, Whiting, Wilson