



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

### Wednesday, 27 November 2019

Subject	Page
<b>REPORT</b> .....	<b>3811</b>
<b>Auditor-General</b> .....	<b>3811</b>
<i>Tabled paper.</i> Auditor-General of Queensland: Report to Parliament No. 8: 2019-20— Queensland state government entities: 2018-19 results of financial audits.....	3811
<b>SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>3811</b>
<b>Petition Responses and Answers to Questions on Notice, Due Date</b> .....	<b>3811</b>
<b>Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Annual General Meeting</b> .....	<b>3811</b>
<b>School Group Tour</b> .....	<b>3811</b>
<b>PETITIONS</b> .....	<b>3811</b>
<b>MOTION</b> .....	<b>3812</b>
<b>Citizen's Right of Reply</b> .....	<b>3812</b>
<b>TABLED PAPER</b> .....	<b>3812</b>
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>3812</b>
<b>Electricity Prices</b> .....	<b>3812</b>
<b>Coomera Connector</b> .....	<b>3813</b>
<b>Cyberbullying</b> .....	<b>3813</b>
<i>Tabled paper.</i> Queensland Government second progress report, dated November 2019, titled 'Implementing the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce Report' .....	3813
<b>Payroll Tax Relief</b> .....	<b>3814</b>
<b>Mines and Quarries, Safety</b> .....	<b>3815</b>
<b>Hydrogen Industry</b> .....	<b>3815</b>
<b>Innovation, Jobs</b> .....	<b>3816</b>
<b>Rural Queensland, Maternity Services</b> .....	<b>3816</b>
<b>Drought, Support</b> .....	<b>3817</b>
<b>Schools, Solar Energy</b> .....	<b>3817</b>
<b>Police Resources</b> .....	<b>3818</b>

Table of Contents – Wednesday, 27 November 2019

Bushfires, Housing and Public Works .....	3819
Regional Queensland, Infrastructure and Jobs.....	3819
Retired Racehorses.....	3820
<b>LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE .....</b>	<b>3821</b>
Office of the Information Commissioner, Report .....	3821
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Information Commissioner of Queensland—Report to Parliament No. 2 for 2019-20: Compliance audit—Bundaberg Regional Council—Bundaberg Regional Council’s compliance with the Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld) and the Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld). .....	3821
<b>HEALTH, COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE .....</b>	<b>3821</b>
Report .....	3821
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 31, 56th Parliament, November 2019—Inquiry into the Wynnum and Mermaid Waters Ambulance Station projects. ....	3821
<b>NOTICE OF MOTION .....</b>	<b>3821</b>
Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness, Parliamentary Inquiry .....	3821
<b>QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE .....</b>	<b>3822</b>
Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance .....	3822
Townsville, Operation Regenerate .....	3823
Regional Queensland, Jobs.....	3823
Public Servants, Gifts and Benefits .....	3824
Drought.....	3824
Public Servants, Gifts and Benefits .....	3825
Rural and Remote Queensland.....	3826
Public Servants, Gifts and Benefits .....	3826
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Extract from gift register for 1 January 2019 to 31 March 2019 detailing gift to Mr Matt Collins.....	3826
Industry Attraction and Infrastructure, Jobs .....	3827
Inner City South State Secondary College, Principal.....	3827
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document, dated 4 September 2019, to LNP regarding a selection process for the position of principal of a new high school at Dutton Park. ....	3827
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Letter, dated, 19 November 2019, from the Assistant Information Commissioner, Ms Suzette Jefferies, to Principal Advisor, Office of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Peter Coulson, regarding an external review of a decision under the Right to Information Act 2009. ....	3827
Ecotourism .....	3828
Inner City South State Secondary College, Principal.....	3829
Back to Work Program.....	3830
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document, undated, titled ‘LNP’s Costings Report: Savings and reprioritisation measures’.....	3830
Hughenden Irrigation Project Corporation .....	3831
Water Supply, Dams.....	3831
Inner City South State Secondary College, Principal.....	3831
South-East Queensland, Road Infrastructure.....	3832
New Acland Coalmine .....	3832
Workers’ Rights.....	3833
Drought, Freight and Fodder Subsidies.....	3833
Recycling, Jobs.....	3833
Premier and Minister for Trade, Legal Advice .....	3834
Cost of Living, Support.....	3834
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.....</b>	<b>3834</b>
Further Answer to Question, Public Servants, Gifts and Benefits .....	3834
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Public Service Commission guideline, dated 1 January 2010, titled ‘Gifts and Benefits’.....	3834
<b>NOTICE OF MOTION .....</b>	<b>3835</b>
Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments .....	3835
<b>MOTIONS .....</b>	<b>3835</b>
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders.....	3835
Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to. ....	3835
Resolved in the affirmative.....	3835
Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments .....	3836
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Letter, dated 27 November 2019, from the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Hon. Jackie Trad, to the Presiding Commissioner, Inquiry into Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments, Productivity Commission, Mr Jonathan Coppel, providing a submission in response to the Productivity Commission’s draft report on Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments. ....	3836
<b>SPEAKER’S STATEMENT.....</b>	<b>3838</b>
Error in Division .....	3838
<b>MOTION .....</b>	<b>3838</b>
Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments .....	3838
<b>HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL .....</b>	<b>3842</b>
Second Reading .....	3842
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.....</b>	<b>3853</b>
Further Answer to Question, Drought, Freight and Fodder Subsidies .....	3853

Table of Contents – Wednesday, 27 November 2019

<b>HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL .....</b>	<b>3853</b>
<b>Second Reading .....</b>	<b>3853</b>
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Letter, dated 16 September 2019, from the Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport, Hon. Mick de Brenni, to the General Manager Policy and Advocacy, Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, Ms Amanda Rohan, regarding the proposed part-day Christmas Eve public holiday.....	3867
Division: Question put—That the bill be now read a second time.....	3869
Resolved in the affirmative.....	3869
<b>Consideration in Detail .....</b>	<b>3869</b>
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, explanatory notes to Hon. Grace Grace’s amendments.....	3869
Amendment agreed to.....	3871
Clauses 1 to 10, as amended, agreed to.....	3871
<b>Third Reading.....</b>	<b>3871</b>
Division: Question put—That the bill, as amended, be now read a third time.....	3871
Resolved in the affirmative.....	3871
<b>Long Title.....</b>	<b>3872</b>
Motion agreed to.....	3872
Amendment agreed to.....	3872
Division: Question put—That the long title of the bill, as amended, be agreed to.....	3872
Resolved in the affirmative.....	3872
<b>CRIMINAL CODE (CHILD SEXUAL OFFENCES REFORM) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL .....</b>	<b>3872</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3872</b>
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.....	3872
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, explanatory notes.....	3872
<b>First Reading.....</b>	<b>3876</b>
<b>Referral to Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.....</b>	<b>3876</b>
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) BILL .....</b>	<b>3876</b>
<b>Message from Governor.....</b>	<b>3876</b>
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Message, dated 26 November 2019, from His Excellency the Governor, recommending the Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019.....	3876
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3876</b>
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019.....	3876
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019, explanatory notes.....	3876
<b>First Reading.....</b>	<b>3879</b>
<b>Referral to Education, Employment and Small Business Committee.....</b>	<b>3879</b>
<b>HEALTH TRANSPARENCY BILL.....</b>	<b>3879</b>
<b>Second Reading.....</b>	<b>3879</b>
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 27, 56th Parliament, October 2019—Health Transparency Bill 2019, government response.....	3880
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Photograph of aged care rally involving members of the Labor Party.....	3882
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Photograph of aged care rally involving members of the Labor Party.....	3882
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Article by Paul Weston, undated, titled ‘Scanlon fires up in LNP pile-on: Aged care sparks political brouhaha’.....	3883
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Social media posts, dated 20 November, including exchange between the member for Mudgeeraba, Ms Ros Bates MP, and the member for Gaven, Ms Meaghan Scanlon MP.....	3883
<b>MOTION.....</b>	<b>3887</b>
<b>Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness, Parliamentary Inquiry.....</b>	<b>3887</b>
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Answer to Question on Notice No. 55, asked on 13 February 2019, in relation the fire mitigation plan for the Ravensbourne area.....	3892
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Photograph of national park signage covered by foliage.....	3892
Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to.....	3898
Resolved in the negative.....	3898
<b>HEALTH TRANSPARENCY BILL.....</b>	<b>3899</b>
<b>Second Reading.....</b>	<b>3899</b>
<b>ADJOURNMENT.....</b>	<b>3908</b>
<b>Vogler, Ms S; Nanango Electorate, Bushfires.....</b>	<b>3908</b>
<b>Mining Industry, Automation.....</b>	<b>3908</b>
<b>Gold Coast, Infrastructure.....</b>	<b>3909</b>
<b>Morayfield Electorate.....</b>	<b>3910</b>
<b>Coomera Electorate, Road Infrastructure.....</b>	<b>3910</b>
<b>Springwood Electorate, Road Infrastructure.....</b>	<b>3911</b>
<b>First Home Owners’ Grant.....</b>	<b>3911</b>
<b>Woodridge Electorate.....</b>	<b>3912</b>
<b>Nambour Police Beat.....</b>	<b>3913</b>
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Nonconforming petition regarding a police beat for Nambour.....	3913
<b>Mercury Theatre Wynnum.....</b>	<b>3913</b>
<b>ATTENDANCE.....</b>	<b>3914</b>



## WEDNESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2019

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 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.

### REPORT

#### Auditor-General

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from the Auditor-General—and I feel more enlightened; the Auditor-General has that effect on people, as you can appreciate—report No. 8 of 2019-20 titled *Queensland state government entities: 2018-19 results of financial audits*. I table the report for the information of members.

*Tabled paper:* Auditor-General of Queensland: Report to Parliament No. 8: 2019-20—Queensland state government entities: 2018-19 results of financial audits [\[2132\]](#).

### SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

#### Petition Responses and Answers to Questions on Notice, Due Date

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Due to the Christmas shutdown period, in accordance with standing order 7, responses to petitions tabled this week and answers to this week's Questions on Notice under standing order 114 are due on Monday, 6 January 2020.

The *Notice Paper* and Questions on Notice database reflect this due date and the Table Office will advise relevant departmental officers.

#### Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Annual General Meeting

 **Mr SPEAKER:** I remind members that the annual general meeting of the Queensland branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will be held in the Legislative Assembly chamber this afternoon at 1.30 pm. I trust all of you will be here.

#### School Group Tour

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I wish to advise that we will be visited in the gallery this morning by students and teachers from Caningeraba State School in the electorate of Burleigh.

### PETITIONS

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

#### Age Pensioners, Vehicle Registration and Licences

**Mrs Wilson**, from 288 petitioners, requesting the House to introduce free vehicle registration and licences for all Queensland aged pensioners [\[2133\]](#).

The Clerk presented the following paper petition, sponsored by the Clerk—

#### Gladstone Hospital, Upgrades

From 33 petitioners, requesting the House to expedite upgrades to the Gladstone Hospital to deliver consistent level 4 services to the growing needs of the community [\[2134\]](#).

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

#### Seniors, Train Fares

**Mr Nicholls**, from 913 petitioners, requesting the House to provide seniors free off-peak travel on trains [\[2135\]](#).

#### Grants, Allocation

**Mr Andrew**, from 365 petitioners, requesting the House to cause an investigation into all grants to ensure that grants are being allocated in accordance with law, policy and taxpayer expectations [\[2136\]](#).

Petitions received.

## MOTION

### Citizen's Right of Reply

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.34 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That this House notes report No. 194 of the Ethics Committee and the recommendation of the committee that a right of reply be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*; and
2. That the House adopt the committee's recommendation and incorporate the right of reply into the *Record of Proceedings*.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

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RESPONSE BY MS PETA-KAYE CROFT, TO STATEMENTS MADE BY THE MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH MR MICHAEL HART MP, ON 27 JULY 2018

On 27 July 2018, the Member for Burleigh was questioning the Member for Springwood and the Commissioner of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission during estimates hearings.

The Member for Burleigh referred to court proceedings involving Mr Garry David Hall, who is my former spouse. During the hearing, the Member for Burleigh referred to a debt involved in those proceedings and made the following statement—*My point is that at the end of the day there was no outcome at the end of this particular court case, and in fact, this person's wife may have been a former Labor member of parliament and I wonder whether that may have had any influence here.*

I have in fact never had any responsibility for, knowledge of, or held any position in, Mr Hall's building companies.

Whilst I am currently not a Member of Parliament I am still an active citizen with a family, living in the electorate that I served. I have never ruled out a possible return to any level of politics, and with that in mind the inference, in Parliament, that I had some influence in a matter investigated by a statutory authority adversely affects my reputation and potentially, my occupation or office.

## TABLED PAPER

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

MEMBER'S PAPER

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

Member for Clayfield (Mr Nicholls)—

[2137](#) Nonconforming petition requesting the House to provide those travelling on seniors go cards free off-peak travel on trains

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Electricity Prices

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.34 am): Last week the Auditor-General tabled the latest results of financial audits for the Queensland government's energy entities. This report has found that my government's Powering Queensland Plan and Affordable Energy Plan are working and delivering more stability and lower prices for Queenslanders. The report said—

Within the national wholesale electricity market, Queensland continues to have the lowest wholesale electricity price, which influences the price consumers pay.

The report says that since the Queensland government introduced its Powering Queensland Plan Queensland prices have become less volatile. The report says that because of this Queensland continues to have the lowest prices in the National Electricity Market. It outlines that the state

government gave back \$1.07 billion to consumers in the form of rebates and subsidies. This included funding to support the additional cost of supplying electricity to regional Queensland. This includes the large increase in rebates and concessions under our Affordable Energy Plan, including initiatives such as a \$50 dividend to households, rebates for energy-efficient appliances and interest-free loans for solar and battery systems. Well done, Minister!

My government has been able to reinvest the returns from our government owned energy corporations into lower prices because we kept our public power stations and poles and wires in public hands. By keeping our power assets in public hands—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I hear interjections. We know what the LNP want to do.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Please continue with your ministerial statement, Premier.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I think everyone is awake now, Mr Speaker.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Happy to take it to the next election, Mr Speaker.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. The House will come to order. Please get that out of your system now, members.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** By keeping our power assets in public hands we can offer greater stability and keep the lights on, not just here in Queensland but over the border in New South Wales.

### Coomera Connector

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.37 am): With an additional 600,000 people expected to call the corridor between Logan and the Gold Coast home over the next 20 years, we need to ensure that we have the infrastructure needed to support this rapidly growing area. That is why my government is getting on with the job, prioritising construction of a major new road east of the M1 between Coomera and Nerang to take pressure off the highway and support growing north Gold Coast communities. Stage 1 of the Coomera Connector is expected to take more than 60,000 vehicles off the M1 when it opens and will also provide motorists with additional crossings of the Logan, Albert, Coomera and Nerang rivers.

So far Transport and Main Roads has consulted with more than 1,200 people at a series of community drop-in sessions and has obtained hundreds of online survey responses. That consultation is ongoing and will continue until 8 December. Well done, Minister! Next year TMR will undertake a detailed business case for the stage 1 corridor between Coomera and Nerang. The business case will include a reference design that takes into account community feedback that is currently being gained by this community consultation.

Our record of major Gold Coast infrastructure speaks for itself. It is our government that secured \$2.3 billion in joint funding for four M1 upgrades; it is our government that delivered stage 2 of the light rail and other major Commonwealth Games infrastructure on the Gold Coast; and it is our government that put up our fair share for Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3A.

### Cyberbullying

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): Cyberbullying is a critical issue in our society. Its impact is not inflicted just on the person using the computer or the phone. It impacts families, next-door neighbours and entire communities. That is why there is not just one thing we can do to tackle this insidious problem; we have to do everything and we have to do it together.

Last year we established the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce, which was the first of its kind in Australia. The task force report and my government's response were publicly released in October 2018. We accepted all 29 of the task force report recommendations and announced \$3.5 million in funding to tackle the issue. This year I tabled the first progress report and today I am pleased to table the second progress report, which shows the significant progress we are making.

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Government second progress report, dated November 2019, titled 'Implementing the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce Report' [[2138](#)].

In just over a year, 19 of the 29 recommendations have now been completed. I would like to acknowledge the ongoing work of the Anti-Cyberbullying Advisory Committee, chaired by QUT legal academic Mr Peter Black. This year the committee has met five times and provided crucial independent feedback and advice to government agencies on the implementation of the recommendations. To date key actions have focused on strengthening support in schools, empowering young people and the community, and a public awareness campaign.

The Department of Education has worked with key stakeholders to develop new policies and guidance to support schools. Well done, Minister for Education! This includes a new complaints management process, as well as a school mobile phone policy the rollout of which will commence in the new school year. Next year the Alannah & Madeline Foundation, in partnership with the Dolly's Dream Foundation, will roll out the eSmart Schools program in Queensland schools which will educate children, young people, parents and teachers on how to use the internet safely.

We have committed an extra \$1.2 million in funding for a parenting skills program and digital skills training, including funding to yourtown to employ an additional full-time cyberbullying consultant at Parentline. Last month the Youth Cyber Summit was held at the Queensland State Netball Centre, bringing young people, parents and carers together with social media influencers, social media companies and support services. The campaign material generated from that will be released early next year.

We have also delivered the first round of the Tackle Cyberbullying Grants Program, with some amazing examples of young people taking a stand against cyberbullying. These include 17-year-old Elizabeth, who will deliver a cyber safety wellbeing expo in collaboration with the Park Ridge State High School P&C Association, and 14-year-old Aiden, who will deliver a cyberbullying video project for young people in Gladstone. We have also released a new online portal that contains information for anyone seeking support or advice on cyberbullying, as well as links to important resources.

I am proud of the work that my government is doing in driving this nationally. At my request, in December last year COAG agreed in principle to the right to be forgotten, to give people the right to request removal of personal data from a search engine such as Google. The federal government is currently consulting with jurisdictions to bring a proposal back to COAG. While my government has acted swiftly, the task force report highlighted the need for action by the whole community. While we keep working hard to implement all of the recommendations, it is critical that the whole community plays their part and that we all work together to provide a safe online environment for our children and young people.

### Payroll Tax Relief

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (9.42 am): I am pleased to update the House on how Queensland businesses are benefiting from the Palaszczuk Labor government's \$885 million payroll tax relief package, which I announced in this year's state budget. Through a series of targeted payroll tax measures, the payroll tax relief package supports the small and medium sized businesses that are at the heart of our economy, especially businesses throughout regional Queensland.

During the recent community cabinet meeting in Maryborough earlier this month, the Minister for Employment and Training, Shannon Fentiman, and I had the opportunity to visit successful Maryborough company Wide Bay Transit. It was great to meet with managing director Murray, drivers Paul and Steven, and other Wide Bay Transit team members and to tour their facility.

**A government member** interjected.

**Ms TRAD:** Yes, the member for Maryborough was also there. How could I have forgotten? I am so sorry. In fact, he was everywhere.

**Ms Palaszczuk:** They love him.

**Ms TRAD:** I take that interjection from the Premier; they absolutely love him. It is fair to say that Murray was very excited about our recent cuts to payroll tax, so much so that he is likely to put on a new apprentice mechanic at their Hervey Bay workshop, who will be their first new apprentice in a number of years. When coupled with Back to Work and free apprenticeships, payroll tax cuts for regional businesses such as Wide Bay Transit mean real opportunities for young jobseekers. Since it was introduced in 2015, our apprentice and trainee rebate has seen more than 200 businesses in the Wide Bay region pay around \$2 million less in payroll tax.

Minister Fentiman and I also had the opportunity to visit Munster Services, an engineering company in Slacks Creek. Because Munster Services employs a large number of apprentices, they receive 50 per cent off their payroll tax for every single one of them and they are taking further advantage of our government's free apprenticeships for under 21s.

**Ms Grace:** And no WorkCover.

**Ms TRAD:** And no WorkCover premium; I take that interjection from the Minister for Industrial Relations. Munster Services loves these measures so much that they are looking at putting on even more apprentices and more full-time employees.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's payroll tax relief package, the most significant raft of reforms in more than a decade, includes an increase in the payroll tax exemption threshold from \$1.1 million to \$1.3 million for all Queensland businesses; a regional payroll tax discount of more than one per cent for regional businesses that employ 85 per cent or more local workers; a new two-year employment growth rebate of up to \$20,000 per year; and a further two-year extension of the 50 per cent payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees to June 2021.

The Palaszczuk government is absolutely committed to supporting job creation through building the infrastructure we need for our growing population; funding important programs to support employment preparation and placement, such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work, free TAFE and Back to Work; and supporting our SMEs and particularly those in regional Queensland to take on workers, trainees and apprenticeships through our very attractive payroll tax relief incentives.

### Mines and Quarries, Safety

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (9.45 am): Members will be aware that another Queensland mining family and another mine workforce are grieving the loss of yet another mine worker. Underground operations are suspended as inspectors conduct their investigation into this tragic loss of life. This brings to seven the number of deaths of workers on mines and quarries in 18 months. This continued loss of life in our mining industry is simply unacceptable. I know that industry leaders, mining companies and unions agree, because in July together we committed to refocusing on safety. Together we committed to looking at reforms to improve safety and protect our mine and quarry workers.

Queensland already has the toughest mine safety and health laws in the world. However, when it comes to protecting life and limb, there is no end point. That is why next year I will bring legislation into this House that will create the offence of industrial manslaughter. That offence already exists in other Queensland workplaces, and our mine and quarry workers will have the same protections. Currently the government is consulting with stakeholders, including the QRC, mining companies and unions on the introduction of legislation into this House. There is also legislation before the House to establish a new independent resources safety and health regulator. I look forward to the support of all members of this House on those crucial reforms.

This government already has runs on the board when it comes to protecting our mining workforce. We have made sweeping reforms to better prevent and detect black lung disease among coalmine workers and provide a safety net for affected workers. Two independent reviews are underway and will report back before the end of the year. Every day is another opportunity to improve, because the most important thing to come off a worksite is a worker.

I would also like to briefly correct the record regarding the member for Burdekin's private member's statement. The independent Mining Safety and Health Commissioner has advised that mine audits have increased, not decreased, over the past three years. There were 10 in 2016-17, 42 in 2017-18 and 56 in 2018-19. Audits are important, but safety is about more than that. It is about total focus. This government will have total focus and will continue to work tirelessly with industry, workers and unions so that every worker returns home safely to family and friends after every single shift.

### Hydrogen Industry

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (9.48 am): Better infrastructure and more jobs in more industries: that is what the Palaszczuk government is focused on, we will work with anyone to achieve those goals and the past 10 days just proved it. In infrastructure we fought hard to get our fair share and won a \$1.9 billion deal from the Morrison LNP government, which is better than any other state. On industrial development, we have also been working closely with the federal government on the National Hydrogen Strategy that, last week, was endorsed by COAG energy ministers.

This is a 21st century industry, potentially worth billions of dollars to Queensland, and our government is putting Queensland in the box seat. We were the first to recognise the great potential that hydrogen presents for Queensland, releasing our hydrogen strategy earlier this year and putting nearly \$20 million towards it. We will make sure we deliver hydrogen's benefits to regional Queensland.

We have the natural advantages of abundant renewable energy, a highly skilled workforce and the experience of developing the LNG industry, which was delivered by Labor. This means regional Queensland is perfectly positioned to benefit from the growth of a hydrogen industry in this state.

It is also why, on 20 November, the Queensland government convened the state's first regional Hydrogen Industry Forum in Townsville. The members for Townsville, Thuringowa and Mundingburra were there along with 150 leaders of business and industry. I was pleased to announce at the forum the establishment of the Townsville Hydrogen Industry Working Group, which will report to the Townsville Industrial Development Board and will focus on attracting industrial development to Townsville's Southern Industrial Corridor. We plan to be at the forefront of Australia's renewable hydrogen production for domestic and export markets. Townsville and Gladstone have the opportunity to benefit from this new-century industrial development. I look forward to working closely with all stakeholders, including the federal government, to drive the investment, jobs and economic growth that hydrogen can deliver to regional Queensland.

### Innovation, Jobs

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Cooper—ALP) (Minister for Innovation and Tourism Industry Development and Minister for Cross River Rail) (9.50 am): We are creating more jobs in more industries across Queensland. New data released today proves that our government's strategy is working. Today I am proud to announce that the Palaszczuk government has created more than 17,800 jobs by investing in innovative Queenslanders and businesses. That is a whopping 1,400 jobs since July this year and more than 5,000 jobs since July 2018. These numbers will continue to grow into the future because we are supporting companies to scale up and contribute more to our economy—companies like Cairns based travel tech start-up Didgigo, a business that is expanding into the US and Europe with the help of the Palaszczuk government.

**Mr Healy:** Hear, hear!

**Ms JONES:** I take that enthusiastic support from the member for Cairns. Gold Coast sport tech start-up SportCor started in a garage in 2017 and has already expanded to employ several more locals as demand for this new technology continues to grow. Aquafarms Queensland, a Hervey Bay business, is now scaling up with the help of our government to export to South-East Asia and to tap into the \$1.4 billion global sea cucumber industry.

While those opposite cut tens of millions of dollars from science and technology budgets, we recognise that by backing Queensland businesses and our best and brightest Queenslanders we can ensure we create more jobs and grow Queensland's economy.

### Rural Queensland, Maternity Services

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.52 am): I was pleased to announce on Sunday that Theodore, Weipa and Cloncurry will be target sites for maternity planning. I am pleased to announce today that the new Office of Rural Health and new workforce arrangements will mean almost all public health employees will work for Queensland Health. Together, these initiatives will mean that our rural health workforce will have more opportunities than ever before.

I want to thank again the Rural Maternity Taskforce for their work on giving women in the bush more options for birthing safely closer to home. Their maternity planning tool is a guide that helps hospital and health services assess existing maternity services and, when necessary, modify them or introduce new services. We are also investing \$500,000 to enable midwives and physicians at rural hospitals to rotate through larger hospitals for training purposes.

Our clinicians do a great job in providing care to women and families not only in birthing but also in the critical areas of antenatal and postnatal care. I visited the birth suite at Mount Isa Base Hospital last week, and the clinicians on the ground there are doing amazing things. Andrea, an outreach midwife, travels to remote areas like Doomadgee and Mornington Island to do pregnancy check-ups. Then when the women travel to Mount Isa to give birth, she is there with them. Andrea's secret weapon for keeping mums engaged and going to their appointments is a simple camera. She started doing

maternity photography in exchange for a commitment to five appointments. It is a beautiful take-home gift for the families and a great incentive to make appointments. Now Andrea's beautiful photographs have been featured in *Marie Claire* magazine.

Investing early in the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies, their mothers and families is one of the best ways to improve health outcomes throughout life. We recently launched the first ever maternity strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. As part of this, Queensland Health is partnering with Griffith University to support a sustainable pathway for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander midwifery workforce in Queensland, and we will invest \$50,000 this year to support second-year midwifery students to complete their study. Queensland is one of the safest places in the world to give birth, no matter where you live, and we are doing all we can to improve maternity services even more.

### Drought, Support

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (9.55 am): Queensland agricultural producers are suffering the impact of the drought that has been ongoing since 2013. A staggering 66.1 per cent of Queensland's land area is drought declared, as at 18 November 2019. This figure of 66.1 per cent represents 33 council areas and four part council areas in drought. The part declared shires are Charters Towers, Flinders, Isaac and Whitsundays. There are also 56 individual droughted properties in a further 10 local government areas. I encourage those who are in the areas that are not drought declared but are impacted by drought to seek information on an IDP by calling DAF. An IDP gives assistance through the DRAS entitlements.

Our support for Queensland farmers affected by drought remains steadfast. We always stand shoulder to shoulder with them. The area of 66.1 per cent may not be the highest percentage of the state declared in this current drought, but it does represent an ongoing financial impact to the sector. In 2019-20 the total value of Queensland's primary industry commodities, which is the combined gross value of production and first-stage processing, is forecast to be \$17.8 billion, which is five per cent less than 2018-19 and six per cent less than the average for the past five years. For 2019-20 the gross value of production for Queensland's primary industry commodities at the farm gate is forecast to be \$13.9 billion, which is five per cent less than 2018-19 and seven per cent less than the average for the past five years.

These numbers indicate the true economic impact of drought. Behind these numbers are the primary producers. Every Queenslanders stands behind our primary producers in drought. Last week I went west of Toowoomba to speak with drought impacted families. I spoke with Kerri, who, with her family, is battling terrible drought conditions in managing a cattle farm while keeping a small business running on the side as well as looking after the family. These are the real human faces of drought. They are feeding their cattle every day, looking after their reduced stock numbers as best as they can while their family pitches in to keep everything working.

I would like to congratulate the *Courier-Mail* on its recent campaign #backthebush, putting the stories of our farmers and their struggles with drought front and centre for all Queenslanders. For much of this year I have been promoting the concept of #eatqld, urging every Queenslanders to buy the magnificent fresh produce that we have grown and farmed right here. With our farmers doing it tough through drought, this campaign should be especially supported this Christmas. When people are preparing their Christmas dinner, they should make sure they are supporting our primary producers by buying fresh, local Queensland food to savour this festive season. All Queenslanders this Christmas should reach out to our primary producers and support our agricultural sector in regional towns by sourcing Queensland produce and Queensland-made Christmas presents by visiting the regions and praying for rain as well. Rain would be the best thing for our farmers in droughted areas, and I am sure every member in this House eagerly awaits that happy event.

### Schools, Solar Energy

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.58 am): After Monday's announcement that we would air-condition every classroom in more than 300 additional state schools outside the Cooler Schools zone, one of the most common questions I have been asked is whether or not we are putting solar panels on schools to help deal with the additional power usage.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left, the minister is not being controversial. I ask that the minister be heard.

**Ms GRACE:** According to their policy, Mr Speaker, they will get it after eight years.

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

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** No. Order! Minister, I do not need any assistance in terms of keeping the House in order. I ask you to go back to your statement.

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have good news for the people of Queensland: solar schools are smart schools. The Palaszczuk government's \$97 million Advancing Clean Energy Schools Program putting solar panels on schools is rolling out progressively across this state, with over 40 schools now completed. Phase 1 of the school audits has now been completed, identifying how the first 212 schools across Queensland will benefit.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

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

**Ms GRACE:** In addition to confirming the number of solar panels to be installed in each school, the audit also identified a range of other energy-saving measures such as hot-water system timers, sensor lighting and replacing fluorescent with LED lights. Just this week schools from Balmoral to Bargara and from Eagle Junction to Esk are installing solar panels on the roofs of classrooms and school buildings. More than 4,800 solar panels are now installed on Queensland state schools, with more than 1,400 installed in October alone. Another 3,477 are planned for November, with installations to ramp up over the Christmas holiday period.

Already, more than 1,400 kilowatts of solar power is being generated from the installed panels, and we are well on track to deliver almost 34,000 panels by the end of June 2020. By the time our program is completed we will have energy-saving solar panels on more than 800 state schools across Queensland and when fully implemented it is expected we will save approximately \$10 million per year in electricity costs.

Importantly, the rollout of the ACES Program is expected to support 320 jobs and 58,000 hours of apprentice work. This outstanding initiative is showing Queensland state school students and their communities the Palaszczuk government's strong commitment to a cleaner, greener energy future. It is also a major boost for our education system here in Queensland. Not only are we going to save millions of dollars; we are also helping to reduce our impact on our environment and supporting local jobs, particularly in the regions.

### Police Resources

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (10.01 am): The Queensland Police Service is recognised internationally as a world-class operation. The Palaszczuk government will always back our police with the investments they need to keep up with their tremendous work.

In a big state like Queensland you need a big police service, and certainly the Queensland Police Service is a big operation. Across the state there are 335 police stations, 58 police watch houses, 88 shopfronts and neighbourhood beats, 15 district offices, six headquarters and regional offices, 14 communication centres, three police academies and two police hubs.

This financial year we are investing further in our police. A capital works program of \$85 million will deliver 16 major projects. This is delivering 12 new or redeveloped police facilities. Another four police facilities will undergo upgrades and/or extensions. Let us have a look around the state.

On the Gold Coast a major new police facility is almost finished at Arundel. At Wacol the new Counter Terrorism and Community Safety Training Centre is under construction. The massive new police warehouse facility at Wacol has just been completed. The Logan Village Yarrabilba police facility upgrade has been completed. The new Upper Ross police facility upgrade was recently opened by the member for Thuringowa. The Caboolture replacement police facility has been completed along with the new district headquarters.

I recently visited the new police facility at Mooloolaba which is already providing additional support for police in the centre of town. The new Harbour Town police beat will go out to tender next month with construction expected to be completed this financial year. The new Newtown police facility is underway. Demolition works will soon start for the new Nambour police facility. Planning and design work has begun on numerous other police facilities.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left will cease their interjections. Again, the minister is not being provocative. I ask that you hear the ministerial statement.

**Mr RYAN:** During 2020 further works will be undertaken for police facilities at Beaudesert, Biloela, Highfields, Coolum, Nambour, West End, Pormpuraaw and Aurukun. In fact, the new Highfields police facility has now reached the tender stage, with construction starting soon. The Queensland Police Service is world class, and our government will always back our police with the facilities that they need to serve the people of Queensland.

### **Bushfires, Housing and Public Works**

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport) (10.04 am): As the year draws to a close, I want to commend the Queensland government's frontline workforce, including our fireys, police, rangers and our QBuild staff. Under the leadership of the Premier and Deputy Premier, we have been working collaboratively to make sure everybody is safe and they have a secure place to stay as communities are confronted with natural disasters.

QBuild and housing department staff are among those frontline responders. Our QBuild teams are on the ground to complete damage assessments and progress urgent repairs of publicly owned infrastructure. After major events like both the North Queensland monsoon event and the recent bushfires, we stand ready to support especially the Minister for Education to ensure that she is able to reopen schools as soon as possible. Seeing these heroic men and women at work, it is no wonder that so many Queensland tradies have put up their hand to join the re-established QBuild team.

To all of the families across Queensland whose homes have been affected by bushfire, 31 of whom have been supported by the Department of Housing and Public Works with emergency housing. We share a commitment to make sure your communities come back stronger than ever. By ensuring local tradies, your neighbours are in the front line of the private sector rebuild effort.

The QBCC Bushfire Rebuild Register is ensuring local tradies drive this multimillion dollar restoration program, just as they did following the floods. Already 285 licensed tradies have registered their details to help rebuild their own communities.

Finally, already more than 2,000 bushfires have burnt across our state since September, with local community sport and recreation facilities often in the path of the flames. It is a testament to our firefighters that only one sporting club has been affected. The Stanthorpe Pistol Club has lost its shed, fencing and timber targets in the bushfires that ravaged the Stanthorpe and Applethorpe areas. Through our Sport and Recreation Disaster Recovery Program, we are already helping the club and the community get back on its feet with a cash grant to start the restoration of the club's facilities. Queenslanders can rest assured that we will be there to help them rebuild, whether it is a school, a club or their home—because it is Labor who put people first.

### **Regional Queensland, Infrastructure and Jobs**

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.07 am): There is a regional jobs boom happening right across Queensland thanks to our major road projects funded by the Palaszczuk Labor government. Billions of dollars are being poured into upgrades to get people out of traffic and home safely and to get freight to and from regional communities. The \$1.6 billion jointly funded Toowoomba bypass, which was finished a couple of months ago, is a prime example. That project supported 9,260 direct and indirect full-time jobs, with more than 3,700 of those jobs in the Darling Downs region. The contractor Nexus spent \$677 million with more than 1,000 Australian companies, many of them Queensland companies. Nexus estimated that that spend generated more than \$1 billion in additional value for the wider economy.

When it gets going, the inland rail is expected to support a further 7,200 jobs in Queensland over time—most of them around Toowoomba and the south-west. Mackay's largest ever infrastructure project—stage 1 of the Mackay Ring Road—a \$497 million investment, is powering on. More than

1,500 workers have been inducted on site, with over 80 per cent local to the Mackay region. When that opens we will move on to the Walkerston bypass and then stage 2 of the ring-road to the Mackay port. This long pipeline of projects means more local jobs for longer. I thank the member for Mackay for her strong advocacy.

Rockhampton is enjoying a roads jobs boom as well. The Rockhampton northern access upgrade on the Bruce Highway and the duplication of the Capricorn Highway are both underway, supporting more than 500 jobs. We will move on to the much larger Rockhampton Ring Road when they are done which will support up to 780 jobs. Thanks to the members for Keppel and Rockhampton for their support.

The largest roads project in North Queensland right now is the \$514 million Haughton River-Bruce Highway upgrade south of Townsville, supporting 544 jobs. Having been on site, I can say that it is a massive site. In Cairns, between the Smithfield bypass and major Bruce Highway upgrades south of the city—which are under construction or about to start construction in the near future—we have backed the city with a billion dollar pipeline of construction jobs that will run until 2023.

We successfully campaigned the federal government to bring forward funding to keep sealing the Peninsula Developmental Road to Weipa on the cape. That will provide valuable local and Indigenous jobs and training and tourism opportunities going into the future. Almost 1,000 jobs in Western Queensland communities will be supported by \$809 million in joint funding for road upgrades over the next three years. There are more than \$200 million in Bruce Highway safety upgrades due to start next year in the Wide Bay region. There are close to \$2 billion in jointly funded upgrades for the Bruce Highway between Caboolture and Gympie coming online in the next few years which will support thousands of jobs.

With the infrastructure funding deal announced last week, our government has worked with the federal government to back an accelerated pipeline of road projects right across the state. Queensland thrives when our regional communities have access to jobs, infrastructure and opportunities. The Palaszczuk Labor government's record investment will ensure that these regional opportunities are available well into the next decade.

### Retired Racehorses

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.11 am): As this House would be aware, on 17 October 2019, ABC's 7.30 aired a program focused on racehorse welfare. The images shown on the program were abhorrent and raised serious concerns around the treatment and welfare of horses once they leave the racing industry. The Palaszczuk government and its racing bodies QRIC and RQ take animal welfare matters very seriously and are committed to ensuring that all racing animals are afforded the appropriate standard of animal welfare.

On 22 October 2019, the Premier announced an independent inquiry to examine the issues raised by the report headed by Terry Martin and Dr Peter Reid. Later that day I chaired the first meeting of a forum with key stakeholders to discuss options for providing a model for the retraining and rehoming of retired racehorses in Queensland. This group reconvened on Friday, 15 November, to discuss a proposed model and how it will operate. I am pleased to report to the House that these meetings have been very positive, with all participants showing a genuine desire to work in the best interests of the welfare of racing animals in retirement.

I can also advise the House that following a request from Judge Martin, on 1 November QRIC announced a two-week amnesty for all Queensland racing industry horse owners and trainers to update their racehorse retirement data. As of Friday, 15 November, there were 411 thoroughbred and 308 standardbred retirements registered in Queensland during the amnesty. This compares to averages of 85 and 25 per month respectively before that time. As a result of this success, the amnesty was extended for a further two weeks until this Friday.

Further, on 9 November I welcomed Racing Queensland's implementation of a one per cent prize money levy from 1 January 2020 for thoroughbred and harness racing to support Queensland's equine welfare. It is proposed that the funds from this levy will be the base funding for the rehoming and retraining program, with other options being assessed. However, it is also vital that the Commonwealth government implement a national horse traceability register as soon as possible. This will help in the data collection and tracking of ex racing animals right across the country. This was the key issue at the meeting of state racing ministers in Perth on Friday, and I can report to the House that all ministers

agreed to write to the federal Minister for Agriculture, Bridget McKenzie, outlining our support for a national traceability register for all horses, noting that this can only be done successfully with the leadership and cooperation of the federal government.

The cruelty and mistreatment of all animals will not be tolerated, and the Palaszczuk government is working together with industry to ensure a robust and effective retraining and rehoming model is put in place that will give more retired racehorses the best opportunity for a safe home and a career post racing.

## LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Office of the Information Commissioner, Report

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (10.14 am): As chair of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, I lay upon the table of the House report No. 2 to the Queensland Legislative Assembly for 2019-20 by the Office of the Information Commissioner Queensland titled *Compliance audit—Bundaberg Regional Council: Bundaberg Regional Council's compliance with the Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld) and the Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*.

*Tabled paper:* Information Commissioner of Queensland—Report to Parliament No. 2 for 2019-20: Compliance audit—Bundaberg Regional Council—Bundaberg Regional Council's compliance with the Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld) and the Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld) [[2139](#)].

As chair, I am required to table this report under section 184(5) of the Right to Information Act 2009 and section 193(5) of the Information Privacy Act 2009. I commend the report to the House.

## HEALTH, COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE

### Report

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (10.15 am): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 31 of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee titled *Inquiry into the Wynnum and Mermaid Waters ambulance station projects*.

*Tabled paper:* Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 31, 56th Parliament, November 2019—Inquiry into the Wynnum and Mermaid Waters Ambulance Station projects [[2140](#)].

The committee examined whether the new ambulance station projects at Wynnum and Mermaid Waters are fit for purpose and whether the government's investment in these stations represents value for money. The committee also considered the community, economic and environmental impacts and the procurement process for the works. I am pleased to report that the committee found that the Wynnum and Mermaid Waters ambulance station projects were well managed by Queensland Health and the Queensland Ambulance Service on all fronts. These stations represent good value for money, serve their local communities well, and should continue to do so well into the future. The positive outcomes identified through this inquiry, including the procurement process involved in building these stations, gives me confidence in the replacement of the Kirwan Ambulance Station in my electorate of Thuringowa, which I know will be a great project and will meet the increasing needs of the local community. I commend the report to the House.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness, Parliamentary Inquiry

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.16 am): I give notice that I will move—

1. That the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly by 31 March 2020 on the effectiveness of the Queensland government's bushfire prevention and preparedness activities leading to the 2019 Queensland fires.
2. In undertaking this inquiry, the committee should consider:
  - (a) analysis of fire reduction practices conducted and coordinated by QFES including its responsibility to issue notices to landowners to reduce fuel loads including state controlled land and national parks;

- (b) the IGEM 2018 bushfire report's findings that overall bushfire prevention activities undertaken by QFES declined 83 per cent, completed hazard reduction burns declined 75 per cent, completed firebreaks declined 82 per cent and community education activities declined 88 per cent in 2018 compared to 2016;
- (c) the impact that a \$13 million, or 25 per cent, cut in 2019-20 funding compared to the previous financial year had on the Rural Fire Service;
- (d) Auditor General's report No. 5, *Follow-up of bushfire prevention and preparedness* finding that QFES still did not know if Queensland's fuel loads were being managed effectively;
- (e) the appropriateness of funding provided by government to implement fire reduction practices on state owned land and national parks,
- (f) the failure to implement any of the Auditor-General's recommendations in report No. 10, *Bushfire prevention and preparedness*; and
- (g) whether juveniles being charged and convicted of arson and endangering property are being appropriately dealt with.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Mr SPEAKER:** Question time will conclude today at 11.18 am.

### Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (10.18 am): My first question is to the Premier. How does the Premier respond to the *Townsville Bulletin's* editor's assessment of her government and the members for Townsville, Thuringowa and Mundingburra's performance, who says that Labor are out of step with the community on every single issue and describes their performance as pitiful?

**Mrs D'ATH:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The question was asking the Premier to directly form an opinion on comments made in the article that has been referred to in the question.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members, I am taking advice from the table. I ask you to keep quiet in the chamber while I hear this advice.

I will allow the question on the basis that the question is seeking to ask how the Premier would respond and that may not necessarily be an opinion. I will allow latitude in terms of the way the question is answered.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. From the outset, let me say that I have every faith in the three Townsville MPs. They are standing up for Townsville and they are delivering for Townsville.

**Ms Jones:** They didn't cut and run.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right. The opposition seem to forget that we actually took the parliament to Townsville. They seem to forget that.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** What we were able to clearly show to the people of the great city of Townsville is what we are delivering for the people of Townsville, including the Townsville stadium that opens next year.

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Mr Hunt** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Buderim. Member for Nicklin.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The opposition has been dragged kicking and screaming to that. The water pipes are being delivered by this government; that is over \$200 million. We are also delivering Riverway Drive by the member for Thuringowa, upgrades to the Townsville Hospital and of course 53 extra police officers for the people of Townsville. I am more than happy to talk about why there are no LNP Townsville members. Let's think about that.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I may regret giving the Premier latitude. I cannot hear the Premier's response. It is important for me and Hansard to be able to hear. The level of interjections is too high.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, one did leave Townsville and went down south.

**Ms Jones:** A bit of a sea change.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, a bit of a sea change. There was not one LNP member left after the Campbell Newman government.

**Mr Crandon** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Coomera, you are warned under the standing orders. You will put your interjections through the chair.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Townsville was ground zero for the cuts, the sacking and the selling.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** How quickly they forget. They wanted to sell off the Townsville port. They wanted to sell off the railway line. They sacked the nurses. They sacked the doctors. They wanted to close the police academy. I am going to love this election. I am going to love every single day standing up and saying what the LNP did to Townsville. Our members will stand up for Townsville and they will keep delivering under this government.

### Townsville, Operation Regenerate

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My next question is also to the Premier. With yet another reported case of a Queensland police officer being spat on by a Townsville youth yesterday, why is the Premier continuing with taxpayer funded Operation Regenerate and forcing police to babysit young offenders to fun excursions while on bail, given even Labor's member for Townsville recently said it is 'not the best thing police could be doing with their time'?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The Leader of the Opposition might be a bit out of step because I have responded to the second part of her question publicly. I said very clearly that police have a responsibility to check up on bail conditions, but youth justice workers are better equipped to look after other aspects when it comes to dealing with youth issues. In relation to the first part of the Leader of the Opposition's question, I will ask the police minister to look into that. I am not aware of that case, but I am more than happy to look into it.

### Regional Queensland, Jobs

**Mr SAUNDERS:** My question is to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier outline what the government is doing to create jobs and build industry in Queensland's regions? Is the Premier aware of any alternative plans?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Maryborough. Didn't we have a great community cabinet in Maryborough? I love going to Maryborough. I love seeing the hard work of the member for Maryborough. Can I just say that the member for Maryborough is greatly loved in his town. When you walk through the town, everyone says, 'G'day, Bruce.' 'G'day, Bruce.' 'G'day, Bruce.' I have never seen anything like it.

We know how important jobs are to regional centres such as Maryborough. When we took the cabinet there, the government was able to announce that we will continue to support those timberworkers who have a great job and are doing excellent work. We had the opportunity to go with the Minister for State Development and the member for Maryborough and meet with the timberworkers. We were able to extend that for a couple of years, and I know that means a lot to the community there.

We do not hear anything from those opposite when it comes to jobs because we on this side of the House support traditional industries in this state, but we want to see more jobs in more industries. We know those opposite do not support jobs because they cut nurses and they cut police officers. You cannot escape your past because it is a dark past and it is a dark chapter in Queensland's history.

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Mr Hunt** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Buderim, you are warned under the standing orders. The member for Nicklin is also warned under the standing orders.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The Minister for Education and I were able to talk about air-conditioning all of the schools in Wide Bay. Under the LNP's plan, it would take eight years. The kids would have finished high school and their apprenticeship by the time the air conditioning got there. I also had the

great opportunity to host a community reception at the Maryborough State High School hall after school had finished. We put \$5.2 million in that hall. The children there love that hall, the teachers love it and the community loves it. That was \$5.2 million.

We know that when it comes to alternative plans the Leader of the Opposition does not back jobs in this state. You could see that very clearly when the Leader of the Opposition came out and attacked her own Prime Minister for \$1.9 billion of combined state-federal funding to deliver more jobs for Queenslanders. The member for Nanango should be ashamed of herself.

**Mr SPEAKER:** A reminder that comments will come through the chair.

### Public Servants, Gifts and Benefits

**Mr MANDER:** My question without notice is to the Treasurer. The Public Service Commission Gifts and Benefits Directive clearly states that public servants are only able to retain gifts over \$350 in exceptional circumstances. What are the exceptional circumstances that allowed the Treasurer's former chief of staff and now senior executive of Queensland Treasury to retain a gift of \$4,000 worth of luxury ski accommodation at Whistler from Nicole Scurrah, a consultant for Queensland Treasury?

**Ms TRAD:** I thank the member for the question. My former chief of staff and now the head of the city's transformation unit within Treasury has declared this and has openly declared this. If the value was an issue then I assume he would have been advised. I will look into this and I will come back to the House. If he has not been advised, then it must be consistent with guidelines that have been outlined. As I said, this has been declared. It has been—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left, the Deputy Premier is being responsive to the question asked. I ask that you hear the answer.

**Ms TRAD:** It has been declared. If there are inconsistencies with the guidelines or the rules, I assume that would have been relayed. I will investigate and I will come back to the House.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Deputy Premier, can I confirm that you will take that on notice under standing order 113?

**Ms TRAD:** Yes.

### Drought

**Mr MADDEN:** My question without notice is of the Premier and Minister for Trade. With our rural communities enduring what is possibly the worst drought in Queensland's history, will the Premier outline what the government is doing to address the need for increased infrastructure to face Queensland's drought crisis head-on?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Ipswich West for the question. I also want to thank the member for Ipswich West for attending our first regional forum in Longreach with the minister for agriculture and Minister Farmer. I know how worthwhile that conversation was. A lot of ideas were raised, and government will be responding to the people who were selected to be part of that first regional forum at Longreach.

As Minister Furner said in this House today, over 66 per cent of Queensland is in drought. I was very pleased yesterday to be joined by Mayor Tracy Dobie, who came in and met with me along with the deputy mayor about our plans to conduct that urgent feasibility study about extending the water grid pipeline. From memory, in 2009 it was extended to Toowoomba and now we are looking at it being extended to Warwick. We know that there are some 14 communities in Queensland that are facing issues with water supply. I know that the Minister for Natural Resources is actively monitoring those communities. We will be getting regular briefs in terms of what else we can do.

We are also contributing \$800,000 per month to transport water to Stanthorpe. I understand that will be happening in the next couple of months and that trial will begin in the next couple of weeks. We know that Stanthorpe is facing a tough time. I do urge Queenslanders to go out and support communities, especially Stanthorpe and Warwick. The best way to show support is to go and spend time in the town.

Unfortunately, when it comes to those opposite, we see that the opposition leader has no plans for the future—no plans, no ideas, no vision.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left, I do not believe those sorts of interjections are appropriate.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** In fact, the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP are starting to morph into Campbell Newman.

**Mrs Frecklington:** It's big. It's bold. It's ambitious.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is always attack, attack, attack; whinge, whinge, whinge.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** What did we see from the LNP president recently? He said, 'We're on our own,' because they are attacking AgForce and CCIQ. Does it sound familiar?

**Ms Trad:** Last night Jann Stuckey was attacking the LNP.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Does it sound familiar? Yes, it does sound familiar because Campbell Newman's apprentice is in the House.

**Mr Boothman** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Theodore.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The apprentice is in the House and is following in Campbell Newman's footsteps.

*(Time expired)*

### Public Servants, Gifts and Benefits

**Mr POWELL:** My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier. The gift and benefit rules also require public servants to obtain approval before accepting a gift. Matt Collins' declaration was made seven months after he received the \$4,000 gift of accommodation from Nicole Scurrah of PwC. Will the Treasurer explain why government rules were not followed and a retrospective approval was granted to Mr Collins?

**Ms TRAD:** As I have said, I will take this on notice. I think the figure being bandied about by those opposite is a figure they have made up in their own head. Let me say this—

**Mr Mander:** Declared.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members.

**Ms TRAD:** I will tell you who went down to Sydney to Luna Park to sip champagne and talk about drought in Queensland at taxpayers' expense. That was the member for Everton and that was the Leader of the Opposition. If you want to talk about travel and hospitality, let's talk about the taxpayers picking up your mess—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members. The level of interjection is too high, members. Deputy Premier, I ask you that you put your comments through the chair.

**Ms TRAD:** Yes, Mr Speaker, of course. If we want to talk about travel and hospitality, let's talk about travel and hospitality on the taxpayers' purse by those opposite, whether it is Margaret River or Luna Park—sipping champagne while talking about the drought in Queensland. The only non-drought-declared part of New South Wales is where they went to sip champagne and talk about the drought.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118. The question asked was about gifts in kind from public servants and expenditure and rules around government, not what the Deputy Premier is speaking about.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Deputy Premier, I do ask you to come back to the core of the question if you can, please, under standing order 118(b).

**Ms TRAD:** I am advised that Mr Collins has declared his accommodation in Whistler to Queensland Treasury's gifts and benefits register. Mr Collins is the general manager—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left, if the minister on their feet is being responsive to the question asked I expect you would want to hear the answer.

**Ms TRAD:** In answer to the first question asked by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I said that I would take the matter on notice and I would come back to the House.

### Rural and Remote Queensland

**Ms LUI:** 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 the Palaszczuk government's support for Queenslanders living in regional—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Sorry, member. Members to my left, the rules apply to all members and the question will be heard in silence. Member, will you please start your question again.

**Ms LUI:** 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 the Palaszczuk government's support for Queenslanders living in regional and remote locations and if she is aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms TRAD:** I thank the member for Cook for the question because I think that, more than any other member of this House, the member for Cook would absolutely understand how difficult and challenging it is to get highly qualified workers to live and work in very remote parts of our state to service Queenslanders. It is a very difficult task, indeed, and one that is made easier by the fact that we have had in place for many, many decades now a tax zone offset. That means that workers in rural, regional and remote areas of our state and, in fact, across every other jurisdiction in Australia can claim a tax offset because of the regional and rural element of their accommodation. However, this is under threat from the Australian Productivity Commission, which has recommended the abolition of the remote area tax concession. That came out in September this year.

Can I say this would be an absolute disgrace. It would mean that a senior constable in Cooktown in the member for Cook's electorate would lose about \$8,300 a year. A nurse working in Weipa with two dependants would lose \$15,000 a year. Someone living in Cairns, Townsville or Mackay would stand to lose hundreds of dollars. That is what the Productivity Commission is recommending. We will be fighting that because we know how difficult it is for people in regional, rural and remote areas to remain living in those areas when there is more money and more pull to bigger regional centres. I think about that when I go into these places within our state, and I know that the member for Cook knows that as do many other members in the House.

We will be fighting against this. I know that those opposite are now in the habit of saying 'no' to the Morrison LNP government. They should continue with that habit: they should stand up and say no to the Productivity Commission's recommendation and no to the abolition of the zonal tax offset. The Productivity Commission report states, disgracefully—

There is no ... role for Government to compensate taxpayers for the disadvantages of life in particular areas.

It said that remote living is 'largely a matter of choice'. This is outrageous and something that should not be entertained.

We know that former prime minister Tony Abbott said words to the effect that he does not like subsidising people's lifestyle choices and that if people wanted to live in regional locations the government should not sponsor that. Today those opposite need to be clear about whether or not they will stand up against this outrageous abolition.

*(Time expired)*

### Public Servants, Gifts and Benefits

**Ms BATES:** My question without notice is to the Premier. I table a copy of Matt Collins's gift register.

*Tabled paper:* Extract from gift register for 1 January 2019 to 31 March 2019 detailing gift to Mr Matt Collins [\[2141\]](#).

Will the Premier now order an investigation about official misconduct looking into Matt Collins receiving a gift of up to \$4,000 in luxury ski accommodation in Whistler from the key account lead of a major government contractor in what appears to be a breach of the government's own gifts and benefits rules?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am advised that the gift was declared. My advice is that it was declared in January—I am happy to check that—and that it was endorsed by the Under Treasurer. I am happy to confirm that for members.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, can I confirm that you are taking that question on notice under standing order 113?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes.

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

### Industry Attraction and Infrastructure, Jobs

**Ms PEASE:** My question is of the Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning. Will the minister please advise how the Palaszczuk government is investing in industry attraction and infrastructure to drive jobs and economic development and whether he is aware of any other approaches?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the member for Lytton for her question. Last week, along with the members for Waterford and Bulimba, I was delighted to open the Australian operations of Scottish craft brewing powerhouse BrewDog in Murarrie. That is a \$30 million private sector investment—25 local jobs, up to 150 in the pipeline. BrewDog was coming to Australia and had to choose between two places to build its new brewery. One was Newcastle in New South Wales; the other one was in Brisbane. I am very pleased to report that, thanks to the Palaszczuk government's Advance Queensland Industry Attraction Fund, the Maroons triumphed again.

We have seen the LNP attack industry funds and attack this project and the jobs that came with it. Just like when the member for Bonney turned up to the Minister for Transport's announcement, when this announcement was made the LNP was there. LNP Brisbane city councillor Lisa Attwood was present and was very happy to support the new brewery and taproom. Even though those opposite whinge about the policy, they are happy to turn up when the ribbon is cut.

They cannot even get that right. Who could forget when the Leader of the Opposition tried to claim credit for Rheinmetall but got it mixed up and announced it in Brisbane instead of Ipswich? Then yesterday there was another one. There was the Leader of the Opposition in the House whinging about the million dollars to be spent on a feasibility study for a pipeline, as she said, to Stanthorpe. There is only one problem: the pipeline study is for Warwick, not Stanthorpe. Never mind that Stanthorpe is 60 kilometres away from Warwick. Never mind that the Premier said it in parliament, five metres away from her. Never mind that it was on the front page of the *Courier-Mail*. The Leader of the Opposition still got it wrong. There is one person who would not have got it wrong: the former leader of the opposition and next mayor of Goondiwindi, Lawrence Springborg. He would not have got it wrong, because he understands his heartland. Those opposite do not care about people in Wacol and Redbank, but you would think she would understand her own heartland.

The performance of the Leader of the Opposition over the past 10 days in terms of infrastructure and the pipeline has been a train wreck. It is more like a plane crashing into a train, careering off into an explosives factory! That is the sort of judgement and performance we get from the Leader of the Opposition. Even the deputy leader knows it is a train wreck, and he is a world expert on train wrecks! Even he knows that the leader is wrong on infrastructure and on Stanthorpe. Good leadership is about good judgement, and the Leader of the Opposition has neither.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, you will address your comments through the chair.

### Inner City South State Secondary College, Principal

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question without notice is to the Premier. I table a letter received by the opposition office with respect to the appointment process of the ICSSSC principal and alleged interference by the Deputy Premier after the selection panel had made a recommendation.

*Tabled paper:* Document, dated 4 September 2019, to LNP regarding a selection process for the position of principal of a new high school at Dutton Park [\[2142\]](#).

I also table a letter from the Assistant Information Commissioner which appears to confirm that a meeting occurred.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated, 19 November 2019, from the Assistant Information Commissioner, Ms Suzette Jefferies, to Principal Advisor, Office of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Peter Coulson, regarding an external review of a decision under the Right to Information Act 2009 [\[2143\]](#).

Can the Premier advise whether Ms Tracey Cook was recommended by an independent selection panel and whether there was then a meeting with the Deputy Premier and the position was subsequently readvertised?

**Mrs D'ATH:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask for your guidance under standing order 115 as to whether that is a question in multiple parts and whether the member should reframe it into a single question.

**Mr SPEAKER:** On hearing the question I did not think it was in multiple parts. I think there was preamble. It is difficult, without seeing that question, to answer your point of order. I will allow the question, but I will also allow latitude in terms of how the Premier answers that question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Kawana for the questions. I do not have the specifics with me in relation to that matter. I am quite sure the Minister for Education may have more access to that information. I am happy to get back to the member.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Will that be taken on notice under standing order 113, Premier?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes.

### Ecotourism

**Mr STEWART:** My question is of the Minister for Innovation and Tourism Industry Development and Minister for Cross River Rail. Will the minister please update the House on the government's strategy to invest in ecotourism to create jobs for Queenslanders?

**Ms JONES:** I thank the mighty member for Townsville for that question. As members know, there is nothing that he will not do to deliver for the community of Townsville with his colleagues in Townsville—the dynamic, terrific trio. We know that only our government prioritises Townsville. We certainly do not cut and run on Townsville.

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Ms JONES:** Yes, I thought you would like that. With all due respect, I can only refer to it because it happened. If he did not cut and run on Townsville, I could not make jokes about it! I am talking about moving forward and the investment we are making.

**Mr Dick** interjected.

**Ms JONES:** I take that interjection. Earlier this year I was very proud that the Palaszczuk government made a multimillion dollar commitment as part of our \$25 million rejuvenation package for Great Barrier Reef islands which includes the clean-up of the derelict Cape Richards resort on Hinchinbrook Island. Many people would know that the resort was left in disrepair and that it was a significant eyesore. Many of us know that the former member for Hinchinbrook, Andrew Cripps, spoke about it a lot.

**An honourable member:** 'Crippsy'.

**Ms JONES:** I was going to say that. Then I thought I might get in trouble!

I am very pleased to say that right now we have workers onsite cleaning up this derelict facility. In coming months, as a consequence of the significant investment in cleaning up this old resort, we will have an addition to the national park on that island that will see Hinchinbrook Island National Park expanded. We are very proud of the clean-up we are doing on Hinchinbrook Island, but it seems to me that the member for Currumbin wants another clean-up of sorts. The member for Currumbin is very upset about the current LNP leadership.

**Mr Dick:** Jann isn't happy.

**Ms JONES:** No, Jann is not. The member for Currumbin is not happy; in fact, the member for Currumbin is very unhappy. What we are seeing play out are some pretty nasty preselections on the other side of the House. We must wonder why the Hon. Tony Abbott was at Queensland parliament yesterday. Was it to ensure that the Christian right—the extreme right—rolled the Leader of the Opposition? Was he doing the numbers for the right? Was he doing the numbers for the member for Everton? Why was Tony Abbott at Queensland parliament yesterday? I do not think it was to endorse the mayor of Goondiwindi's campaign. I am pretty sure it has more to do with the divide and the split—

**Mr Lister** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Southern Downs, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Ms JONES:** We all want to know why Tony Abbott was here skulking around the halls of Queensland parliament. If I were a betting woman, I would put my money on the fact that he is backing in the member for Everton for the leadership.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms JONES:** That is right: Mr Abbott's bestie. It would be really good to know what they thought. I believe that he was here for some hours. Spies tell me that he was here for four hours. Such is the division that is happening in the LNP today. I sympathise with the member for Currumbin: they are a rabble.

**Mr SPEAKER:** A reminder, Minister, that comments will come through the chair.

### **Inner City South State Secondary College, Principal**

**Mr LANGBROEK:** My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier. Can the Treasurer confirm that, in addition to her role on CBRC where the Inner City South State Secondary College was considered on 27 March and in April this year, the Treasurer also intervened in the recruitment process for the school principal and blocked the original appointment recommendation made by the independent selection panel, Ms Tracey Cook?

**Ms TRAD:** From the outset let me say that if those opposite have any evidence that there was any interference in an independent selection panel they should deal with it appropriately. Let me say—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Sorry, Deputy Premier. Members to my left, this will be the third time I have had to remind members to my left that a minister is being responsive to the question asked. I expect to hear the answer.

**Ms TRAD:** I have never interfered in a recruitment process, and particularly in relation to this one. To put the facts on the table—and let us be clear about what has been tabled—there was an anonymous tip-off—probably produced in the Leader of the Opposition's office—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms TRAD:** There we go. There was an anonymous—no header, nothing—tip-off, which is just another LNP dump, and the RTI document. The RTI officers in this state act independently. The meeting that they are referring to occurred at the request of the Department of Education. At the request of the Department of Education there were a number of stakeholders which it requested the—

**Mr Powell:** The Deputy Premier had to eyeball her.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member for Glass House will cease his interjections.

**Ms TRAD:** I take personal offence at that interjection and I ask for him to withdraw.

**Mr POWELL:** I withdraw.

**Ms Bates:** Peter Beattie wouldn't have been offended.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms TRAD:** Who would be offended by those opposite? The 14,000 Queenslanders who were sacked.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms TRAD:** And they still think it is funny. In fact, they are so proud. They are so very proud of this achievement. They are so very, very proud.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order with regard to 118(b) relating to relevance. The Deputy Premier was about to say what the meeting was actually about—that is, confirming—and I am keen to hear her continue that rather than what she is now going on about which is not relevant to the question.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Kawana. Ministers are entitled to have some points of view that are not directly related to the question, but I do ask the Deputy Premier to come back to the question asked.

**Ms TRAD:** The meeting was at the request of the Department of Education, as was the follow-up meeting with the other candidate. The advice I received from the Minister for Education was that the director-general had changed his mind in relation to the appointment because—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr Purdie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members! Member for Ninderry, you are warned under the standing orders. I have called the House to order. That means that you will cease your interjections.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders. I have only just called the House to order.

**Ms TRAD:** The director-general made the decision to change the level of principal to executive principal because further land had been acquired in the build and the school was going to be bigger. The school is now—

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition! Deputy Premier, please resume your seat. Leader of the Opposition, you are warned under the standing orders. Member for Coomera, you will leave the chamber for one hour. I have just called the House to order. I have just given a warning to the Leader of the Opposition and you are already under a warning this morning.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Coomera withdrew from the chamber at 10.54 am.*

**Mr SPEAKER:** The House will come to order. All members will hear the answers to the questions in silence.

**Ms TRAD:** While I am on my feet I wish to address the issue in relation to the general manager of the city's transformation task force. I am advised that the task force has not let any contracts to PwC since Mr Collins was appointed to this role. I am also advised that the gifts policy referred to is in relation to gifts received in the course of official duties. I am also advised that Ms Scurrah and Mr Collins are close personal friends of some 15 years standing—

*(Time expired)*

### **Back to Work Program**

**Mr BUTCHER:** My question is to the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development. Will the minister update the House about recent milestones reached for Queensland's Back to Work program and what alternative approaches have been proposed?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for Gladstone for the question. I know that he is a huge supporter of those small and medium businesses in Gladstone that have taken the opportunity to put on young people and people who have been unemployed through our Back to Work program—a fantastic program. The Palaszczuk government is all about jobs. We have created over 200,000 jobs since we were elected. In the last 12 months alone, 52,000 jobs have been created—more jobs in more industries—and we are backing those businesses to give opportunities to Queensland.

Some 10,000 local small and medium businesses have signed up through Back to Work and we have supported 21,000 Queenslanders into jobs. Some 14,000 of those are young Queenslanders. That is more than 5,000 apprentices and trainees who have found work through our Back to Work program. I had the privilege of visiting one of these small businesses when we were all in Maryborough recently with the member for Maryborough. Alowishus Delicious, a wonderful cafe, has employed five people through Back to Work, including two young locals Aaron and Caitlyn. Caitlyn told me that, because of our program, she was now saving up for her very first car and Aaron was able to restart his chef's apprenticeship. He is training to become a chef and he is now saving for a deposit for his first home. This is about giving people a job and helping them fulfil their dreams. It is changing their lives, because the Palaszczuk government is all about job creation.

One would think that job creation for Queenslanders would be everyone's priority, but again it seems that it is not the priority for the member for Nanango and those opposite. In 2017 the member for Nanango was the deputy leader when those opposite released their election costings. What was on the chopping block? Back to Work and Skilling Queenslanders for Work—both savagely cut. I am happy to table those election costings documents for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Document, undated, titled 'LNP's Costings Report: Savings and reprioritisation measures' [\[2144\]](#).

That is almost 50,000 jobs that would not exist if those opposite had won the election. That means that 50,000 Queenslanders would not have the benefit and the dignity of work if those opposite had won the election. Of course, we know what happens when they win government. They scrap Skilling Queenslanders for Work, so many hundreds of NGOs are left in the lurch and there would be so many Queenslanders without the skills that they need to get a job. When presented with nearly \$2 billion in infrastructure promises, what do they do? Attack their own Prime Minister. They are not interested in jobs. They cut jobs and their relentless negativity around jobs is there for all to see.

### Hughenden Irrigation Project Corporation

**Mr KATTER:** My question is to the Premier and Minister for Trade. The Premier said that the government would consider all options for the drought and that it is supportive of the Bradfield Scheme. The Hughenden irrigation scheme, HIPCo, is vital for drought mitigation and forms part of the Bradfield Scheme but the state does not appear supportive. Will the Premier commit personally to driving delivery of HIPCo and ensure the \$180 million committed by the federal government is not lost?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Traeger for the question. From the outset, can I say to the member for Traeger that it was wonderful to have the whole cabinet up in Mount Isa recently. I know that we met with a couple of his constituents. They had some really good ideas that the government is following up.

In relation to the member's question about the Hughenden dam going ahead, we know that the Commonwealth has said very publicly that it would commit—my understanding is—\$180 million to the project. In fact, it has not spent one cent out of the national water infrastructure fund to start construction. Although we are fully supportive of the project, I am quite sure that the Minister for Natural Resources is more than happy to follow that up and make representation to the federal government about what is happening.

My understanding is that \$2 million was committed by the federal government for the feasibility study and \$180 million for construction. We are supportive of this project and we are ready to assist the federal government if it needs anything from the state to get this project moving.

### Water Supply, Dams

**Ms SCANLON:** My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. Will the minister update the House on the preparedness of the Palaszczuk government for falling dam levels in South-East Queensland?

**Dr LYNHAM:** I thank the member for Gaven for the question. She understands that our water levels have dropped to 60 per cent in South-East Queensland. We are simply asking people in South-East Queensland to be water wise. The aim is to have everyone reduce their consumption from 200 litres per head per day to 150 litres per head per day. At the same time the desalination plant at Tugun has ramped up to 100 per cent production. That is 15 per cent of our water supply.

**Mr Batt** interjected.

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

**Dr LYNHAM:** What have we heard from those opposite about the Tugun desalination plant—the great facility that a previous Labor government built that has made such an important contribution to the South East Queensland Water Grid? The member for Currumbin has been bagging this plant for over a decade. Even when it supplied Brisbane with drinking water during the 2011 floods, the LNP members could not bring themselves to support the desalination plant. Even when the LNP was in government and the desalination plant was in operation, the LNP members were still caning the desalination plant. How ironic, because from every glass over there they are now drinking their words.

The LNP water minister at the time—thankfully for a very short time—the member for Caloundra described the desalination plant as ineffective and inefficient. Why? Because the LNP wanted to sell the desalination plant. In fact, it did not want to own any water infrastructure. It certainly did not want to build any water infrastructure.

Let me quote the policy that the member for Nanango, as assistant Treasurer, supported. The Newman LNP government's 30-year strategy for Queensland's water—30-year strategy! What wishful thinking that was!—states—

In the foreseeable future, the Queensland Government is unlikely to fund new bulk storages. Greater emphasis will be placed on ensuring the best possible use of existing dams and incentivising private sector investment.

There was no building of dams—'Let's sell the dams off. Private sector investment everywhere.' Talk about short-sightedness! It just goes to show that you can lead the LNP to water, but you cannot make them think.

### Inner City South State Secondary College, Principal

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My question is to the Premier. The documents tabled earlier show that, after Tracey Cook was recommended by an independent selection panel to be principal of the ICSSSC, she was asked to meet the Deputy Premier and after that meeting the position was re-advertised. I ask: under the Palaszczuk government's education policy, do MPs have a right of veto for the selection of local principals, or are the rules different for the Deputy Premier?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for the question. I make it very clear that no member has the ability to reject. I will say that. Let us get the facts on table. I have been advised by the director-general that the woman in question was appointed by a panel, but the director-general of Education changed his view about the role and it was upgraded because of the size of the school. Let me make that very clear.

Whilst I am on my feet, I was referring to the tabled document, which had a date of 1 January. I have been advised that the relevant declaration was made by Mr Collins to the Under Treasurer on 7 August 2019, so I believe that I have discharged my duty under standing order 113.

### South-East Queensland, Road Infrastructure

**Mrs McMAHON:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Will the minister update the House on the Palaszczuk government's major road investment between Brisbane, Logan and the Gold Coast?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for her question. She is a great advocate for infrastructure in her electorate of Macalister. We on this side of the chamber are building a better M1. Under our plan, M1 motorists are seeing five major M1 upgrades in the pipeline; four massive M1 upgrades worth \$2.3 billion; three M1 interchange upgrades in planning at exits 38, 45 and 49; two interchanges built or underway at exits 54 and 57; and one interchange ready to roll at exit 41. In terms of the M1 under this government, that is five, four, three, two, one and go. I ask members to compare that to the big fat zero that we received from the opposition members when they were in government. There was not a single dollar spent on the M1.

We are also getting rocking and rolling on the second M1—or the Coomera Connector—after we gazetted all three sections. That infrastructure will deal with the growth between Coomera and Nerang. As the Premier outlined, consultation is underway. We are engaging with the community and getting on with something that was blocked by those opposite.

The members opposite have had seven different positions on the second M1. Firstly, when they were in government, they blocked it. Then they said they would build it for \$250 million—about a tenth of the cost. The third position was when last year the member for Mermaid Beach said that it should be a toll road. We now see their agenda: they think it should be a toll road. The LNP member for Forde said that he did not want it. Then we had the member for Theodore come out with the extraordinary position that he thinks that it should be an 80-kilometre-an-hour local road. Then we saw the deputy leader go down there less than a day later and say, 'No, it will be 100 kilometres an hour or plus.' That is the sixth position the members opposite have had on it. Then the member for Coomera said that it will start construction on 1 January next year if the LNP gets elected. I do not know how that is possible, given the opposition members blocked it. They have prevented us getting into a position to do it. There have been seven different positions on the second M1.

When it comes to the opposition's position on the second M1, it is anarchy on the GC. That is the LNP. Whether it is backing our infrastructure—the member for Bonney—or whether it is having holidays instead of coming to parliament—the member for Burleigh—it is anarchy on the GC with the LNP. That is what we have.

I have not even started on the Currumbin preselection yet, where we have Chris Crawford being prevented from being preselected by Roger Emerson and the LNP cronies down there. It is absolute chaos in the LNP—absolute anarchy on the GC in the LNP. No wonder the shark pack is circling with the member for Broadwater. They are going after the Leader of the Opposition.

*(Time expired)*

**Mr SPEAKER:** The minister is a poet and he did not know it.

### New Acland Coalmine

**Mr WEIR:** My question is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, the Palaszczuk government is cruelly pressuring hundreds of mining workers and their families right before Christmas by delaying approvals for the new Acland stage 3 despite the Court of Appeal clearing the way for approvals to be given. When will the Premier finally give the go-ahead for the 400 local jobs that families in my area desperately need?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for the question. As we know, the Court of Appeal has handed down its decision. I am quite sure the minister is going through due process.

## Workers' Rights

**Mr BROWN:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the minister advise how the Palaszczuk government has supported and protected Queensland workers and are there any alternative approaches?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for the question. I know that the member is well aware of the role that this government plays in ensuring that workers' rights are protected and that we do all we can to ensure that when they go to work they return safely home to their family.

It is the Palaszczuk government that has stepped in to protect the rights of workers with the federal government asleep at the wheel. It is almost unbelievable that every day we hear large multinationals in this country—Woolworths being the latest case—underpaying workers to the extent that they have been underpaid. It is this government that has stepped up to try to protect our most vulnerable workers. The CEO of Woolworths, who gets paid something like \$6 million a year with wages and bonuses, cannot decipher a certified agreement. It is absolutely unbelievable.

Unbelievable cases of underpayment of wages keep rolling out. It is this government that is putting things in place to make sure that these workers are protected. It is the workers who are being ripped off, injured or killed at work that I want to concentrate on today. We are the first government that has introduced mandatory labour hire licensing laws in the state ensuring that some of the most vulnerable workers and backpackers are not subjected to exploitation and mistreatment. Earlier this month we saw the third successful prosecution of an unlicensed provider since the inception of the scheme in April last year. It is a reminder to providers and users that labour hire licensing laws are in place and if you do the wrong thing you will be caught and you will be dealt with. It is also great to see our unit in Queensland working cooperatively with Border Force, the Australian Taxation Office and the Fair Work Ombudsman in relation to vulnerable workers who are exploited.

We are also making sure that our industrial manslaughter laws are working. Last month the first industrial manslaughter charges were brought against an auto wrecking company after a man was tragically killed. Compare our strong record to that of those opposite. Whether in government or in opposition, workers cannot trust the LNP. They are the party that voted against the labour hire licensing laws. Now we have a federal government looking at Queensland as a model. Those opposite voted against industrial manslaughter laws and now they are calling for them in mining. It will be great to see what happens when that bill comes before the House. They voted against the wage theft inquiry, cut rights to injured workers in spite of their own committee saying not to do so and sacked 14,000 public servants but they come in here and cry crocodile tears every time a workers loses their job.

## Drought, Freight and Fodder Subsidies

**Mr PERRETT:** My question without notice is to the Premier. As the drought continues, with desperate Queensland farming families facing bleak circumstances, will the Premier reverse her government's cruel cuts to freight and fodder subsidies to protect animal welfare and give our farming families a future?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for the question. My understanding is that there are no cuts. I will ask the minister for agriculture to investigate. Hopefully the member is not misleading the parliament.

## Recycling, Jobs

**Mr KELLY:** My question is to the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts. Will the minister please update the House on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting jobs in recycling and the outcomes of the recent meeting of the environment ministers at the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum?

**Ms ENOCH:** I thank the member for Greenslopes for his question and his continued passion for recycling and, of course, for the environment. Queenslanders have become incredibly passionate about recycling and that has been demonstrated through the incredible success of the container refund scheme, with over one billion containers returned to the scheme in its very first year—an outstanding result and 30 per cent higher than had been anticipated. This has meant that we have seen the establishment of some 350-plus container refund points across the state. Many of these are small businesses and are situated in every part of the state from the cape down to the Gold Coast.

These small businesses are ensuring that there are jobs in regional Queensland. Kenny and Steffi Reid from AusWaste Environmental Services run a service across the top end of Queensland from Cooktown to Weipa. Reef Logistics in Townsville, which I have had the privilege to visit, have more than 60 employees on their books, including some long-term unemployed. Earlier this year I was very pleased to be in Hervey Bay when U Can Recycle opened its new facilities. At the time they were employing 12 locals, three of whom had been long-term unemployed—two of whom are brothers, Jacob and Kieran, who were thrilled to have full-time work after an extended period of unemployment.

This does not happen by accident. This is through deliberate actions, such as the bringing in of the container refund scheme and the \$100 million Resource Recovery Industry Development Program to attract recycling industries to our state to capitalise on the jobs that they create. This is all part of the broader story of supporting our environment and supporting the jobs that depend on it.

Recently the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum occurred close to the Great Barrier Reef, which was a nice difference. I am pleased to provide information to the House that at that forum we heard from the federal Minister for the Environment, the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee and the Reef 2050 Independent Expert Panel that climate change continues to be the biggest threat to the Great Barrier Reef—the second biggest threat being water quality. During discussion of deliberate actions taken to protect the environment, the reef regulations that were passed in this House recently were held up as an outstanding example of how we take deliberate action. That will form part of the state party report on the state of conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area later this year.

### Premier and Minister for Trade, Legal Advice

**Mr JANETZKI:** My question is to the Premier. Last sitting week the Premier broke her promise to disclose how much taxpayers' money she spent on legal fees to respond to the Ethics Committee. Why is the Premier hiding how much money she spent instructing Crown Law and one of Australia's most expensive private barristers to deal with her contempt finding?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Legal professional privilege applies to all ministers on both sides of the House, former and current.

### Cost of Living, Support

**Ms LINARD:** My question is to the Minister for Communities and Minister for Disability Services and Seniors. Will the minister update the House on how the Palaszczuk government is helping Queensland families who are financially vulnerable with cost-of-living pressures?

**Mrs O'ROURKE:** I thank the member for the question. I know how important it is to look after vulnerable people in our community. I am very pleased today to announce a major milestone for the No Interest Loans Scheme, and that is the achievement of over 2,700 no-interest loans having been approved. This has helped vulnerable people who unfortunately fall victim to unscrupulous payday lenders who promote products that in some cases have interest rates as high as 800 per cent.

I call on the federal government—which is the only government that can change this scheme—to put in place caps on payday loans and consumer leases, tighten regulation and improve transparency around interest rates. We know that providing a viable alternative—that is, a no-interest loan—is supporting vulnerable Queenslanders address unexpected expenses and not be out of pocket, giving them dignity in their life.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The period for question time has expired.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Further Answer to Question, Public Servants, Gifts and Benefits

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (11.18 am): I rise to make a ministerial statement. During question time the members for Everton and Glass House asked questions in relation to Mr Collins, the General Manager of the Cities Transformation Taskforce. I wish to respond to those and acquit my responses under standing order 113.

As I said, Mr Collins is the general manager of the Cities Transformation Taskforce. The task force has not let any contracts to PwC since Mr Collins was appointed to that role. I am advised that the gifts policy refers to gifts and benefits received in the course of official duties. I table a copy of the Public Service Commission policy in relation to gifts and benefits.

*Tabled paper:* Public Service Commission guideline, dated 1 January 2010, titled 'Gifts and Benefits' [\[2145\]](#).

I am advised that Ms Scurrah and Mr Collins are close personal friends of some 15 years standing and that the invitation was extended entirely on that basis and accepted entirely on that basis. Mr Collins sought further advice from Queensland Treasury general counsel and formed the view that, out of an abundance of caution, the gift would be declared. I am advised that Mr Collins then declared his accommodation in Whistler to Queensland Treasury's gifts and benefits register, and that that occurred on 7 August.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (11.20 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House:

1. notes:
  - (a) that the Productivity Commission's draft report into remote area tax concessions and payments recommends abolishing the zonal tax offset and tightening fringe benefit concessions for employer provided and employer sourced housing;
  - (b) that the zonal tax offset supports Queenslanders working in our regions and the proposed change would reduce the income of 288,000 Queenslanders by \$55 million;
  - (c) that the proposed changes by the Productivity Commission will impact regional private sector and public sector workers alike;
  - (d) that a senior constable in Cooktown would stand to lose around \$8,300 per year as a result of the changes;
  - (e) that a nurse in Mount Isa would be worse off by more than \$7,000 as a result of the changes;
  - (f) that a nurse in Weipa would lose nearly \$15,000 as a result of the changes;
  - (g) that the Palaszczuk government backs Queenslanders working in our regions and rejects the proposed changes; and
  - (h) that the Palaszczuk government has made a submission to the Productivity Commission to this effect.
2. calls on the Morrison government:
  - (a) to reject the proposals of the Productivity Commission to abolish the zonal tax offset;
  - (b) to accept Queensland's proposal to update the boundaries of the zonal tax offset, rather than abolishing it; and
  - (c) to accept Queensland's proposal to preserve the value of fringe benefit concessions.

## MOTIONS

### Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.21 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, notwithstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders, the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships be permitted to immediately move the motion of which the Deputy Premier has given notice earlier today, with the following time limits to apply: five minutes for all members; total debate time before question put, 30 minutes.

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

**AYES, 51:**

**ALP, 46**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Lynham, Madden, McMahon, McMillan, Miles, Miller, Mullen, B. O'Rourke, C. O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Pegg, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Stewart, Trad, Whiting.

**KAP, 3**—Dametto, Katter, Knuth.

**PHON, 1**—Andrew.

**Ind, 1**—Bolton.

**NOES, 37:**

**LNP, 36**—Bates, Batt, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyce, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Hart, Hunt, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McArdle, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Sorensen, Stevens, Stuckey, Watts, Weir.

**NQF, 1**—Costigan.

Pair: Mellish, Wilson.

Resolved in the affirmative.

## Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (11.27 am): I move—

That this House:

1. notes:
  - (a) that the Productivity Commission's draft report into remote area tax concessions and payments recommends abolishing the zonal tax offset and tightening fringe benefit concessions for employer provided and employer sourced housing;
  - (b) that the zonal tax offset supports Queenslanders working in our regions and the proposed change would reduce the income of 288,000 Queenslanders by \$55 million;
  - (c) that the proposed changes by the Productivity Commission will impact regional private sector and public sector workers alike;
  - (d) that a senior constable in Cooktown would stand to lose around \$8,300 per year as a result of the changes;
  - (e) that a nurse in Mount Isa would be worse off by more than \$7,000 as a result of the changes;
  - (f) that a nurse in Weipa would lose nearly \$15,000 as a result of the changes;
  - (g) that the Palaszczuk government backs Queenslanders working in our regions and rejects the proposed changes; and
  - (h) that the Palaszczuk government has made a submission to the Productivity Commission to this effect.
2. calls on the Morrison government:
  - (a) to reject the proposals of the Productivity Commission to abolish the zonal tax offset;
  - (b) to accept Queensland's proposal to update the boundaries of the zonal tax offset, rather than abolishing it; and
  - (c) to accept Queensland's proposal to preserve the value of fringe benefit concessions.

I have seen some pretty hilarious and silly own goals of late, such as those opposite voting against more infrastructure funding for Queensland from the federal government. However, voting against debating the Productivity Commission's recommendation to abolish the zone tax offset that will hurt regional Queensland workers so deeply has to be the most ridiculous and unthinking own goal that I have ever seen.

In relation to this motion, I want to make it clear that the Palaszczuk Labor government backs regional Queensland and we back regional workers and their families. Like all members of this government, I spend a lot of time travelling to regional and remote communities right across the state. In whatever community I go to I know that it is our frontline service workers who are so often the mesh that binds the community together. Typically, they know everyone in town and often they are the first line of defence when trouble strikes. Whether it is a primary schoolteacher in Karumba, a police officer in Bamaga or a teacher in Ilfracombe, those workers play a role that is more important in Queensland than it is anywhere else in Australia. We live in the most decentralised state in the country, where the delivery of frontline services poses more challenges than it does anywhere else in the country. If you go to any of those regional or remote communities, locals will tell you how hard it is to keep kids in town or on the land and how hard it is to attract key workers.

Against that background, the federal Productivity Commission's recommendation to abolish zone tax offsets and tighten fringe benefit tax concessions for employer provided and employee sourced housing is simply economic rationalism gone mad. Those cuts would rip the heart out of regional communities across our state. Today I have written a submission to the Productivity Commission urging it to scrap those ridiculous changes. I table a copy of that submission for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 27 November 2019, from the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Hon. Jackie Trad, to the Presiding Commissioner, Inquiry into Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments, Productivity Commission, Mr Jonathan Coppel, providing a submission in response to the Productivity Commission's draft report on Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments [\[2146\]](#).

In total, the proposed changes would reduce the income of 288,000 Queensland workers by some \$55 million, or an average of \$190 each. However, the biggest impact would be felt by some of our frontline workers. Take the example of the police officer in Bamaga, a senior constable with two dependent children. That officer would lose \$8,000 each year, largely because of the FBT changes to employer provided housing. The proposed changes also affect the regional private sector, particularly the resources sector in places such as the North West Minerals Province.

I have noticed that recently the federal resources minister, Matt Canavan, has shown an interest in rare earth minerals, which is something that the Palaszczuk government has been pursuing for more than two years as an industry that is creating jobs. While he seems more interested in chasing those

resources in states other than Queensland, such as in the United States, what impact does Senator Canavan think abolishing zone tax offsets would have on resource companies looking to invest in local communities? That is an especially relevant question for Senator Canavan as a former economist at the Productivity Commission. What does he think and where does he stand on this issue? I would like him to make that clear. I would like him to tell regional Queensland what he thinks of this ludicrous idea by his former employer and I would like those opposite to convince their federal counterparts what a bad idea it is. If Senator Canavan really cared, he would come out immediately and rule out the changes that would devastate our regional communities and families. If those opposite really cared, they would step up to the plate and do some work in relation to it.

I had my office check whether those opposite had, in fact, made a submission to the Productivity Commission on the tax changes that would so devastatingly affect regional workers. I have to report that, yes, they did. There is a one-page submission that mostly criticises the Palaszczuk Labor government. In fact, their recommendation is that they do nothing—that the Productivity Commission makes no recommendation in the final report. If that is the strength of the advocacy from the LNP then Queensland is doomed. Quite frankly, those opposite need to stand in this place today and back regional workers.

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.32 am): What do the government do when they have an atrocious question time? They come up with some desperate attempt to deflect, to change the subject or to change the agenda and suddenly try to discover that the regions actually exist. It is amazing what has happened since the federal election in May. State cabinet has finally discovered regional Queensland. Ministers have gone out there in their droves in the last six months, more than they have in the previous 4½ years. We encourage them to continue to visit the regions, particularly the Deputy Premier.

**Ms Bates:** Take Bob Brown with them!

**Mr MANDER:** Take Bob Brown with them; I take that interjection. The more that the Deputy Premier and ministers go into the regions, the better our election chances are in October next year. They have suddenly discovered the regions.

This is a government that has been anti regions since the moment it came to office five years ago. Whether it has been the vegetation management laws, the reef regulations, commercial fishermen or the resources industry, the government has done everything in its power to show that it is anti regions and, therefore, anti jobs. All of a sudden government members come up with a stunt to try to make out that they are friends of the regions. Nothing could be further from the truth. This has been brought on by the Deputy Premier, who has been responsible for driving our economy to become an absolute basket case in the last five years.

**Mr Minnikin:** What's the unemployment rate?

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection from the member for Chatsworth. The unemployment rate is the worst unemployment rate in the country. It is even worse in the regions.

**Ms Fentiman:** Still better than when you left office.

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection from the minister, because what is so important about the unemployment rate is the relative unemployment rate—how we compare to the rest of the nation. The relative unemployment rate in this state at the moment under Labor is three times higher than it was when the LNP was in power. Those are the important figures that we need to be comparing. Our interstate cousins—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. I ask you to be relevant to the motion before the House.

**Mr MANDER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, just to seek clarification, I am referring to—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member, I will not have a debate. I have given you some latitude. I would like you to come back to the motion before the House.

**Mr MANDER:** The Palaszczuk government tries to make out that it backs Queenslanders working in our regions. It does not back Queenslanders working in our regions. That is why we have high unemployment rates in our regions. That is why the youth unemployment rate in the outback is over 40 per cent. Those opposite speak with a forked tongue when it comes to saying that they back regional workers, because they do not.

We have made a submission to the Productivity Commission. Unlike the Treasurer, we made it before the closing date. The Treasurer's submission was made after the closing date. Again, she is slack, incompetent and tardy, not just with this—

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection from the member for Broadwater. What are the priorities of this government?

**Mr Nicholls:** She had other submissions on her mind, I suspect.

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection from the member for Clayfield. That is part of the problem: the Treasurer is distracted with so many other things.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr MANDER:** I will come to that in a moment. The Treasurer obviously is distracted by many other things, whether it is purchasing properties or having interviews with potential school principals. I would love to know what that meeting was supposed to be about, but we will address that tomorrow.

We need no further evidence than the CFMMEU outside chanting, 'Labor Party fail! Labor Party fail!' That is what they are chanting. Even the unions are denouncing the Treasurer and the Labor government because they have had enough, too. They know that this government is all talk and no action. There is no further proof needed than this lame, fake motion. They come in here and make out that they stick up for the regions. This government is anti regions, anti resources and anti jobs.

Interruption.

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### Error in Division

 **Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Before I call the next member, I need to correct the record in relation to the previous division. The ayes were in fact 46 and not 47 as reported. The result of the division therefore is ayes 51 and noes 37.

## MOTION

### Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments

Resumed.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I would like to issue general advice to the House following the last speech. There were some references made to a matter that is before the Ethics Committee, potentially going very close to matters before the Ethics Committee. I caution members about referring to matters that are before the Ethics Committee.

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (11.38 am): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Deputy Premier. Once again, regional Queensland is being disadvantaged by the recently released draft report from the Productivity Commission on remote area tax concessions and payments. Among the many other payments suggested for removal, the draft report recommends abolishing the zone tax offset.

The zone tax offset concession is offered by the Australian Taxation Office for people who live in remote and regional Queensland areas. The offset is to assist with what we all know are the high costs of living in remote areas, together with the high costs of amenities and many other factors that affect people living in remote and regional communities. As everyone is well aware, the people who work and live in the remote communities of Queensland are doing it extremely tough. These recommendations are another cruel blow to those hardworking people in remote and regional Queensland.

Removing the zone tax offset will affect up to 288,000 Queenslanders, with most of these people being represented by those opposite. It is time for those members to stand up for these people and demand their federal LNP colleagues to oppose these recommendations in draft form from the Productivity Commission and to support this motion. The Productivity Commission's report says, 'Remote living is largely a matter of choice.' In other words, if you do not like regional Queensland, you can get out.

If that sounds like talking points from the federal LNP, well they are. It is in their DNA to attack those people living in regional Queensland. But there is hope and that hope comes from the Queensland Palaszczuk government. We immediately opposed the Productivity Commission's proposals and we have made submissions to them. I acknowledge that we have just heard from the Deputy Premier that they actually have bothered to put in a submission—a one-page submission—

which, as the Deputy Premier said, spends more time talking down the Queensland government, but they did not talk about how many job opportunities we have given remote and regional Queenslanders, particularly with our Works for Queensland packages. They all know how successful and well supported that program is by every mayor in regional Queensland who gets Works for Queensland funding.

I also call on federal Senator Matt Canavan instead of continuing to put down Queensland and remote Queensland every chance he gets in the media—at every opportunity he gets he talks down regional and Central Queensland—to stand up and tell the government not to support any of these recommendations. Minister Canavan was that passionate about this tax offset that he said he supported it going to the Productivity Commission to have a look at it. He said, 'It was no longer working as intended. It has barely increased now for 25 years.'

Not only did Matt Canavan want to send this off to the commission to get more money for regional and remote communities; now they have come back and said they want to scrap it. What was Matt Canavan's stance that he put to the commission now that they have come back and said they are going to scrap it for every regional worker who is looking to get this offset bonus when they do their tax? It is up to Minister Canavan to stand up for regional and Central Queensland instead of downplaying and down talking workers in regional centres.

As we all know here in Queensland, the Palaszczuk government continues to back Queenslanders. We continue to back those who choose to live and work and raise families in remote and regional Queensland, just like where I am from in Central Queensland. The removal of the zone tax offset will cripple small, regional and remote communities who rely on attracting workers with this zone tax offset. Our government is working to create opportunities here in Queensland. We have created over 200,000 jobs, with more than half of those in regional Queensland. Our commitment to infrastructure in regional Queensland is \$29 billion. This is nearly 70 per cent of our infrastructure budget.

As I said earlier, this is a bad report. I implore the LNP to reject these recommendations and support those who are doing it tough, particularly those in central and regional Queensland. Instead, the Morrison government should adopt the Palaszczuk government's proposal to preserve the zone tax offset for Queenslanders who are living and working in regional Queensland. I ask all those opposite here today to stand with Labor and to stand with the Deputy Premier and support her motion and support regional Queensland.

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (11.43 am): This is a desperate government desperately flailing around trying to find some sort of diversion from the economic bad news that continues to happen. This is a desperate motion from a government that only six months ago wanted to kill and hammer regional Queensland. How did they want to do that? They wanted to see a Shorten government elected—a Shorten government that wanted to attack every retiree's dividend imputation plan and tax them on average another \$5,000. That was what Queensland Labor and this Labor government and this Labor Treasurer supported.

They supported a Labor government that wanted to remove the negative gearing benefit for people who work hard and buy a holiday home or buy an investment property and provide rental accommodation. That is what this government supported. An ALP state government wanted to support Bill Shorten and his death tax regime. That would certainly hit every farmer in regional and rural Queensland and add another \$380 billion worth of new taxes to Queenslanders, particularly all of those people throughout regional Queensland. This is from a party that has a pedigree of taxing Queenslanders more. There have been 10 more taxes—\$3.5 billion. They include a billion dollar waste levy, increases to land tax, increases to payroll tax for certain employers, increases—

**Ms Bates:** Car rego.

**Mr NICHOLLS:**—to car registration. Thank you to the member for Mudgeeraba. They have a pedigree of getting rid of the principal place of residence concession for people when they want to buy their principal place of residence, their family home—adding \$7,500; a pedigree of increasing the tolls on motorways by 30 per cent; and a pedigree of getting rid of the fuel subsidy, adding eight cents a litre to the cost of motorists getting around. Who do you think that affects most? People in regional Queensland who travel the furthest distance.

When this Treasurer comes in and says, 'We want to support regional Queensland,' she is speaking with a forked tongue. In fact, we have to wonder who she is speaking for. I note that the Queensland Treasury is now seeking a chief economist, a chief economist to do the hard work. What does that chief economist role involve? It involves leadership and planning for economic growth and being the key spokesperson for the Queensland economy.

**Ms TRAD:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Why do they need someone like that?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Because the key spokesperson who should be the person—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Pause the clock. There is a point of order. What is your point of order?

**Ms TRAD:** I ask you to rule on relevance. This is not relevant to the motion.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I have been listening carefully. I am giving some latitude, but I would ask the member for Clayfield to come back a little closer to the motion.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I take that objection from the non-chief spokesperson of the Queensland economy over there—the Treasurer, who is paid to do it but now is looking for someone else to do it.

If this Treasurer were doing the job, one would have to ask why a simple 1½-page submission was put in after the closing date for submissions. It is not as though the time line has been any particular secret. It has been on the website since 28 November 2018 when the terms of reference were resolved. Whilst the LNP and the LNP's Treasury spokesman, the deputy leader, does the job that needs to be done and puts in a submission, here we are on 27 November 2019 and the Treasurer is finally getting around to making a submission.

We all know what this is. We all know that this is a distraction from the main issue. We all know that this is a distraction from an economy that is plummeting under Labor. We all know that the regions are suffering because this Labor government has taken its eye off the ball. We all know that this Labor government has desperately gone out to the regions in some vain attempt to try to recover lost ground, lost ground that they found out about on 18 May when the Queensland people comprehensively rejected their regime that they supported for higher and more taxes, for fewer jobs and to penalise workers who just wanted to get on with their job, whether that was in the resources sector or elsewhere.

We know what the Deputy Premier and Treasurer thinks about the resources sector: they should all retrain into other areas. That was her comment. We know what the Minister for Education thought when she was the employment minister. The Minister for Education was the minister who said, 'Youth unemployment is always with us. We can do nothing about it.' We only need to read Tuesday's *Courier-Mail* that talks about the increasing youth unemployment in the regions to show that she has taken that particular philosophy to heart and has completely given up on finding jobs for young people in the regions.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Before I call the next member, I remind the House of those members on a warning. Some members are sailing very close to the wind: the members for Kawana, Coomera, Buderim, Nicklin, Southern Downs, Ninderry, Mudgeeraba, Nanango and Bundaberg.

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (11.49 am): It is quite hypocritical of those opposite to stand up and accuse the Palaszczuk government of not being friends with the regions or to say that the Palaszczuk government is desperate in what we are trying to do to support the regions. From where I stand, the only side that does not support the regions is those opposite, which I think is appalling, shameful and disgraceful. I do not think those opposite know the first thing about supporting the regions. Why else would they not support this motion, which simply supports regional Queensland? I rise in support of the Deputy Premier's motion.

On 4 September the Productivity Commission released its draft report on remote area tax concessions and payments which, among other things, recommended the abolition of the zone tax offset. The zone tax offset is a tax concession offered by the tax office to people engaged in private and public sector jobs who live in remote areas of Australia. The zone tax offset is critical to attract the right professionals to resource schools, hospitals and police in the regions. It is designed to assist Australians with the higher cost of living, amenities and other factors associated with life in regional and remote Australia.

The many public sector workers I have met in the Cook electorate understand the challenges that regional and remote communities face. They chose to move to the regions in order to give back to their communities because they believe in building stronger communities. Adopting the proposed changes is a huge slap in the face to private and public sector workers, and I can tell you now, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it will be detrimental to services in my communities. Currently, the zone tax

offset is claimed by 69,000 Townsville residents, 60,000 Cairns residents and 34,000 Mackay residents. To put this into perspective, a senior constable in Cooktown would lose \$8,300 per year and a nurse in Weipa would lose nearly \$7,000 per year.

We are talking about communities such as Saibai Island in the Torres Strait, four kilometres away from Papua New Guinea; Pormpuraaw in Cape York, which is completely cut off during the wet season; and Mareeba on the Tablelands. I fully support public and private sector workers in all of my communities because of the benefits they bring. My good friend Robyn White, who has been a nurse for over 25 years in the Torres Strait, has given so many years to service the communities of Yam Island and Masig Island in the Torres Strait. I take my hat off to Robyn. The Torres Strait is not home for Robyn, but she has given back to the community. It is because of the zone tax offset and the support given to the public and private sectors that Robyn was able to continue her good work in the communities.

In its draft report the Productivity Commission says that 'there is no clear role for government to compensate taxpayers for the disadvantages of life in remote areas' and that remote living is 'largely a matter of choice'. Abolishing the zone tax offset has LNP written all over it. As a matter of fact, it sounds, looks and smells like the LNP. Why? Because the LNP does not care about the regions. We need to have a good, hard think about how we support the regions. Sitting here listening to those opposite week after week, I am losing patience with them accusing the Palaszczuk government of not doing good work in the communities.

I know the challenges. I know the hardships that people in my communities face. I also know the difficulty of attracting workers to the regions. The zone tax offset is an incentive that brings people to the regions. It supports people staying in the regions. Most importantly, it benefits local people in communities who will gain educational achievements and health outcomes. We want to see positive health outcomes into the future. We want to see safety and security for our communities. The people who come to our communities are the ones who will influence positive change in our communities. I fully support this motion and I ask other members to support it as well.

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (11.54 am): This is a really important issue to bring before the House because it is a burning issue in my electorate. In any discussion of endemic or pervasive problems in outback areas this will always rank in the top three. At the outset, there must be an acknowledgment in this room of the very real crisis facing outback Queensland. When I looked at the population projections in my electorate the other day, everything is down. Apart from Indigenous communities, the population of every other town in my electorate is projected to decrease.

In terms of future opportunities we face many constraints; for example, if we want to build dams or develop our properties everything works against us. In the outback it began when Queensland Rail was privatised. About 800 jobs from Townsville and Mount Isa evaporated, and we are still dealing with the fallout and social impacts of that. There has been hit after hit. In Mount Isa the liquor and gaming officer—the bloke who used to give you licences and alcohol permits around town when you had events—was moved last year, which makes getting approvals for events enormously difficult now. A few years ago the environmental office said they could not find anyone to move to Mount Isa. For two years there were two jobs they were not able to fill, so they shut it down and moved it to Cairns or Townsville. The mining office in Mount Isa—the mining centre of the state—has been completely gutted and the jobs have gone to Townsville. There is a real problem not only with the level of services but also populating the inland that we need to face, try to arrest and turn around.

Central to that are zone tax offsets. In terms of solutions that we could apply, that is a common denominator. What the Productivity Commission's draft report recommends is very scary. Perhaps there is another story behind it and they are saying that we need to do something completely different or better than that, but I do not think so. I think they are saying to straight out abolish it, which is ridiculous. With regard to a nurse in Mount Isa losing more than \$7,000, I am not sure where that figure comes from. I am sure that must be an accumulation of benefits or a compounding effect.

My understanding of the zone tax rebate is that if you are in Normanton, Julia Creek, Hughenden or Doomadgee—I think that is zone A—it amounts to about \$1,173 a year, and for Cloncurry, Camooweal and Mount Isa it is \$338 per annum. That is ridiculous. If you want to entice people to live in remote areas, displace them from the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast or Brisbane, you have to have jobs and a good enticement. We need people to set forth and prosper out in those western areas and you have to incentivise them.

At the Ernest Henry mine in Cloncurry I think there is a \$10,000 to \$15,000 incentive if you base yourself locally, and they still struggle to attract people with that. They are still struggling out in remote areas—even with an extra \$50,000 or \$100,000—to attract doctors. There is a really big problem.

Even \$7,000 does not cut it. There needs to be some very hard decisions made beyond the zone tax rebate to force employees and public servants to work in those areas—not asking politely—because otherwise, if you go and look at the population projections in my electorate, they are all going down. I believe that is a real problem for all of us.

I know there is a sentiment in Brisbane that ‘we’re already putting enough money out there, we subsidise electricity with equalisation tariffs and we’re already doing all these things’. There is a figure that I love to throw back at people. This figure is about four or five years old, but it is still relevant and it would still be close. The gross regional product per person in the north-west is about \$182,000; in Brisbane it is \$62,000. I am not saying that we are all great for doing that by virtue of the fact there are resources there, but you cannot just throw out figures and say that you prop things up. There are all sorts of anomalies in there. The real cost per person of providing health services in remote western areas is less than it is in the cities. It is hard to believe, but members should go and look it up for themselves. We pull our weight, and members need to acknowledge that there are huge problems in outback areas.

I agree with this motion. I am not sure I agree with ‘the government backs Queenslanders working in the regions’, because there are still things happening out there that are hurting us and must be addressed urgently.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 26 November (see p. 3788), on motion of Ms Grace—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (11.59 am): I rise to give my contribution to the debate on the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I was on the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee that examined this bill in a bit of detail. As we went through that examination, we got to speak to all different types of stakeholders—stakeholders who were supportive of the bill and stakeholders who were definitely not supportive of the bill. If this bill does pass today, we will be declaring a public holiday that will recognise the personal, social, religious and cultural significance of Christmas celebrations commence on Christmas Eve. We will be recognising the importance of that evening to spend with family and friends and prepare for Christmas Day. Declaring a public holiday from 6 pm to 12 pm will also ensure that workers have the right to reasonably refuse to work, or be fairly compensated if they do want to work, after 6 pm on Christmas Eve.

There are quite a lot of people who will be affected by this bill—people in the working community, people in the public sector as well as people in the business community. People who will be affected by this in the public sector include hospital workers, health workers, emergency services workers, police, fireys, ambulance workers, corrective services workers, public transport workers such as Queensland Rail employees and people who work for energy and electricity suppliers. I also note that people who work in the hospitality industry, people who work in restaurants and people who work in the tourism industry will be affected by this bill.

Some figures have been thrown around about the effect of this bill. It has been said that it will cost Queensland industry, including the public sector, between \$43 million and \$136 million, and it will cost the public sector between \$9.4 million and \$21 million to implement this change. This is going to be a great thing for workers. It will make sure that if they do have to work or want to work on Christmas Eve they will be duly compensated, and that is a great thing for workers. I have worked on public holidays many times while I have been a worker—whether it was in the mining industry, the construction industry or even when I was working as a baker’s assistant during my early days at high school. Working on a public holiday is great. You get that double bubble, as they call it in the mining industry—that is, you get double your wage for the day. Some people might even say it is working for jam, which is a term used in the construction industry. Like I said, working on a public holiday is very beneficial to a worker.

The explanatory notes say that Christmas Eve is an evening before Christmas that people should spend with their families. I have had people come to me saying that this bill may deter people from actually spending Christmas Eve with their families because they may have the opportunity to make

that extra dollar. People are strapped for cash at the moment, and this is the time of the year when they are looking for a couple of extra bucks in their back pocket, so they may choose to work on Christmas Eve instead of spending it with their family, which they might usually do.

During the consultation RIS, there were 1,779 submissions received. Out of those, 1,271 submissions were supportive of the change to make Christmas Eve a public holiday. The split in the numbers of submissions in favour of or against the change is probably a good representation of the numbers of workers and employers. Employers would not represent 50 per cent. There were 508 submissions received in opposition to the bill and not in favour of the public holiday, which is 28.6 per cent. These came from the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, the Australian Industry Group, the National Retail Association, the Hotels Association, Clubs Queensland, the Master Grocers Association, the Baking Association of Australia and the Restaurant & Catering Industry Association. These are the kinds of organisations that spoke out against the public holiday.

To be fair to them and as someone who also owned a small business before getting into politics, I can understand the troubles you have when you have the responsibility of running a business. All of the risk goes on to a business owner when they go into business. All of the responsibilities for employees' rights and making sure they are paid properly falls on the employer, as does the cost of insurance and the cost of running that business. As a small business owner in a previous life, I understand that. A lot of times the owner of the business goes without being paid themselves just to make sure the electricity and insurance bills can be paid that year and to make sure their workers are paid properly. A lot of business owners are doing it very tough, and the fact is that a lot of them underpay themselves or do not pay themselves a wage at all. You can see that if you look at their tax returns. They do not pay themselves at all because they just cannot afford to.

I believe the objective of the bill in the first place was to give back to people who may have lost wages when the federal government took away some of their entitlements for working on weekends and overtime. I can see the fairness in that. The Labor government is trying to give back and is sticking up for workers. It decided it wanted to give back to workers and make sure there is another day of the year when they can boost their wages, but it is at a cost to business. We are seeing businesses that cannot afford to pay their electricity and insurance bills. It comes back to how we could have done this a bit fairer and how we could have helped all Queenslanders. Perhaps we should figure out ways to lower the cost of living, lower the cost of running a business and lower the cost of everyday things we use like insurance.

**Ms Boyd** interjected.

**Mr DAMETTO:** I am not taking the interjection because I cannot hear it, to be quite honest. I have industrial deafness from working in the mining industry. What I can say is that some employers would love to give their workers a pay rise and give them a bit extra every week, but they are literally paying them what they can afford.

One thing that was raised with me by people in the business community is that they did not even think they would make a profit on Christmas Eve if they were asked to pay these extra benefits to their workers. A survey was conducted and 62 per cent of the businesses surveyed said they do not open at Christmas because they cannot make a profit at Christmas. They cannot get people to work. The biggest thing is why a small business owner would open their doors just to supply a service to people if they were going backwards for the day. The restaurant and hotel owners wondered why they should open on Christmas Eve if they cannot make a profit. That is a problem in regional Queensland because a lot of these places become a meeting point. I am probably from a younger demographic and I can say that Christmas Eve is not spent at home with your mum and dad. It is out spending time at the pubs and clubs catching up with friends before Christmas Day. I can probably speak for a lot of people who spent a lot of time in their younger days hungover at Christmas.

I now turn to the amendments to this bill that have been circulated, specifically those that relate to the ID scanners. I was on Flinders Street just last Friday night. It would have to be one of the most degrading things to have your face and licence scanned on the way into a nightclub or a bar. It feels like you are—I did take a trip to China just recently with a parliamentary delegation—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stewart): Let's come back to the bill, please.

**Mr DAMETTO:** That will be my contribution to this debate. I look forward to voting on it in the House.

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.09 pm): My father has been a chef my entire life. I come from a proud hospitality family and that means that I do not remember us sharing a whole Christmas Day together until my early 20s. Every year my dad would hustle us kids out of bed so we could have

an hour together as a family to open gifts and to eat a quick breakfast before he went to cook Christmas lunch for hundreds of other people. He would get home late in the afternoon absolutely exhausted and grumpy having missed out on the day's festivities. I know that this scenario will play out for thousands of other families right across Australia in just under a month. There is no getting around it: not having a Christmas as a family sucks. When Dad became the sole owner of Restaurant Two after many years—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Steward): Order! Pause the clock. I think you have used unparliamentary language. I ask you to withdraw.

**Ms PUGH:** I withdraw. When Dad became the sole owner of Restaurant Two after many years of serving Christmas Day lunch, we made the decision to close on Christmas Day. This was despite strong demand from customers. We decided as a business that this was a special day for our staff to spend with their family and we wanted them to have that day. Some of our staff were from overseas and we often ended up hosting them at our house each year. Instead, we opened on Christmas Eve for bookings only with a special set menu at a fixed price. This was mainly to prevent wastage as we were closed for the ensuing days, but it meant we could better control our costs for the evening. It ended up being one of our busiest nights. I know if we were still open and our staff were happy to work, we would stay open and we would factor that wage increase into our prices.

Diners love coming out on Christmas Eve to celebrate with family and entertain visiting loved ones. Of course, I saw a few Christmas Eve proposals in my time. For most restaurants, adding a surcharge is not a large problem. We certainly know from the roaring trade that many holiday venues do over the Easter long weekend that most diners are happy to pay them. These times together are so precious. They come up a few times a year and we need to ensure that those times are protected and preserved for people to celebrate.

For many families, particularly religious ones, Christmas Eve is just as special as Christmas Day. I know that this year my local church services will be very busy with families wishing to share a quiet moment. I can confirm that last year's Christmas Eve service at the Church of the 12 Apostles, which I attended with my family, was packed to the gunwales. Families like mine, with two single parents, also join with family on Christmas Eve to celebrate. My children and I will join their dad's extended family on Christmas Eve before he joins our family celebration on Christmas Day. This enables both sets of families to see the children as well as allowing them to see all of their cousins. As families change shape and size, Christmas Eve has taken on extra importance for families like ours who have children with two households.

If members are not moved by tales of working-class families, then let's look to the royals. I understand that the British royal family like to gather on Christmas Eve to exchange gifts and celebrate with festive cheer. I am led to believe by the cover of *New Idea* that the royals are just like us! If Kate Middleton does not want to work on Christmas Eve then why should our hospitality workers?

Each year I run my Mount Ommaney Small Business Awards in my electorate, aimed at promoting the hardworking small businesses in my electorate. This year over 200 small businesses attended the awards, and I also hosted numerous launch events while this issue was being canvassed in the community. I can say that not a single member of my chamber of commerce or my larger business community raised this with me as an issue of concern. Mount Ommaney locals know I am passionate about advocating for small business. I want to ensure that they are competing on a level playing field. Most small business owners I know—and having been a small business manager I know this—value the contribution of their employees. If they have a good employee, they do not complain about paying them penalty rates; they wish that they could pay them more. If there is one thing I know from working in small business and running my Mount Ommaney Small Business Awards, it is that our local small businesses are absolutely packed with amazing superstar staff who go above and beyond every day of the year—not just at Christmas time—to do an amazing job for their employers.

For years there has been an attempt by those opposite to create an adversarial narrative that hardworking staff are trying to bleed their employers dry. Let's be clear: these staff generally work for little more than minimum wage, and they need and deserve every extra penny, especially at an expensive time of year like Christmas. Let's not be scrooges; let's give these hardworking employees an early Christmas present.

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (12.14 pm): I rise today to express my deep concern for the far-reaching negative impact that the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 will have on the hundreds of thousands of small and medium sized businesses that work hard to keep Queensland's

economy afloat. Before I begin I would like to thank the members of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee for their consideration of this bill and for allowing me to join the committee for a short time as a substitute for my LNP colleague Jann Stuckey, the member for Currumbin.

This bill proposes the introduction of yet another public holiday in Queensland, albeit a part day, at the busiest time of year for many retail and hospitality businesses. Queensland already has the second highest number of gazetted public holidays in the country. The estimated public and private wages cost of the Christmas Eve part-day holiday is unjustifiable. Labor's blatant dismissal of industry advice that the legislation will simply cut jobs and hurt businesses and families just shows how out of touch this Labor government is.

The committee received 14 written submissions, 10 of which categorically opposed the introduction of the part-day public holiday despite—or maybe in spite of—Labor insisting on rushing through a 2019 introduction with little regard for the time required for retail, hospitality and tourism businesses, community services and aged-care facilities to prepare. With less than one month to go before Christmas Eve, all of these industries have already finalised rosters, confirmed bookings and locked in events—events that will now need to triple their turnover just to break even.

The 14 formal submissions were received from large stakeholder groups that represent the vast majority of Queensland's small to medium sized businesses. In fact, as reported by Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland—the CCIQ—SMEs make up 98 per cent of Queensland businesses and employ 66 per cent of private sector employees. Unlike big businesses, SMEs are not protected by enterprise bargaining agreements, leaving them to feel the full brunt of 300 per cent wage hikes as a result of public holiday penalty rates. The additional annual wages cost to the private sector is estimated to be between \$31.9 million and \$115.8 million.

As is often the case, Labor's legislation is South-East Queensland centric, based on dodgy research, union bias and an appalling grab for city votes, leaving the rest of disaster ravaged Queensland to take yet another blow. In the words of the CEO of the Queensland Hotels Association, which represents 88 per cent of general licence holders in Queensland, 100 per cent of members polled indicated that a part-day public holiday will reduce staff hours and negatively impact the workers of Queensland by reducing shifts.

Where will exhausted, drought-stricken, struggling country families who look towards Christmas for hope and companionship go when their local pub shuts on Christmas Eve and the heart of their town stops? Labor has pulled the wool over the eyes of Queenslanders yet again with ridiculous claims that 70 per cent of all submitters supported the bill. This is neither a fair assessment nor a true reflection of what the committee heard. There were just 1,271 benign one-line sentences and signatures from individuals and unionists recorded over a four-week period as part of the consultation process that supported the holiday. This, along with four written submissions from unions, is the figure on which Labor bases support for the bill.

There was a groundswell of opposition to the bill from people whose livelihoods are at risk by this bill. Submissions were received from Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, the National Retail Association, Queensland Hotels Association, Clubs Queensland, Master Grocers Association, Baking Association of Australia, Restaurant and Catering Industry Association and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council who all opposed the bill. These peak stakeholders provided lengthy, informed and measured submissions both in writing and to the hearing itself, representing a collective total of 498,000 members who resoundingly opposed the bill. This is close to half a million industry member businesses that think this bill will hurt Queensland, cut jobs and increase prices for consumers.

Once again, what we see from this government is all smoke and mirrors. In the words of the Australian Retailers Association's Mr Zimmerman, the bill is flawed at best and baseless at worst. It seems Labor stalwart John Mickel would have agreed with him. Following his review in 2016 into potential impacts of a part-day public holiday, he recommended against it. In order to protect SMEs and tourism operators from economic hardship and to appease the unions, the Mickel review recommended a compromise—that large retailers such as Coles, Woolworths and Aldi must close at 6 pm. These laws were passed in 2017. It was surprising to me, then, to hear two Coles workers and two Woolworths workers say at the committee hearing that they support the bill because it will protect their rights not to work Christmas Eve.

Not only are big business employees already protected; according to Clubs Queensland CEO Doug Flockhart, a reasonableness test is already imposed to protect staff, meaning that any employees who do not want to work are typically not rostered and staff are rostered on only out of operational necessity, thereby satisfying the reasonableness test.

Our retailers currently face the biggest fight of their lives since the GFC, thanks in part to nine new or increased taxes imposed on them by this government. The economy is now in the worst shape, with unemployment the highest and business confidence the lowest in Australia, but Labor thinks now is a better time for the change than three years ago, when the economy was in slightly better shape.

I challenge those opposite to ask the 177,000 unemployed Queenslanders if the opportunity to work less is good economic policy. The negative impact of penalty rates and payroll complexities for small businesses was surveyed by CCIQ, with 48 per cent of businesses planning to close under these proposed changes and 26 per cent of mum-and-dad owners forced to send staff home and work themselves. Nearly every hotelier I spoke to last night here at parliament said they would now be forced to close on Christmas Eve, so staff who are currently rostered on and who are relying on that shift to assist with their Christmas expenses will be left short.

Inevitable mass business closures and underemployment of casual staff destroy Labor's argument that wage boosts from penalty rates would stimulate spending. Businesses would have to triple their turnover just to break even, which is no small feat in South-East Queensland with population buffers but impossible outside of it. The Australian Retailers Association's Mr Zimmerman said in his evidence—

... this idea promises an unwarranted and unjustified hit on retail businesses and those in ... tourism and hospitality that belies either a disregard for or an ignorance of the commercial parameters of those businesses.

In its submission the CCIQ also reported that the introduction of the part-day holiday will take \$116 million off the private sector bottom line and is dismissive of the concerns of Queensland SMEs. Regardless of the committee process, the legislation remains in its original form as proposed by Labor. Despite the private sector overwhelmingly rejecting Labor's claim that a part-day public holiday on Christmas Eve would be good for us, the backbone of our economy—small and medium sized businesses—will experience the greatest impact and foot the largest bill, proving Labor is anti business. Our SMEs are not the only losers: taxpayers will be hit twice, with increased taxes to pay public servants or the loss of community services at holiday time, and with exorbitant costs that will mean their holiday budget is stretched beyond repair.

The Local Government Association of Queensland, also a significant voice for the regions, dismissed any suggestion that this legislation would be grounded in social reform and went on to add that the introduction would be detrimental to local communities and economies. The LGAQ submitted—

... the case for the granting of an additional part-date public holiday has not yet been made.

The peak body Restaurant & Catering Australia said—

This Bill is neither workable nor reasonable to restaurant owners in QLD.

CEO Mr Lambert said—

... the true impact of this—

proposal—

is that workers in nearly a quarter of Queensland's restaurants would not be compensated at all ...

He concluded that the proposal puts small business at a competitive disadvantage. That is what Labor does time and again. I will finish with the words of the ARA's Mr Zimmerman. He said—

Half a holiday on Christmas Eve isn't about looking after people or 'properly compensating' them, which is why our view is that the government's Christmas Eve vision extends no further than a date with the ballot box on 31st October next year.

I will not be supporting this bill.

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (12.26 pm): There are two things we know for certain at this time of year: Christmas Day will fall on 25 December and the LNP will attack workers. You can bet that the opposition leader, the deputy opposition leader, the member for Kawana and all the other members opposite will be relaxing at home on Christmas Eve, but when the Palaszczuk Labor government says that people who have to work should get a bit of extra compensation, it is a total disaster. It is one rule for the LNP and another rule for retail workers in this state. Having sacked 14,000 public sector workers after assuring them they had nothing to fear, having driven the unemployment rate to a peak of 7.3 per cent, and having worked themselves into a frenzy about the very existence of trade unions and the temerity of working people to want to organise to protect their rights, they are at it yet again.

The reform before the House to grant workers a public holiday on Christmas Eve after 6 pm is good policy. It is fair, decent and overdue. The LNP's position looks like it was composed by Scrooge himself. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition did not begin her contribution in this debate—I looked forward to it—with 'Bah humbug!' That is her vision for the lot of working people in this state—shackled to the retail counter, working to midnight as though it were any other day.

Christmas Eve has a special significance for the Australian community. It is a time for family and friends, for reflection and preparation, for wrapping of presents and finishing off Christmas decorations and, for many Australians, observing the important religious occasion of Christmas. I am sure many members of the opposition will be attending church on Christmas Eve. They will not be working, but those who are working and do not have the opportunity to observe the religious significance of Christmas should be compensated for that.

As I have said, Christmas is a time for family, friends and community. This bill does not spell the end of Christmas Eve trading; it just ensures people obliged to work are properly compensated for their labour and the disruption to their family life. We in this House have heard a lot about work-life balance and about what we as legislators can do to ensure Queenslanders have access to the kind of working conditions that promote a dignified life. It is all very well to champion the quiet Australians but, like every other LNP slogan, it is hollow and meaningless, because they are the people the LNP want to vote against.

This bill is for hardworking Queenslanders who do their very best to provide for their families—those hardworking Queenslanders who work in both the public and the private sectors. If we are to keep those workers from their families on what is arguably the most important night of the year, they deserve to be paid at an appropriate rate, just like they are on any other public holiday. The LNP's opposition to this bill is not just mean-spirited; it is deeply ideological. They have demonstrated again and again through their actions that they see working people as little more than unit labour costs to be discarded as easily as Christmas wrapping on Boxing Day.

Who can forget the thousands of public sector workers they sacked by email, Campbell Newman's pledge to get out the pooper scooper to sweep up the remnants of their shattered aspirations, or his even more bizarre claim that ex-public servants were approaching him on the street to thank him for sacking them?

The contributions of those opposite to this debate show that they have learnt nothing from those toxic anti-worker policies of the Newman LNP government in which many of them served. Mark my words: should Queenslanders suffer the unhappy fate of the LNP returning to office, those dark days will be visited upon Queenslanders again.

In the parliament today I want to pay tribute to the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association that has fought hard for this change. I declare in this debate that I am very proudly a member of the Australian Workers' Union, but the first union I joined when I was 15 years of age was the SDA and I am proud to stand with and for it in this debate. Just as it is in the LNP's DNA to go to war with workers, it is in the shoppies' DNA to fight hard for some of the lowest paid in our community. When I visit my local Big W at Underwood I am always recognised by my shop assistant mates and today I want to recognise them in the people's place—the parliament of Queensland. I stand shoulder to shoulder with the SDA when it comes to the fight against the LNP members whose priorities are all wrong.

At a time when even the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia has identified flat wages growth as the greatest threat we face to economic growth, the grinch from Nanango—the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the LNP—cannot see beyond her ideological blind spot to simply give workers a fair go. Our government, the Palaszczuk Labor government, and the Australian Labor Party will always look after the working people of our state who are the backbone of the Queensland economy. I strongly commend this bill to the House.

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (12.30 pm): This legislation is a kick in the guts for a lot of mum-and-dad small businesses.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Pugh): I am going to stop you there. That is unparliamentary language.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Is that word on the list—kick in the 'guts'?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes. I am going to ask you to withdraw.

**Ms SIMPSON:** This is a kick in the stomach. The usual language that the public would use is something—

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You did not withdraw, member for Maroochydoore.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I withdraw.

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms SIMPSON:** This legislation is a kick in the head—

**Mr BAILEY:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** We have a point of order.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I have withdrawn.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I said we have a point of order.

**Mr BAILEY:** If she has already withdrawn, that is fine.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister.

**Ms SIMPSON:** This legislation is a kick in the head for those small businesses.

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I hear members opposite laughing, and they have laughed all the way through this debate, and that is what is so disappointing. When small businesses in my area—the retailers and the hospitality sector—heard about this, they were distressed. There were those who said that they were going to close and there were others who said that they would get their family to work so they would not be able to employ the number of people they wanted to employ. Others just said that they are going to close their doors for Christmas Eve. It appears that this Labor government operates in a bubble when it says that it is supporting the workers, yet when I talk to those mum-and-dad small businesses—they are not big corporates—they say that this is yet another burden and that this Labor government is treating small business like a beast of burden.

Earlier I heard Labor members opposite laughing it off because they are completely out of touch with those struggles that the major employers of Queensland—small businesses—are facing. Is it any wonder that there is such a low confidence rating amongst small business in the role of this government, because time and time again they see new and increased taxes and a completely dismissive attitude from this government?

At a time when Queensland has the highest unemployment rate of all the states, the people whom we need to employ more people and give their workers more hours are being penalised. This is not just about penalty rates for workers; it is a penalty rate that will close the doors so that in fact workers end up with fewer hours being worked when those workers need more working hours. This dismissive 'let them eat cake' approach by the Labor government and a dismissive approach to the concerns of the hundreds and thousands of small businesses that have had their concerns voiced through their representative organisations is just stunning.

Queensland has the highest unemployment rate in Australia, and that is a disgrace. All of the Pulse surveys have shown that the confidence rating amongst business is at its lowest in about 12 years. When we dig down in terms of what we are talking about with respect to public holidays, there is only one other state and a territory that have Christmas Eve as a part holiday. We all support Christmas Day and Boxing Day being public holidays in Australian jurisdictions. Those days and particularly Christmas Day are recognised as being the most important with regard to the majority of people's religious celebrations. Whatever people's personal approaches, I bring members back again to the fact that other jurisdictions around Australia have not gone down this path, including Labor governments.

Cynically, this Labor government, which relies on union dues from workers who predominantly work for big business and the public sector, does not want to listen to small businesses and it has completely ignored submission after submission and very strong evidence with regard to the fact that this will mean fewer workers will be getting the hours that they should get at this time of year. When I talk to those in the retail and hospitality sector—that is what makes up my electorate of Maroochydoore, and there are those who have really been struggling in this space—they have been very critical of the fact that this government just does not understand small business. Where has the small business minister been with respect to speaking out against the impacts on small business? She has been quite silent in the public arena on these matters.

The government and the submissions have shown that the real cost to industry could be between \$41.6 million and \$136.9 million. That in itself shows that there is all of this rubbery stuff where the government has not wanted to own up to the real impact. Firstly, in this House it has denied that there is an impact and, secondly, when it comes to the financial burden that is not being borne by the ministers opposite but by small businesses and their workers it has been in complete denial. There will also be an impact for taxpayers given it is estimated that it will cost between \$9.4 million and \$21.1 million for those state workers who will gain a benefit from this. I stand here to speak on behalf of small businesses because it is—you cannot say ‘gut wrenching’ apparently—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** No, you cannot. I will ask you to withdraw.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Maybe stomach wrenching, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I am really distressed on behalf of these people—

**Mr BAILEY:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is a former Speaker of this House. If she persistently flaunts the standing orders using that term—I think it is highly inappropriate—she should not just withdraw but apologise. She knows better.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, Minister. I will take some advice.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I withdraw. I want to speak on behalf of small businesses without being censored by those opposite who laugh off the impact on mum-and-dad small businesses throughout this state at a time when there is such a low confidence rating amongst business when we need them to be able to employ more people and to give workers more hours, particularly in the hospitality sector.

When I was in Townsville recently with colleagues what did we see? Row after row after row of restaurants with closed doors. This government is out of touch. Those workers are no longer employed in those restaurants. Those restaurants have gone and the shops are empty as a result. What will we see come this Christmas time? There will be some that will open their doors but many that will not, and that is a lost opportunity. That is a lost pay packet—not an increased pay packet—for those who do not get that work. What did we see when this government played around with the Easter holidays? Many businesses in my electorate—it was replicated in regional Queensland and throughout the state and here in Brisbane—could not afford the increase given the way the government fiddled with those holidays.

**Ms Grace:** Rubbish, absolute rubbish! There’s no evidence of that at all.

**Ms SIMPSON:** This minister thinks it is rubbish. This minister has not been looking at the ‘closed’ signs. She says that there is no evidence and that it is complete rubbish. The minister does not care because she is paid off by the unions and is not standing up and speaking for the small businesses. In terms of what we have been told by the mum-and-dad small businesses that have spoken about this through their industry representatives, time after time they have said that they have faced increased burdens. I am speaking in this debate after the Minister for State Development spoke, and he was completely ineffectual when the issue of a 900 per cent increase in the beer tax hit the table.

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Once again, I hear Labor members laughing it off, but when this government brings in new and increased taxes—in this case a 900 per cent increase on craft breweries and distilleries; a lovely, burgeoning industry and a lot of our small business communities—it completely mucks it up. We had to go into bat for those businesses. This government was trying to make out, ‘No, it’s not us; it’s the council.’ One theme comes back time and time again: the government does not care about the impact on the employers and the workers in those jobs. We need small businesses to flourish in this state. We do not need them being kicked in the head, treated with disrespect, laughed off in this chamber and lectured to by Labor members who say, ‘This won’t have a negative impact.’ What universe do they live in? It is certainly not the marketplace and all of those other places where people want jobs.

Queensland has a high youth unemployment rate. It has the worst unemployment rate in Australia. Shame on this Labor government! It is so out of touch. It does not care about the impact on the real workers who need jobs, who need small businesses to flourish, who need a successful local economy. The government cannot employ everybody on the public sector purse. We need good public servants but, if we are to break the back of this damaging unemployment cycle in Queensland, small businesses need to be championed and not spat in the eye with respect to the way in which this government continues to hike up their taxes, hike up their red tape and then laugh it off and say, ‘This doesn’t have an impact.’

I speak to the way in which public holidays are implemented across Australia. There is plenty of evidence to show that Queensland already has an appropriate number of public holidays. We also have more public holidays than many other jurisdictions. We are now finding that this government is adding to that number of public holidays but is not wanting to pay for the cost of that. That cost is going to be paid by those who do not get employed, or who find that their business will not open that night, or by the small business owner and their family who will be the ones who will have to front up and do the work. I think it is a shame that there has been this class warfare with this government, which does not care, does not get it, and will not take responsibility.

*(Time expired)*

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.41 pm): It is not even Thursday and we have the union bashing going on. We are starting early for the last sitting week. I rise to speak proudly in support of the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I congratulate the Minister for Industrial Relations for bringing this bill forward. I am very proud to be part of the Palaszczuk Labor government, which is introducing these changes. After listening to the contribution to this debate by the member for Maroochydore—

**Mr Molhoek** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Pugh): Order! Member for Southport, if I have to say your name again you will be warned. Your repeated interjections are not being taken.

**Mrs D'ATH:** We talk about supporting small business. The best way to support small business is to make sure that workers are earning a decent income to have a disposable income to spend in our local shops, restaurants, cafes and everywhere else. Once again, as we saw in the Howard years, under the Morrison years we are seeing people carrying the highest level of personal debt. Wages are stagnant in this country. Members opposite talk about people tightening their belts and not spending money, which hurts our local communities and our local economies. We have to look at why they do not have a disposable income—because their wages are not growing. We are making sure that people are paid properly for the hours they work. If they are going to be expected to work Christmas Eve, they should be paid properly for it. We also believe that workers should be able to get time with their family. We are supportive of that and those members opposite should be as well.

We should stop—and when I say; ‘we’ I mean those on the other side should stop, because we are not doing it—constantly criticising unions for giving a voice to the voiceless, for giving a voice to those who have an imbalance of power in the workplace where the bosses call the shots and the workers do not have the ability to speak up individually and need to work collectively. That is what unions do. For those who argue about the relevance of unions and their membership numbers, let me say that, in terms of membership, their numbers are far healthier than the membership numbers of political parties in this country. If the members opposite think unions are not relevant, they should look at the membership number of their own party. The LNP is probably even less relevant.

I will back the unions any day. I acknowledge members of the SDA in the gallery who are witnessing this debate today. This bill is important. I acknowledge their campaign. We should be proud of the campaign that has been run to bring this bill before the parliament. That is what unions are about—representing workers and giving them a voice and ensuring that they get these improvements in their wages and conditions. That fight never stops, because we saw it with Work Choices. One hundred years of fighting for good wages and conditions can disappear overnight when you have a bad government. That government ripped those conditions away.

Right now we can see what is happening federally with the Morrison government's union-busting bill that it is trying to put in. The LNP constantly wants to undermine unions. Why? It wants to make sure that workers do not have a say so that wages and conditions can be driven down in this country. What will that do? That will destroy the economy. The LNP wants everyone to be working poor, to not be able to pay the bills. We do not want the American system where people have two or three jobs and still rely on coupons and welfare just to make ends meet. We do not want to be like that. We are proud of our system in this country and this state and we want to hold on to it. If we want small business to flourish, we need to make sure that workers get fair wages and conditions. Then they can put their hand in their pocket so that they can take their family out, buy extra things, buy Christmas presents, give special treats to their family but, more importantly, just put basic food on the table, a roof over their head and pay their bills. They need good wages and conditions to do that.

For me, Christmas is a time for family. I am certain that all of us in this House value the rare opportunity Christmas allows us to be at home with our loved ones. Over recent years the vast increase in retail hours over the Christmas period has meant that workers have found this time increasingly

demanding. The new part-day public holiday for Christmas Eve not only acknowledges the sacrifice being made by those working late on Christmas Eve but also that this time of year is a time for family and a time of celebration.

We should be encouraging families to be together. When we go out and see those workers working on Christmas Eve, we should say 'thank you' and acknowledge their contribution. It is the same situation for those who work on Saturdays and Sundays when we are taking our families out. The people who are serving us in the retail shops and everywhere else are giving up their time to wait on us, to look after us, to serve us. We should say 'thank you'. Some business operators keep the extra loading on weekends instead of paying that loading to their staff. When I see the sign, before I make any decisions about whether to purchase anything I ask the person serving, 'Are you getting paid extra for working today?' If they say 'no,' I walk away. I am not going to be charged an extra fee when that is not going to the workers. We should do more of that.

A number of amendments will be moved in consideration in detail outside the long title of the bill in relation to the Liquor Act 1992. These amendments will enhance the existing ID-scanning framework by providing flexibility on lower risk nights and facilitating a system for scanned persons to leave and re-enter venues without the need to be re-scanned. The relevant amendments were supported in principle in the Palaszczuk government's interim response to the independent evaluation into its tackling alcohol fuelled violence policy, which was tabled in parliament on 26 July 2019.

The independent evaluation found that ID scanning improved safety in safe night precincts. The report also stated that the ID-scanning scheme could be further refined by addressing unintended consequences being experienced by licensees. Amendments will be moved to provide that, between Monday and Thursday, licensees will not have to operate ID scanners if they close at or by 1 am. However, this will not apply on the eve of a public holiday, given the higher patronage and desirable risks associated with trading on those nights.

The QANTEM report also found that there were issues with scanning of patrons on both entry and re-entry, particularly in venues with external smoking or toilet facilities. The government interim response to the evaluation report acknowledged that all venues were affected by ID-scanning re-entry issues to some extent not just those with external facilities. The amendments will provide a re-entry pass system that will apply to all regulated premises for reasons of equity, practicality and consistency. A re-entry pass will only be issued to a patron who has already had their ID scanned upon entry to the venue. It will only apply in respect to the same venue during the same trading period. Particular criteria for the re-entry passes will also apply.

These changes are sensible, pragmatic amendments that maintain the effectiveness of the tackling alcohol fuelled violence policy measures and make it easier for licensees to run their business. The government has consulted extensively with relevant stakeholders and there is significant support for these amendments. I thank the minister for moving these amendments as part of the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill so that we can ensure that these amendments take effect prior to the busy Christmas period. The minister has advocated strongly for improvements not only to make it easier for venue operators and patrons but also to keep our communities safe. The QANTEM report recommended these changes and we now have the right balance. I commend the bill and the amendments to the House.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Pugh): Before I call the member for Chatsworth I will read out Santa's naughty list. We have the members for Kawana, Coomera, Buderim, Nicklin, Southern Downs, Ninderry, Mudgeeraba, Nanango and Bundaberg.

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (12.51 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate of the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. From the outset I congratulate the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee. I note that the committee recommended that the bill be passed and made no other recommendations, whilst the LNP members of the committee provided a dissenting report. I guess there are no real surprises there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you spoke from the floor about your proud family background as it pertained to the labour workforce. Other members, in particular those on the other side of the chamber, have also talked about family members they are very proud of who are involved in the union movement. I take this opportunity to tell the House of the respect I have for my brother who is ideologically completely opposed to my way of thinking. However, we do have in common that we both believe in the rights of the worker: the freedom of collective assembly and the right of a person who does not have the same bargaining power to have someone negotiate on their behalf. I have made it very clear,

coming from a strong union family, that I believe, as much as I think I do, in the essential DNA of people who support the rights of workers. I think it is fair to say that when we have debates in this chamber—and I stand to be corrected on this; it is a bit of a stomach feeling—around 75 per cent of legislation goes through unopposed. Where we tend to disagree is when it relates to industrial relations bills such as we have before us today.

The key objective of this bill, as has been eloquently outlined, is to introduce a part-day public holiday on Christmas Eve, 24 December, from 6 pm to midnight. The explanatory notes state that workers would be entitled to refuse to work in reasonable circumstances or to the payment of public holiday penalty rates where work is performed on Christmas Eve after 6 pm. The essential effect of the declaration of a part-day public holiday on Christmas Eve will be to activate the public holiday provisions of the Commonwealth Fair Work Act 2009 and the Queensland Industrial Relations Act 2016 and the industrial instruments for all employees in the national workplace relations system.

Consultation on the regulatory impact statement, the RIS, was announced in the *Sunday Mail* and commenced in August of this year. The consultation period was four weeks. Looking at both sides of the argument, the RIS arguments for the changes as supported by the government members of the committee, included appropriate penalty rates for workers on Christmas Eve, workers having a right to have the night off and refusing to work unsociable hours, the social benefits that they thought it would bring, as well as potential increased consumer spending.

The flip side, the arguments against the changes, included—and they are important—increased costs for employers, estimated to go from \$41.6 million to \$137 million approximately, including in the public sector, a loss of income and hours for workers if businesses do not open, as well as increased costs for consumers paying a surcharge. Much has been said about the impact on businesses. It is absolutely fine for the minister, particularly with her strong and, she would say, proud union background, to go in to bat for the workers, but it would be naive in the extreme to think that there will not be an impact on businesses.

I am very proud—and it is all very much declared—to have three businesses. In relation to one of them I will be approaching a position very shortly where I will be paying payroll tax. I always make sure that first and foremost I look after the people who look after me. It is a very simple proposition. It does work from both sides of the argument.

There will be impacts on businesses in the private sector. Industries that would be impacted by the declaration of a Christmas Eve public holiday include, but are not limited to, private hospitals, aged and disability care facilities, accommodation services, continuous manufacturing processes that cannot stop—assembly lines or runs of production et cetera—and small and independent retail shops. The large shops that we all know, DDSs and big-box retailers, are required to close in Queensland from 6 pm on Christmas Eve in accordance with the trading hours that Labor changed in 2017 following the Mickel review. These large employers employ other staff as well as night fillers.

One of the key people instrumental in modern industrial relations in this state is the Hon. John Mickel, a former Speaker. He provided a report following a review that he chaired into Queensland's trading hours. Many of us—in fact, I would say the majority of people on this side of the chamber who have had anything to do with him in his current role—say nothing but good things about John Mickel. I know he is held in high regard on the government's side of the chamber. John Mickel is the sort of person you actually listen to. Whether you agree with him time will tell, but you always take time to listen to the man. The issue of a part-day public holiday was considered by the Mickel review in December 2016. While the SDA union—I acknowledge certain members are in the gallery today—supported a part-day public holiday, the organisations representing small business and tourism were opposed to it. The review recommended the non-exempt shops, the large retailers—discount department stores and big box retailers—had to close on 6 pm on New Year's Eve, in that report it was stated—

It is considered that the 6pm closing time is a reasonable compromise which allows most workers to go home at a reasonable hour, balancing costs for all industries if a public holiday was to be declared from 6pm.

The government adopted and legislated this recommendation in 2017. In relation to comparisons interstate, the only other jurisdictions to have a part-day public holiday on Christmas Eve are South Australia and the Northern Territory. In both of those jurisdictions the time is not 6 pm; it is 7 pm till midnight. Both of those jurisdictions also have a part-day public holiday on New Year's Eve, around about the same time. In South Australia the Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve part-day public holidays were introduced in 2012 as part of an agreement between the peak employer and union bodies around extended trading hours.

Whenever looking at any bill before the House it is important to look at the unintended consequences. I urge the government to think long and hard about this change because at the end of the day this goes to the very heart of its mantra of 'jobs, jobs, jobs'. Given that we have the highest unemployment rate in the country I urge the government to give serious thought to the contents of this bill.

Debate, on motion of Mr Minnikin, adjourned.  
Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Further Answer to Question, Drought, Freight and Fodder Subsidies

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (2.00 pm): I rise to make a ministerial statement. Earlier today in question time, the member for Gympie asked a question of the Premier about drought support funding. It is unfortunate that those opposite are trying to make drought assistance a political issue. Earlier this year a report on drought support was authorised and authored by two well-respected industry identities, Ms Ruth Wade and Mr Charles Burke. The report was released in its entirety. The report was subject to extensive engagement with industry, including AgForce and the Queensland Farmers' Federation. Furthermore, as has been repeatedly stated, there will be no change to support for producers receiving drought support for the duration of the current drought.

There seems to be a little bit of confusion or scurrilous scaremongering by those opposite on this report. I will be 100 per cent clear: the Palaszczuk government has cut not one cent from drought support. I will say it again in case those opposite missed it: not one cent has been cut and not one cent will be cut from the drought support for our farmers during this drought. Since the drought began, the Queensland government has committed more than \$740 million to support farmers and drought-affected communities. In the state budget this year, we committed more than \$74 million in additional funding for drought support. It was made very clear at the beginning, and I quote the terms of the reference—

The Palaszczuk Government committed to work with industry to consider future drought models in Queensland and has engaged an independent panel who have been tasked to looking at what can be done during, and prepare for future droughts through a Drought Program Review.

Statements by the LNP members on this matter show that they are either being deliberately mischievous or generally ignorant of the process. I welcome the opportunity to highlight the support the Palaszczuk government has given in this drought to our primary producers. I encourage those opposite to seek the facts on this matter. I am quite prepared to provide a briefing if they need it.

## HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed, on motion of Ms Grace—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (2.02 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution in support of the bill. I commend the minister for introducing this bill into the House, because I think it is proportionate, responsible and very important to a great many Queenslanders who have to work between the hours of 6 pm and midnight on Christmas Eve. That is something that I have done in the past. Quite some time ago, in my teenage years, I was a checkout operator at Franklins. Everyone remembers Big Fresh.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr PEGG:** I take all of those interjections. Luckily, there are not too many photos of me in my fetching uniform that can come back to haunt me. My point is that when you are 15 or 16 years old or even older and you are in insecure employment the reality is that you do not necessarily feel you have a choice as to whether or not you can work the hours you are rostered on, even if you are a casual employee. From my perspective, if I was rostered on I worked for the five-something dollars an hour or whatever it was that I was being paid back in the mid-1990s. In giving workers a right to refuse in reasonable circumstances or receive public holiday penalty rates, the bill is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances.

The reality is that Christmas Eve is a special time. It is a time when families gather together and maybe sing some carols. With the excitement of Christmas—

**Mr Butcher:** Maybe eggnog.

**Mr PEGG:**—they may have a few drinks. In the case of the member for Gladstone, apparently it is eggnog. It is a special time. I remember those Christmas Eve nights when I was happily scanning groceries. People in the Rockhampton Franklins had trollies the size of tanks, or so it seemed to me in my teenage years, as they stocked up—as people tend to do—during a bit of last-minute Christmas shopping, which is completely understandable. I think that workers who work in such industries at those times should have the reasonable right to refuse to work in the circumstances or should get appropriate public holiday rates. It is very reasonable to do that in the span of hours between 6 pm and midnight.

I further note that Queensland is not the only jurisdiction that is looking to do this. Hopefully this bill will be passed and we will introduce this change. It is also in South Australia and the Northern Territory. Certainly we are not alone in implementing this change.

Some members have raised the point that people want to work at that time, which is quite legitimate. People who want to work that span of hours will be able to do that under this legislation. I also accept that not everybody celebrates Christmas. In an electorate such as mine, which is the most multicultural in the state, not everybody celebrates Christmas. People have different religious beliefs, which is fine. However, just as people respect other religious celebrations, they accept that Christmas is a really important time for many people. It is a time for families to come together. Like so many other families, for my family Christmas is probably the only time when we all get together as one, because I have brothers who live interstate and my parents live far away. Christmas is a special time and Christmas Eve is a very special time. I think that should be recognised.

I recognise the work of the SDA, Chris Gazenbeek and the team who I know have been pushing this issue for some time. When I was a checkout operator at Franklins, I was a member of the SDA. I think it is appropriate that we put this legislation in place.

Finally, I refer to the amendments foreshadowed by the Attorney-General to deal with some of the issues with scanners. As a former member of the Legal Affairs Committee, I wholeheartedly support those foreshadowed amendments. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (2.07 pm): 'The case for this proposal is flawed at best and baseless at worst.' That is what the Australian Retailers Association had to say about this bill. Correct me if I am wrong, but that does not sound like a great endorsement. The Australian Retailers Association has 9,500 members with approximately 70,000 shopfronts and it employs 1.3 million people. Therefore, when such an association and other industry groups criticise this bill, the Labor government should listen. We certainly have listened and it is one reason why we will be opposing the bill.

The Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill that I speak on today is a prime example of a desperate Labor government looking for as many distractions as it can get. The only worth that this bill offers our great state is in the money it will take from the pockets of small business owners and jobs it will destroy. With its aim to introduce a half-day public holiday on Christmas Eve, this bill is nothing more than a baseless idea conceived by one of the many union bosses who pulls this Labor government's strings. Could we really expect anything more from the most incompetent and untrustworthy Labor government that Queensland has ever seen?

Before I go further, I thank the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, the secretariat and the many submitters for their contributions. I make special mention of the members for Currumbin and Pumicestone whose dissenting report has greatly assisted in informing debate on the bill.

Let us have a look at this government's contribution to employment and small business in Queensland. Consumer confidence is down. Business confidence is down. Investor confidence is down. In fact, the only figure that has gone up is our state's unemployment rate, which is now at 6.5 per cent. Queensland has the highest number of long-term unemployed of any state. This is not a record Queensland should be proud of.

With nearly 180,000 Queenslanders in the unemployment queue, this Labor government, at the whim of its union mates, now wants to attack our state's biggest employer, small business. Already struggling to cope with slowed business confidence, the additional cost of a half-day public holiday on Christmas Eve is one many businesses just cannot afford. Queensland's leading representative body for small and medium businesses, the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, clearly illustrated this fact through a survey of nearly 800 small businesses. The survey found that 48 of the businesses surveyed would be forced to close on Christmas Eve to avoid the costs this bill would force upon them. A further 26 per cent of businesses would be forced to send staff home. This is little wonder, given the CCIQ estimates this bill would cost the 448,000 businesses that it represents a combined total of \$116 million.

The Queensland Hotels Association were also explicit in their condemnation of the bill. In their submission to the committee, the QHA stated that the decision is 'completely out of touch with the hospitality industry in Queensland' and is one that will negatively impact on regional Queensland, small businesses and the Queensland tourism industry. The group also sought to debunk the claim that the costs associated with this bill could be offset through public holiday surcharges. It stated—

Public holiday surcharges are not acceptable to most consumers. They cannot cover the additional costs anyway in the surcharge. The bill creates that perfect storm to kill off small business: increase costs and reduce your customers.

As the elected representative of several struggling regional communities, I wholeheartedly agree with the QHA's assessment. Already facing the difficulty of operating during the worst drought in living memory, business in the communities I represent simply cannot afford the costs of an additional public holiday. Even those who decide to remain open will inevitably rue that decision. Struggling with the increased cost of living and being taxed all the way to the grave by this Labor government which could not care less about them, many in my community simply do not have the money to spend. Every day regional small businesses shut their doors for the last time, finally unable to cope with the pressure heaped upon them by this anti-workers, anti-regions, pro-union Labor government. This is another reason Queensland already has the highest number of bankruptcies of any state. This bill is another blow.

With these comments from the QHA, it is three from three. Things really are not looking good for this bill. These peak bodies represent those businesses most affected by this bill—three scathing 'endorsements'. That is only the beginning. Clubs Queensland also raised serious concerns about the potential job losses this bill could cause, stating—

The real effect, however, in these clubs and other forms of hospitality is that many clubs will simply choose to close their doors so they do not incur a loss. This negatively impacts staff by way of a reduction in overall shifts and it also affects the loyal clients. This also applies to tourists in some areas. Businesses will also choose to roster skeleton staff.

Meanwhile, regarding the poor consultation of this bill, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council said—

... businesses have planned and budgeted based on existing legislation. Changes this late in the year will impact the bottom line of businesses, will put undue strain on businesses and their employees.

Given the scathing reviews it has received from industry bodies and individual businesses, it is startling that those opposite could even consider passing this bill. It is nothing more than the crazed notion of the power-mad union bosses who really run the state.

This bill serves no purpose other than being a potential nail in the coffin for Queensland's small businesses. As a party determined to protect small businesses and ensure they remain the lifeblood of our state, the LNP has no choice but to vehemently oppose this bill and call on those opposite to do the same. If this Labor government had any integrity left, it would stand up to union bosses and show them that it cannot be controlled this easily. This Labor government needs to reconsider this additional public holiday. It may be very easy to sell to workers who either want to take the time off or earn some extra money for working, but as business after business, together with the industry bodies, has said, businesses cannot afford the additional burden so workers will receive fewer hours and less pay. With the Labor government's record on unemployment, now at 6.5 per cent, the almost 180,000 unemployed are facing a very sad Christmas.

This government should be looking for ways to get people into jobs and to stimulate business. Stop the slide of unemployment. Another reported 14,000 unemployed last month is further proof of the negative effects of Labor's flawed taxing policy. Labor has introduced nine new taxes, costing \$3.5 billion. This bill will be just another cost. As the regulatory impact statement outlined, these changes would include increased costs for employers potentially up to \$136 million including public sector costs of potentially \$21.1 million. There will be loss of income and hours for workers if businesses do not open and increased costs for consumers paying a surcharge.

This policy shows just how desperate the Labor government is. It bounces from one integrity crisis to another—from the weak Premier Palaszczuk to the Deputy Premier—looking for any distraction it can find.

Labor claims that 71 per cent of submitters were in support of this bill, but industry groups representing almost 550,000 businesses were completely opposed. Include those figures in your calculations and it results in a very minor percentage in support. I hope that everyone in this House enjoys a very merry Christmas, because if this bill is passed we can be sure that Queensland's small business owners certainly will not.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stevens): Before I call the member for Ferny Grove, there is far too much conversation going on in the House. If you want to have conversations, I suggest you move out so the rest of us can enjoy the input from the members concerned.

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (2.17 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The committee made one recommendation, and that was to pass this bill. I commend the efforts of the Education, Employment and Small Businesses Committee, particularly the chair of the committee, the member for Nudgee, for her guidance. I thank the submitters and witnesses for their evidence. I also commend Minister Grace and the Palaszczuk government for having the foresight to introduce this bill.

Consultation via a regulatory impact statement was open for 28 days. A total of 1,779 submissions were received, with a majority of 71 per cent supporting the proposal to declare Christmas Eve a part-day public holiday. In referencing the submission from Chris Gazenbeek, SDA Queensland branch Secretary-Treasurer—and I note his attendance and that of his members in the chamber today—it is noted that 89 per cent of SDA members want Christmas Eve to be a part-day public holiday from 6 pm until midnight.

The bill provides that the hours between 6 pm and midnight be designated as a public holiday to provide all workers with deserved time off with family and friends. The bill also provides workers with an entitlement to refuse to work in reasonable circumstances or receive a payment of public holiday penalty rates where work is performed after 6 pm until midnight on Christmas Eve. The bill provides entitlements consistent with other states and territories. Christmas Eve has many values and memories for many people, including those in the chamber.

My own values around the night are spending it with family preparing for the celebration ahead for Christmas Day and going to midnight mass or in later years evening mass at a local parish. Of course our family tradition in the past was that once the children were asleep we would uncover the presents that had been hidden for several days or months and place them under the Christmas tree. Also—and I am sure many of us would agree—time was spent erecting those swing sets, finding the tools to put them up and then finding leftover loose screws and nuts in the dark on completion, finding that some of the tools would not even fit and throwing the instructions to the wind. Nevertheless, we got through it and made those structures possible.

I am sure Christmas Eve holds many values for a lot of people privileged to have the time off before Christmas Day. However, there are thousands of workers who do not have the opportunity to spend time with their loved ones or to attend mass. Some of those workers are in retail, fast-food and warehouse businesses across a vast range of enterprises both large and small. Some of them are our police, our nurses and our frontline responders who watch over us during these festive times. I have had the privilege in my years before entering public office to represent many of those workers in both the police and the warehousing industry. They are hardworking, genuine, decent people.

Consistent with the opposition's dissenting report to this bill, followed by the tired old union-bashing rhetoric, each opposition speaker failed to realise the entitlement. Each and every condition provided to workers in this state, in fact in Australia, has been the result of unions seeking improvements to conditions of employment, health and safety, and superannuation—conditions that even we in this place enjoy.

Unions and Labor governments do not discriminate between workers. The entitlements from this bill will flow on to other workers regardless of their membership of a trade union. The Palaszczuk government governs for all workers. Conversely, those opposite cannot break from their DNA for once and support workers.

In conclusion, as a party that claims to support family values, I urge those opposite to think deeply about the values that they put on being together with their families over Christmas time and extend their support to this bill. I call on everyone to support these workers. Do not be a Grinch. Support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (2.21 pm): I rise to make a contribution in opposition to the amendments put forward in the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, other than of course the last-minute minor amendments we have seen to ID-scanning laws. To make 24 December a public holiday from 6 pm to midnight is a costly way to welcome Christmas for a tourist city like the Gold Coast. Small businesses are already having a hard enough time under this government, particularly hospitality businesses. Although this only impacts a few hours on one day of the year, it is another hit they cannot afford. As several of my colleagues have quoted, the Australian Retailers Association summed up the proposed changes well in saying that the 'case for this proposal is flawed at best and baseless at worst'.

The Gold Coast runs on tourism, and that is especially so during holiday periods. The tourism industry employs one in six Gold Coasters and generates around 14 per cent of our gross regional product. We are Australia's fourth most visited destination. Visitors to our city eat out at cafes and restaurants, they go to bars and they shop. These amendments will hurt tourism on the Gold Coast. We need these venues to stay open so tourists can enjoy what we have to offer over the Christmas period. The last thing the Gold Coast needs is to have businesses close during one of the busiest times of the year. We do not want people trying to turn up to venues that simply cannot afford to open. It will be like the ghost town we saw during the Commonwealth Games all over again but thankfully just for one night and not for weeks.

Many businesses would most likely choose to close instead of incurring the increased costs that come with opening on a public holiday. They will eschew opening and putting on staff which will mean fewer shifts for some of our lowest paid workers, completely going against what the government wants to achieve. I worked for many years in the hospitality industry and saw firsthand how public holidays often mean fewer staff working. If the venue even opens, it becomes a case of a small number of casual staff being put on, or the managers or other staff who are full-time or part-time who may not have to be paid the same rates working in their place.

Many of these businesses run on small margins and they cannot afford any extra expense like this. Christmas Eve is a time for families, but the result of this change for some will mean that many small business people will have to work because they cannot afford to pay wages for their staff. This already happens on other public holidays and even on Sundays for many of my local businesses. These people are not the top end of town. Particularly in a place like the Gold Coast, these small business owners are the very definition of everyday Queenslanders.

The Queensland Hotels Association found that 100 per cent of their polled members said that if the cost of opening became more expensive they would close or reduce the shifts of their staff. Clubs Queensland is expecting many of their member clubs to close too, with the added costs likely to be around \$750,000. That is lost shifts for people in my area.

It is interesting to see that at the same time these businesses are being hit there might finally be some small relief in the ID scanner space for venues that have to use them. Changes in this space are long overdue, and frankly it is too little too late. Broadly with these changes there is a large cost to implementing them as well and it will have to overwhelmingly fall onto the private sector. Modelling provided by the government predicts that the cost of wages under these amendments will be between \$41.3 million and \$136.9 million. This is split roughly into a cost to the public sector of between \$9.5 million and \$21.1 million and between \$31.9 million and \$115.8 million for private enterprises. These are pretty big differences in potential costs to businesses. It shows that this amendment has been poorly planned and its impact is not fully understood.

Businesses are already facing sluggish and costly conditions. The Pulse Survey undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland has reported that the general business vibe in Queensland is at its lowest levels on record and continues to weaken. I want to see businesses grow and prosper. I have some excellent restaurants, cafes and clubs in my area and they work hard to survive—places like the Grand Hotel; the Arundel Tavern; the 'Parky Tav'; Tonic and Ground N Sound at Chirn Park; Lambar Pizza, which I visit far too often; and one of the oldest and best fish and chip shops on the coast in Harley's at Labrador. They should not have to work any harder to make ends meet. This will be an unwelcome Christmas surprise for them.

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.26 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be shocked and amazed—and I am sure the entire House will be—to find that I support this legislation. I am similarly shocked—and I should not be after nearly five years in this place—but I continue to be shocked at the vitriol towards the trade union movement by those opposite. It is an attitude that I find perplexing and hard to understand. After all, a union is just a collection of workers who are trying to improve their workplace and, by extension, society.

If we look at what these miscreants have achieved in Australia over the past 150 years, I could understand why people are shocked and amazed at the Australian trade union movement: fair wages and safety in the workplace. These are the crazy fools who came along and said we should not continue to use asbestos and, in fact, we should compensate those people who had been damaged by asbestos. These are the people who said we should provide universal health care to people in this country so that every single Australian, whether they are a union member or not, have the opportunity to have decent quality health care. They are the people who make sure that parents have the time to care for newborn children by having parental leave. They are the people who said we should have a universal retirement system in superannuation. How many trillions of dollars do we now have available for investment thanks to these crazy fools from the union movement?

We all want to talk about the cost of the union movement, but we should not forget the massive increases that have been achieved in productivity thanks to the willingness of the union movement to work sensibly with employers to improve productivity. I think one of the stand-out unions in that vein is the SDA. My brother has been a retail worker for over 30 years. I am proud to say that in this country he enjoys perhaps the best working conditions of retail workers. That is thanks in no small part, in fact entirely, to the very hard work of the SDA.

How have they achieved this? I thought those opposite would welcome and support people who engage in sensible industrial relations, building sensible relationships with employers, sorting out problems sensibly and pushing constantly to improve the working conditions of their members. If my brother were in any other country in the world, he would probably be amongst the working poor. Instead, he has had a dignified life being able to pay off a house, being able to lead a decent life. When the SDA comes along and says there is something that we need to consider, I certainly listen. I am glad that those on this side of the House do as well. I would like to thank the minister for taking the time to understand this issue.

I want to talk about what this issue means for workers in the workplace because, much like the member for Stretton, this is an issue I am familiar with through my previous line of work before I came into this place. I am one of those people who has had to work through every public holiday that we have in this place. I can tell you that as a worker it is incredibly depressing when people around you are talking about what they are going to be doing at Christmas and what is going to happen on Boxing Day. You know how excited they are to be going off to the Woodford Folk Festival and what is going to happen on New Year's Eve. You say to yourself, 'Great! I've got three lates, an early and a night duty. Won't that be an exciting way to spend Christmas!' It is a special pain, and I only felt it in the last 10 years or so. When you have to say goodbye to your kids on Christmas Day and go to work it is not a fun experience. I believe firmly in my soul that people who have to do that deserve a penalty rate for being asked to do so. It does not matter whether you are doing this, as I was, to provide an essential service or whether you are simply doing something that provides a better quality of life and luxury for the rest of the community—if you are working on those days you deserve that opportunity.

In my experience, there were many nurses—particularly from certain cultural groups—for whom Christmas Eve was a particularly important time, so when those people were rostered to work on Christmas Eve it was very difficult for them. As a nurse, once the roster is posted if you get shifts that do not fit your schedule you try to swap them. Many nurses would hope and pray they got Christmas Day off. When they suddenly found they had to work Christmas Day they would approach other nurses to ask, 'Would you mind swapping a shift?' If there was a penalty rate attached to that shift your chances of getting someone to swap with you were much increased, but your chances of getting someone to swap Christmas Eve with you were mostly nil. Many workers were deeply distressed that, at a time when they would normally be undertaking religious observances, celebrating with their family or doing things important to their culture, they were instead at work—and not only having to work, but receiving no penalty rates. This is a really important step forward and I am happy to support this bill.

I want to finish by saying that as a shiftworker of many, many years, whenever I hear people talking about penalty rates saying that, 'We've moved on as a society. Our society doesn't operate that way anymore,' I say to you that that is one of the most offensive and ridiculous things you can ever say to a shiftworker. Anybody who has had to say, 'Sorry, kids, I won't be home until four o'clock on Christmas afternoon,' or 'Yes, I'm coming home at seven o'clock in the morning, but I'm going to have to be in bed by eight o'clock in the morning because I need to go to work that night,' knows that we are a society that operates 9 to 5, Monday to Friday.

Banks do not open on weekends. Industrial relations commissions and courts do not open on weekends. Generally speaking, we do not hold weddings on Tuesdays. Sporting events for the kids are all held on weekends. While we have those things in place, while we are a Monday-Friday society—and I can say proudly that we are a Monday-Friday society because of the union movement—people who are forced to work on weekends should be recognised and given penalty rates. It is absolutely disgraceful that people have lost those, thanks to the federal government. This legislation is an important step forward for our government. It is an example of not only how we value penalty rates but also how we are prepared to look at sensible extensions. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.33 pm): I rise to address the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, which would create a six-hour public holiday between 6 pm and midnight on Christmas Eve. Holidays are a time for family. If your family observes Christmas celebrations and if you are lucky enough to have the means to do so, 24 December is a really precious time: presents under

the tree and the breathless anticipation of kids who do not want to go to bed for fear of missing Santa. If your family does not observe Christmas, then summer holidays are still special. It is an amazing time of year to enjoy our beautiful summer weather across the state with family and loved ones.

At the 2017 state election the Greens proposed four new public holidays including State of Origin Day and International Women's Day, which were, of course, criticised at the time as being absolutely crazy. I am honestly very pleased to see that Labor has picked up on this small part of our plan. They have gone for six hours as opposed to four days, but we will enjoy these baby steps. It is unusual to be able to quite so precisely calculate how much of the Greens' policy it is that Labor has pinched, but this time we have exactly one sixteenth. Of course there will be a financial impact from a new public holiday, and no-one is pretending otherwise. The effects will be different for different people: full-time and shiftworkers will get a day off; some service sector businesses will charge public holiday surcharges; and some will choose not to open, which will boost trade for others. It is a mixed bag, but let's look at it in context.

Corporate profits are at all-time highs. The share of national income going to wages is at its lowest level since the 1950s. There is a very good reason why we have 12 public holidays in Queensland; there is a very good reason why we have a five-day work week instead of six. Quite simply, the reason is that after a long struggle that was fiercely opposed by those in charge we came together as a society and decided that there are some things that are more important than work such as family, time to rest, time for learning and time for our loved ones. There has been much talk already today about whether folks who work on Christmas Day deserve penalty rates for giving up that special time with friends and family, and I agree that they do, but I believe that it is about more than that. It is about how we encourage and allow everyone to spend more time doing the things they love.

The reality is that we live our lives in the spaces that are created between work on weekends and holidays. While we are debating a new public holiday—a small piece of our lives we can reclaim from work—it is easy to forget the history. It was just over 70 years ago in 1948 that the two-day weekend began. Before that we had a standard six-day working week. In 1986, just over 30 years ago, Australians won the 38-hour work week. That number has not moved at all since then. On the other hand, as the member for Greenslopes mentioned before, productivity has nearly doubled. We produce twice as much per hour of work as we did in 1986. We are creating far more wealth, but for most of us wages are flat and we are still working as long.

In the context of this bill a few extra holidays might help, but the real solution is bigger and more ambitious. I believe the time is right to take the next step. Workers, the labour movement, families and civil society should begin to push for a four-day working week with no loss of pay. Obviously, this would have to happen at a federal level and it will not be achieved overnight, but at the same time I believe that the state government should show some leadership by investigating a trial, perhaps within one of our great public hospitals or aged-care facilities. That would mean bringing on more staff to maintain current service levels. That is a big investment in jobs for those who need them, and it is great opportunity for Queensland to be a trailblazer. In fact, some businesses have already started trialling a four-day work week—or, as I prefer to call it, the three-day weekend. There is a genuine proven productivity benefit when workers are better rested.

I will conclude by saying again that I have no hesitation in supporting this bill. As I have outlined, I believe that we should aim to reclaim even more of our lives from work.

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (2.37 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The purpose of this bill is simple: to protect a special time of year. It is formal recognition that the night before Christmas is as important to families as Christmas morning.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Wait until I get to you, member for Kawana. When this legislation was raised publicly, the most common response I heard was surprise that the law did not already exist. Christmas Eve counts as a time for churches and community; for friends and family; for putting together train sets and trampolines and trikes and bikes with training wheels; for putting out a carrot for the reindeer and a glass of milk and a rum ball for Santa; for midnight mass and Christmas carols. It is for all the things that make Christmas Christmas. It is a time for making memories.

For emergency workers, police, paramedics, nurses, fireys and all those who work Christmas Eve, it provides recognition that a Christmas shift means sacrificing all of those things. For those who work or open a business this legislation allows for penalty rates and, for hospitality businesses, surcharges to cover them. Anyone worried about the commercialisation of Christmas need only listen

to the contributions of those opposite on this bill. I wonder if the member for Kawana will insist on working on Christmas Eve because he believes it to be no different than any other night. If it is good enough for the member for Kawana to celebrate Christmas Eve with friends and family and his Elvis Christmas album, then it is good enough for the rest of us.

I want to pay tribute to Chris Gazenbeek because Chris organised a meeting for me with the distribution warehouse workers who work at Larapinta. They work long and they work hard and they are away from their families and friends the night before Christmas. This recognises the hard work that they do because they will get to make a little bit more.

Our legislation has no impact on the late night and very early morning shopping hours that have proven so popular in addressing the Christmas rush—a fact I would draw to the member for Kawana's attention if he has left his secret Santa shopping until the last minute. I know the Minister for Industrial Relations will be very disappointed if she misses out again.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Oh, they are so jealous.

**Mr Hinchliffe:** It's the ghost of Christmas past.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right. It is the ghost of Christmas past. I believe Queensland is blessed with employers who recognise the significance of Christmas Eve, just as they do—

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stevens): Member for Kawana, you are consistently interrupting and it is being repetitive. The Premier has the floor. Please let her continue.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The tourism and hospitality industries will be as popular as they are during Easter and other holidays. It is 28 days until Christmas. That came as a bit of a shock to me. Do not forget, member for Kawana, that Santa is looking at who is being naughty and nice—very, very naughty, member for Kawana.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! May we return to the bill, please.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The fact that that might come as a shock tells you there is something wrong with our society. All the technology designed to keep us better in touch has instead driven us further apart. A measure like this says some things are still important and always should be. Christmas is worth protecting. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (2.42 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. No-one in this chamber would deny an employee and their family the right to spend time together and no-one with common sense would deny an employer the right to spend time with their family and earn a living, but a balance has to be struck between the two. Let us call the bill for what it really is. It is a business-bashing amendment bill, it is a bill that attacks business, and it is a bill that is driven by the union movement, which the ALP kowtow to and are answerable to.

The member for Kawana yesterday outlined in this chamber that money had been paid via the union to the ALP, and that has not been disputed. The core of this whole bill comes back to one thing. What the unions want, the ALP give. It does not matter what the impact is on businesses, and it does not matter what the impact is on the owners of businesses, their employees or in fact their family. It does not matter one iota. It is amazing that this ALP government still ties its shirt tails to the union movement. After some of the statements made by the CFMMEU and Sally McManus, it is astounding that this government still is prepared to tie its tails to the union moment. I remember very clearly that the CFMMEU made a comment in a protest movement that was reported that they would rape children.

**Government members:** What?

**Mr McARDLE:** It was in the paper. Not only that; the response by the Premier was that that was unacceptable. That is the toughest she could get. She acknowledged the comment, and the toughest she could get was saying that it was unacceptable. What did Sally McManus say? The secretary of the ACTU said—

I believe in the rule of law where the law is fair, when the law is right. But when it's unjust, I don't think there's a problem with breaking it.

She is going to be the arbiter of what is fair and just.

**Ms GRACE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. My point of order is relevance. This is a bit of union bashing and he is right off the topic. Can we bring him back to the bill please?

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

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stevens): I will deal with the first point of order. There is a slight nexus between what the member for Caloundra is putting forward currently as I am hearing. I will hear now the point of order from the member for Caloundra.

**Mr McARDLE:** It was about the point of order raised by the minister. In fact, at page 10 of the report a comment is made by the—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Caloundra, I am quite happy to deal with the member for McConnel, so please continue your speech.

**Mr McARDLE:** As I said before, the secretary of the ACTU in essence has said that it is fine to break the law. This is the same mob that the ALP support, and that shows a direct kowtow to the union movement. John Mickel was an esteemed member of this House. As a Labor minister, he was a tough man in the House but he was a fair man. As a Speaker, he was a tough man and a fair man.

**Mr Power:** Relevance.

**Mr McARDLE:** I will take the interjection. The report refers to the Mickel review, and therein lies the relevance. He was an honourable man who provided a report. He looked at this matter in particular and found that it was not a matter he could endorse. He thought the balance came down on a 6 pm end of day, not a part-day public holiday. That is a fair comment. That legislation was passed by this Labor government in this parliament back in 2017. There has been no reason given as to why that change has now occurred, except that the Labor movement is kowtowing again to the union movement.

Some 15,000 businesses are likely to be impacted. They are mum-and-dad businesses in many cases. Many are on the Sunshine Coast and many may not open their doors. They may not be able to trade and the employees as a consequence will indeed lose income. The most amazing thing, though, is that the minister stood in this House yesterday and said that the increase in wage costs because of this would range between \$31.9 million and \$115.8 million and that the lower end is more likely. That loss is borne by Queenslanders. That increase in wages is borne by mums and dads. They have to pay out of their pocket an additional \$31.9 million because of this government's determination to push through this legislation.

That does not matter to this government. It does not matter that the small business owners of this state are going to suffer as a consequence of this particular piece of legislation. That is not taken into account. That is not considered. That is not important because they are not important to the Labor government.

Business owners are not important to this Labor government. The backbone of this state are business owners and small business owners. The Labor government and the minister do not care. She can write off \$31.9 million to business owners. She does not care one iota. It comes from the employers, it comes from the family. It does not come from the government and they do not care. Labor will tax business into poverty. At the end of the day, the LNP is the only party that cares about big business.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr McARDLE:** The minister can gesticulate and comment as much as she likes. She cannot deny the fact that these employers will fork out an additional \$31.9 million. She cannot deny that fact. That is the minimum. She has no care, no consideration and no obligation because the ALP kowtow to the unions.

I am also aware that amendments have been tabled in the House in relation to ID scanners, in particular relaxing obligations between Monday and Thursday of each week. We will support—and we should support—those amendments. They are rational, they are decent, they are effective and they impact all sectors. However, to put them in this bill when they have no correlation and no connection whatsoever to the substance of the bill is wrong. As good as those amendments are, they are being moved to a bill that is corrupt. Because of that, the whole of the bill including those proposed amendments cannot be supported. You cannot divide the bill into sections. As a consequence, the bill along with the proposed amendments cannot be supported.

At the end of the day, this is a tax on small business—mums and dads across the state—and the impact will be felt on the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast, in Brisbane and right across this state. The government simply bowed to the wishes of the unions yet again and they will do it over and over again. Come the election in 2020 I hope there will be a change in this state whereby we will get a Deb Frecklington LNP government to change the course of the economic and other directions of Queensland.

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.51 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the bill. This bill is about people and families. Christmas is only weeks away and my family has already started to prepare for Christmas Day. My family is like many other families in Queensland. For us, Christmas celebrations begin on Christmas Eve. We all attend church vigil services. It has long been a tradition for a couple of generations for all the children to have ice cream spider drinks when they get home as a Christmas celebration. Unfortunately, some of my family are shiftworkers and are required to work on Christmas Day. They do not enjoy not being able to spend time with the rest of the family—and I come from a big family; there are heaps of us—but they always get that bonus whereby they are recognised for the work they do in the form of penalty rates.

Christmas is important not just for my family but for our society. It is a time to celebrate and to embrace our communities. Declaring a public holiday will recognise the personal, social and religious and cultural significance of the Christmas celebrations that commence on Christmas Eve and so, too, it will recognise the importance of that evening to spend time with family and friends and to prepare for Christmas Day.

When this bill was introduced into the parliament, there was a mix of reactions from my community. The Mackay Chamber of Commerce was against this bill. They said it will force businesses to close and people will lose income. I gave them a commitment that I would listen to the community to see what the electorate of Mackay was saying. On my Facebook page there was a very positive reaction to this six-hour public holiday on Christmas Eve. In our local paper the *Daily Mercury* the majority of SMSs were in favour of the half-day public holiday. Once upon a time the Christmas Eve mass was at midnight.

**Mr Power:** Earlier and earlier.

**Mrs GILBERT:** Now more frequently it is held earlier on the evening of Christmas Eve; the mass I go to starts at six o'clock. Families want time together to prepare for the Christmas Day celebrations whether in a religious way or just to get ready for the arrival of Santa. Seriously, it is a time for families.

There has been wide consultation, and not just with my community and the people I have met with and spoken to. We have heard from unions, employer groups and churches. The outcome of the consultation—the weight of it—has been in favour of this public holiday. We are living in a time when change is so swift and people are experiencing increases in stress and mental health issues so we need time and to put people in front of profits. We need time to stop. We need time to celebrate. We need to get in touch with what is important. Sometimes people are more important than profits. Our communities are important and we need to be with those we love.

My community in general has said to me that they do not want to spend Christmas Eve out there shopping; they have been to our local shopping centres that open to midnight for a week before Christmas. They have done all the shopping they want to do. They want an opportunity to stop, relax and be with the people they love. Those who need to work on Christmas Eve deserve to be rewarded. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (2.55 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. This bill was introduced into the House and referred to the committee on 19 September 2019 with the committee reporting on 4 November. Unlike a lot of legislation that comes into this House, this one has come back very, very quickly.

The LNP will be opposing this bill, which creates increased costs to both employers and consumers. The committee recommended the bill be passed with no other recommendations. A dissenting report was provided by the LNP members of the committee. The key objective of this bill is to introduce a part-day public holiday for Christmas Eve from 6 pm through to midnight. The explanatory notes state that workers would be entitled to: refuse to work in reasonable circumstances or to the payment of public holiday penalty rates if work is carried out on Christmas Eve after 6 pm.

In August 2019 the government released the consultation RIS and then published a decision regulatory impact statement in December 2019 prior to the bill being introduced into the Legislative Assembly. There were 28 days provided for the consultation RIS process, which closed on 2 September 2019. In total, 1,779 submissions were received. Of the 1,271 submissions that were in support, 1,149 were provided by the members of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association. Of the 508 submissions that opposed it, 422 were provided by the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland. Some submitters expressed concerns about the department's consultation process, noting that many submissions to the consultation were single-line comments, which seemed fairly inadequate.

With reference to the explanatory notes to the bill, the additional annual wages cost to the Queensland government for the state's public sector was estimated to be within the range of \$9.4 million to \$21 million. These figures pale into something less significant when we consider the estimated additional annual wages for the Queensland private sector are in the range of \$31.9 million to \$115.8 million. The difference between these estimates is staggering. However, one thing we have learned through bitter experience with this Palaszczuk Labor government is to always expect the worst, so the higher figure is the more likely cost.

An analysis of businesses by the department provided that 15,338 Queensland businesses would likely be impacted by the changes. Former Speaker John Mickel provided a report in December 2016 on a review into Queensland's trading hours, which included the issue of a part-day public holiday. While the union supported a part-day public holiday, organisations representing small business and tourism were opposed. In response, the review recommended that non-exempt shops—large retailers—had to close by 6 pm on Christmas Eve. The report stated—

It is considered that the 6pm closing time is a reasonable compromise which allows most workers to go home at a reasonable hour, balancing costs for all industries if a public holiday was to be declared from 6pm.

The government adopted and legislated this recommendation in 2017. In 2019 Queensland had 12 public holidays.

Submissions opposed to the proposed public holiday were received from Clubs Queensland, National Retail Association, Retail Drinks Australia, Hotel & Tourism Management, Australian Retailers Association, Restaurant & Catering Australia, Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland and Queensland Tourism Industry Council—all major employers. The LGAQ submission states—

... several councils have expressed concern on the likely impact on small businesses in their communities ...

It concludes—

... the case for the granting of an additional part-date public holiday has not yet been made.

Further, Clubs Queensland advised that most community clubs would trade at a loss if they were to open on a Christmas Eve public holiday and that many community clubs would therefore consider closing at 6 pm. As a result, those employees who ordinarily would have worked that evening would lose shifts and income.

In short, this bill will cost jobs and will increase prices for consumers. It is yet another display of the Palaszczuk Labor government's pro-union, anti-worker and anti-small-business agenda. In the public hearing, the Australian Retailers Association stated—

The case for this proposal is flawed at best and baseless at worst.

These laws are being debated at a time when Queensland has the highest unemployment rate in the nation, with over 117,000 Queenslanders in the unemployment queue. The bill is being rushed in for this Christmas, ahead of the state election next year, to appease the unions—yet again. Two of Queensland's largest employer groups in the service sector that will bear the brunt of this bill are opposed to its introduction. I refer to the Queensland Hotels Association and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council.

Right now in the Condamine electorate, the last thing any small business needs is extra costs and the last thing that consumers need is extra costs. Cafes, restaurants, accommodation providers, clubs and hotels are already feeling the pinch of the enduring drought. Adding the burden of another public holiday with penalty rates could be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

Under this Palaszczuk Labor government, Queensland is now leading the nation in business bankruptcies, accounting for 30 per cent of all bankruptcies in the nation. This bill will only add to that figure, putting additional costs on already struggling businesses. This government has no plans to help small business grow or to boost jobs.

There are 150 workers in the Condamine electorate who would love the opportunity to work on Christmas Eve but who have been put on permanent holidays thanks to this Palaszczuk government's refusal to grant approvals for stage 3 of New Hope's Acland coalmine. These people would love to work on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Day or any day—including tomorrow—but they are being denied by this government. It is in this government's power to give these people the jobs they need. The government has the ability to do it. There is nothing to stop it from doing it. Members opposite say that they are the party for workers—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stevens): Member for Condamine, can you return to the bill, please.

**Mr WEIR:** They need to support this. Those workers do not need to be on permanent holidays. I oppose the bill.

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (3.02 pm): Today I rise to speak in support of the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It is very difficult to deny that there is an entrenched power imbalance between employees and employers in this country. I watch with disdain as our society, through highly advanced times such as these, continues to see employers lobby and advocate for their ever-increasing profitability at the expense of some of the lowest paid and most vulnerable workers in our community. If ever we wanted a test case for the overuse and overreach of the entrenched power, we need only glimpse at the competing tensions explored through this committee's examination of the bill—a bill that seeks to provide protections and payment for employees on Christmas Eve.

Despite a brief participation in these proceedings I witnessed much reference by participants to the Christmas period, but we need to acknowledge that this period is not for 24 hours; it starts with Christmas Eve. Regardless of religious observance, this is a time of togetherness, a time to be with family and friends, a time to travel to loved ones, a time to attend religious and cultural events, a time to stop and rest. For so many in our community, it remains no different to any other time—a time of work, a time away from loved ones, a time to earn the precious dollars that do not stretch as far as they used to. For so many in my community and every community, Christmas Eve remains the persistent grind of work and toil. This bill changes that.

The bill recognises that this time of year is about more than profits and is about more than the daily grind. Christmas Eve should be a time when workers have enshrined protections to be able to refuse work. Christmas Eve should be recognised as a time when work attracts an additional payment. This bill recognises a cohort of workers who, by and large, have already been robbed of their penalty rates, who have been told by this country's federal LNP government that the work they do is now less valued. Now they are even lower paid, as the profitability of their bosses is more important and is the priority.

**Mr Lister** interjected.

**Ms BOYD:** I take the interjection of the member for Southern Downs. The federal LNP government did nothing to stand up for low-paid workers throughout the Fair Work process. Further, the Morrison government entertains continued calls from industry to keep cutting rates of pay in what is an atrocious race to the bottom, one that the LNP in Queensland obviously wholeheartedly supports.

Doom and gloom abounds when talking to industry representatives, while they are consciously ripping rates of pay off their workers. Industry cries foul that mum-and-dad small businesses would rather work themselves on Christmas Eve than pay others, would close their doors or would reduce hours. These are cited as 'dire consequences' by industry representatives who personify a one-eyed economic approach to community. They just do not get it. This is about affording people time for rest and family and about giving them proper remuneration if they elect to work. It is about enshrined protections if they choose not to work. It is about putting families before profits. It is a matter of morality.

Rather than industry seeing this as an opportunity for six hours in the day to say to staff, 'We value that you are here, that you have taken time from your family; we appreciate you,' we once again see these employer associations leap into vehement opposition. Not only is it the hand that feeds these workers; seemingly it is also the hand that will bite them. In an obviously twisted, dysfunctional, domineering relationship, we continue to see a line out the door of employers and industry groups happy to front up at every opportunity to throw their workforce under the bus.

Unrelenting in their pursuit to rip away wages through decaying industry penalty rates, these employer associations fail to appreciate that their strip and slash approach is the very thing that is threatening their profitability. We see industry groups hand on heart saying, 'We have not had the advantage of our workforce's penalty rates being decimated like we wanted, like we asked for, so we should be exempt because we have to pay one-quarter more on some days.' These very groups are banging on the door of the Morrison LNP federal government and saying, 'Right now, times are tough; help us go further with cutting our workers' wages.' I am willing to bet that the minute economic circumstances improve they will not be down there banging on the door of any government to pull the strings at Fair Work to reinstate penalty rates that they robbed from hardworking Queenslanders.

These very groups sat in a hearing to tell members of this place that their industry voice was not loud enough because through the RIS consultation process they had only one say and that their voice should be louder than someone who made an individual, concise submission. Some employer associations argued that, given the census data regarding religious participation, the existing public

holidays provided ample opportunity, that employers through good management and rostering would accommodate the provision of leave. We know that this simply is not the case. It is not the lived reality for so many Queenslanders. It was not my reality when I worked in hospitality and in retail.

We are left with a vulnerable, underappreciated, often abused workforce becoming ever more vulnerable, underappreciated and abused. It is not okay. It is not a formula that will continue to see profits flow to the pockets of the powerful. It is bereft of morality and it needs to change. Workers in my community and indeed across the state deserve better, and it is in this government that they find that. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (3.09 pm): ‘Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.’ That will be the story of businesses throughout the length and breadth of Queensland come Christmas Eve 2019 because of this Labor government—this weak Labor government—that cannot hold the line against its union paymasters. We all enjoy a break. Holidays are something that all of us look forward to, and I am sure that there are many in this place who will be looking forward to spending some time with their family and friends over Christmas. This legislation is not about holidays. The word ‘holiday’ is being used for branding purposes only. This legislation is purely and simply about a weak government kowtowing to its paymasters in the union movement—a government on the ropes, a government bereft of ideas, not that it ever had any, and desperate to hold onto the trappings of power without actually doing anything to benefit Queensland as a state and Queenslanders collectively.

**Mr Saunders** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** If the member for Maryborough came up with an idea it would be the first one, but we are not holding our breath in respect of the member for Maryborough, and nor are the people of Maryborough holding their breath waiting for the member for Maryborough!

This is a government on the ropes and bereft of ideas, as I said. The policy rationale put forward in the explanatory notes is weak—in fact, so weak as to be almost laughable. The rationale is continued into one of the most lame examples of a consultation regulatory impact statement I have ever read. It would not pass a grade 12 economics exam. There is no mention of economic benefits, no mention of employment benefits, no mention of business benefits or even the much bandied around flow-on benefits that are often talked about in regulatory impact statements, and we know why that is: because other than some trite, fuzzy and unprovable and unsupported statements about recognising the importance of Christmas Eve, this bill only comes with costs.

This bill comes with costs to taxpayers and it comes with costs to businesses of all sizes, but particularly small businesses in the cafe and restaurant sector, the takeaway food services sector, the pubs and clubs sector, the accommodation sector and small supermarkets employing fewer than 20 people like the IGA in my part of the world. It comes with costs to employees in lost wages because the businesses that they might have worked for on Christmas Eve may well now decide not to open. In fact, you only needed to be at the Queensland Hotels Association event last night and speak to some of the publicans there who were forthright in saying that, given the costs and given the trade, they are not going to open because it is not worth it anymore. That is direct evidence from people who actually write the cheques out from their own pockets to pay the wages and who care about their staff who are making a decision now about Christmas Eve. There will be costs to employees in lost wages because the businesses that they might have worked for on Christmas Eve have decided not to open.

This was a regulatory impact statement that relied on material from South Australia in 2013—more than half a decade ago at the end of the GFC. This is a regulatory impact statement that ignores the costs that were identified in Victoria in 2015 when it was considering exactly the same thing and decided not to implement a part public holiday on Christmas Eve. The RIS that accompanied this legislation is laughable and one of the weakest and laziest examples of a RIS I have ever seen. It is a regulatory impact statement designed to do one thing only, and that is to support the government’s otherwise unsupportable decision. If we adopt the reasoning in that RIS, what next? Are we going to have a part day holiday before Anzac Day? Many Australians would argue that they travel to be at services or to be with family and friends to commemorate the sacrifice that those family and friends made that they want to remember. What are we going to see next time? What about a part day holiday before Labour Day? Is that going to happen—a part day holiday for Labour Day?

**Mr Brown** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I note that the member for Capalaba would be marching in the streets with the comrades over that one, although he might not be marching with the CFMMEU—and certainly the Treasurer will not be. Nonetheless, what next? Perhaps a part-day holiday on the eve of the Queen’s

birthday for my friend the member for Kawana? Indeed, what I have been able to demonstrate by making those ridiculous statements is just how ridiculous it is, because everyone in this place laughed at the absurdity of it and it is absurd in this piece of legislation as well. It is not supported by the RIS in that respect, so all of the reasoning for it is not supported by anything like evidence that is either measurable, quantifiable or testable.

I have three kids and two of them work as casual part-timers in service industries. One of them is a night packer and a night stacker at one of our major supermarket chains and the other one of them works on weekends and public holidays at Eagle Farm and Doomben for Tabcorp. They are both extremely grateful for the work that they get and the income that they receive, and both work outside normal nine to five hours. Both work either weekends, public holidays or night shifts. My daughter, who is in grade 11, has applied for part-time work after school as well.

I do not need a RIS or the Office of Industrial Relations or this minister—and they certainly do not—to tell them or to tell us what is in their best interests. They know and we know what that is, and that is a job—a job that pays with fair and reasonable conditions and a job that gives them a sense of achievement, money in their account and the opportunity to be independent. That is the thing that young people look for when they go looking for jobs, and predominantly—not always, but predominantly—it is young people who are in those sorts of jobs. Under this proposed law, that chance for many young people will be substantially less and the opportunity to earn that income will be substantially less and the opportunity for that independence will be substantially less.

That last pay packet before Christmas—that last bit of extra spending money—is what is at stake under this legislation for so many employees if a business decides to close, and let us not forget that 48 per cent of the CCIQ responses to the survey it carried out indicated that they would not open on Christmas Eve because of this, and even if that is exaggerated, even if it is 30 per cent, that is 30 per cent of small businesses in Queensland—and there are 411,000 small businesses in Queensland—that will not be open and that will not be paying someone. They will not be paying them that extra \$80 to \$200 that they would have received for working that evening from six o'clock until midnight, and that is not counting the gratuities and tips that would have been available, because we should not forget that most of those businesses are in hospitality, food and takeaway, restaurants and pubs and clubs.

It is not just the wage they were getting but all the tips and gratuities and other benefits that flow from working on that evening, and this at a time when unemployment is going up—and we just need to look at yesterday's *Courier-Mail*—and at a time when Queensland has the highest unemployment rate in Australia both seasonally and trend, and when business confidence is at its lowest according to the CCIQ since the height of the GFC. However, we should not expect any less than that from a minister who only two and a bit years ago told us, 'I don't know what you can do about youth unemployment. The problem is always with us.' That is the excuse.

I can tell the people of Queensland: there will always be youth unemployment as long as we have this minister in charge who kowtows to the interests of the unions and does not stand up for the interests of employees and workers. If one listened to the Labor side of the House, one would think that making a profit is a bad thing. I just heard the member for Pine Rivers talk about gargantuan profits. Those opposite should tell that to mum-and-dad businesses that can barely afford to pay the tax and who will have to work themselves because they cannot afford to put employees on. Profits pay wages. Profits lead to investment. Profits pay tax. This bill cruels all of that.

*(Time expired)*

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport) (3.19 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I do so on behalf of every worker in my electorate who will have to work this Christmas Eve. I do so on behalf of their families, their partners and their kids.

As a former retail worker I, too, have sacrificed my Christmas Eve to provide for my family. For my family, like many families this time of the year, attendance at the 6 pm Christmas mass followed by a family function is a time-honoured tradition. This Labor government understands the sacrifice made by working Queenslanders who miss out on those sort of events.

This bill is about families, but it is also about finances. We also understand that, for some families, penalty rates mean the difference between putting fuel in the car and walking to work. We believe that, if Queenslanders have to miss out on those sorts of important events with the ones they love, they should be appropriately compensated for missing those important occasions just as penalty rates also compensate for missing a football match on a weekend or a road trip to the beach on a public holiday.

Our retail and hospitality workers will be supplying the Christmas presents and pulling pints. Our casino workers and our cleaners will be working alongside them, making sure that Queenslanders have a good time before cleaning up after them. Our prison officers and our aged-care workers will be looking after those in their care. Our nurses and our paramedics will be there to patch us up if something goes wrong for us. All of these Queensland workers and more will be working on Christmas Eve to keep us safe and allow us to enjoy the season.

When the Chamber of Commerce & Industry wrote to me asking for my thoughts on this new public holiday, it was those Queenslanders I had in mind when I crafted my response. I would like to table my response to the CCIQ, which outlines some of the cuts to workers in hospitality, retail, fast food and pharmacy that Australians have already had to endure thanks to the Morrison government's cuts to penalty rates.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 16 September 2019, from the Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport, Hon. Mick de Brenni, to the General Manager Policy and Advocacy, Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, Ms Amanda Rohan, regarding the proposed part-day Christmas Eve public holiday [\[2147\]](#).

Those workers, members of all of our communities, are already earning 15 per cent less. By the time those cuts come into full effect, hospitality workers across the nation will be \$837 million worse off. The facts are well observed. The Council of Small Business Organisations Australia has shown that these devastating cuts have not created one single extra job anywhere in the country.

I hope that, during this Christmas period, all Queenslanders in the circumstances in which they may have to give up precious family time over the holidays are appropriately compensated for that. I commend the bill to the House and reiterate that Labor will always be back in workers and back in families every single time.

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (3.22 pm), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. This bill is for workers such as Luke Ahern, who has had two Christmas Eves off in 22 years; Brett Carpenter, a shiftworker, who has been working Christmas Eves for 21 years; and Rhonda Jenner, who is looking forward to this bill passing because it will mean the first Christmas Eve she has had at home for eight years and it would be excellent to spend time with her family.

When we consider the contributions from both sides of the House, we do not have to be Einstein to work out that the only side of this House that supports workers and a balanced approach is the Labor government. This Labor government will continue to deliver for hardworking Queenslanders. Honestly, I could not believe the member for Kawana could outdo himself but he outdid himself in his contribution to the debate. His contribution was bordering on hysteria. We are all used to the union bashing from those members opposite. We heard it time and time again during this debate. That is just par for the course now. That is all the member for Kawana had. There was no substance.

Yesterday the member for Kawana decided to raise the level a notch or two with wild, baseless allegations and assertions about corruption, that somehow we are pro union but anti worker, that there will be jobs lost because maybe some businesses, which currently decide not to open anyway, may not open and so somehow it is jobs lost without understanding that this legislation has nothing to do with somebody losing their job. There was also the usual name-calling and character assassination. It was absolutely unbelievable.

In his contribution the member's smoking gun was a payment disclosed by the SDA—and I acknowledge Chris Gazenbeek and his delegates who are in the gallery—on 5 August. Somehow this is corruption—'We're going to the CCC,' or whatever. The fact is that the payment of \$3,850 disclosed by the SDA was a standard annual payment from the union for its delegates to attend the state ALP conference, which this year was held on the weekend of 23 and 24 August. For the benefit of the member for Kawana, let me say it again: it was a standard payment for delegates, such as the SDA has in the gallery this afternoon, to attend the state ALP conference. Honestly, the contribution from the member was bordering on hysteria. The craziness that we heard was absolutely unbelievable.

The member for Kawana referred to amendments to bills. He referred to a bill in relation to racing that I inherited. I will give the member for Kawana one statistic. When he was a minister he introduced two bills and then moved 169 amendments to those two bills. When it comes to moving amendments to bills in this House, the member for Kawana still holds the record. He should enjoy it while he can.

There is no doubt that making Christmas Eve a public holiday has been canvassed quite broadly—in the RIS, by the parliamentary committee. Many workers, including members of the SDA and their delegates, have campaigned for this amendment and this Labor government is proud to be

delivering it. Christmas Eve is a special time of year. Not one of the members opposite acknowledged that Christmas Eve is a special time of year for families and friends—not one of them. Their contributions were all about business trading, profits and losses. Unbelievable economic analyses were made.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** I say to the member for Clayfield that it is a family time. He should get on board. His children who work for Tabcorp are being paid under the agreement. They get penalty rates because of that union agreement. They deserve the benefits that they get under that agreement and the member for Clayfield should never forget it. That agreement is there because of the union.

I do not know where the members opposite have been, but businesses make decisions about Christmas Eve. Last year I remember seeing quite a lot of businesses closed on Christmas Eve because people wanted family time. In addition, I remember walking past a business in my electorate where there was a blackboard out the front that said, 'We are closing today because we want our staff to enjoy family time. Thank you for your patronage. We will see you on Christmas Day.' That was unbelievable. There are good employees out there who do that. I saw that and businesses will make such decisions all the time based upon their—

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms McMillan): Order! Member for Clayfield, your interjections are not being taken.

**Ms GRACE:** If the member for Clayfield would listen, the point I was making is that businesses will make decisions for a number of reasons—the benefit to their workers, the benefit to their business. If businesses can trade and make a dollar, I will tell the member that they will trade. If business owners want to spend time with their family, they will also spend time with their family. Those decisions will continue to be made. This bill protects workers in that area. It gives those workers an opportunity, under the relevant legislation, under reasonable circumstances, to be able to decide whether they work or not. They are given that protection. At the same time, in line with their award, or their agreement, they will get penalty rates.

I remind members that we are talking about a special time of year and we are talking about six hours. After listening to those opposite, the whole sky will fall in. I do not know many businesses, small or whatever, that open until midnight anyway. Whether they trade or not trade are decisions that businesses make based on the circumstances that they find themselves in.

As I said, I do not know where these people have been around Christmas Eve, I do not know where they are or what they are doing, but I see a lot of businesses making decisions when there are no public holidays. Businesses make decisions on whether to trade on Easter Friday, Easter Monday or, as the member for Clayfield mentioned, Anzac Day. Businesses make decisions on all kinds of public holidays and this will be no different. The scaremongering from those opposite is laughable.

Even the member for Maroochydore could not bring herself to mention the special requirements and the special place that Christmas Eve has in families, in homes, in religious institutions or in cultural events. Knowing her beliefs I was astounded that she could not stand up for family time on Christmas Eve.

**Ms Simpson** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** In this day and age family time is special.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms McMillan): Order! Minister, resume your seat. The chatter has to stop. The interjections are not being taken.

**Ms GRACE:** We know the Christmas period, including Christmas Eve, has personal, social, religious and cultural significance—

**Ms Simpson** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member for Maroochydore!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. With respect to your ruling that the interjections were not being taken, I respectfully recall the minister questioning the religious beliefs of a member in this House. She was talking about the religion of a member in the House. The member was simply replying.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Kawana. I do not need your counsel. There is no point of order.

**Ms GRACE:** We know that the Christmas period, including Christmas Eve, has personal, social, religious and cultural significance for many in the community, as well as being an important time for businesses and for the provision of public services such as health and emergency services. For six hours on Christmas Eve, from 6 pm to midnight, we believe workers have a legitimate expectation and desire to take part in Christmas Eve events and enjoy that special time with family and friends. This should be recognised and protected with a part-day public holiday that allows workers to refuse to work in reasonable circumstances and for those workers who do have to work to be paid penalty rates that compensate them for missing out on that special time. The Palaszczuk government is always proud to be in the corner of Queensland workers. We are proud to demonstrate that once again in this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Under the provisions of the business program agreed to by the House and the time allocated for this stage of the bill having expired, the question is that the bill be now read a second time.

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

**AYES, 49:**

**ALP, 46**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Lynham, Madden, McMahon, McMillan, Miles, Miller, Mullen, B. O'Rourke, C. O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Pegg, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Stewart, Trad, Whiting.

**Grn, 1**—Berkman.

**KAP, 2**—Katter, Knuth.

**NOES, 41:**

**LNP, 37**—Bates, Batt, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyce, Crandon, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Hart, Hunt, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McArdle, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Sorensen, Stevens, Stuckey, Watts, Weir.

**KAP, 1**—Dametto.

**NQF, 1**—Costigan.

**PHON, 1**—Andrew.

**Ind, 1**—Bolton.

Pair: Mellish, Wilson.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

### Consideration in Detail

 **Ms GRACE** (3.39 pm): I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

*Tabled paper:* Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, explanatory notes to Hon. Grace's amendments [2148].

**Mr SPEAKER:** In accordance with sessional order 2B, the House must now consider clauses 1 to 10 and any amendments circulated by the minister. I note that the minister's amendment No. 1 is outside the long title of the bill and therefore requires leave of the House. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Question put—That the minister's amendment No. 1, as circulated, be agreed to.

Amendment as circulated—

**1 After clause 6**

Page 5, after line 18—

*insert—*

**Part 3A Amendment of Liquor Act 1992**

**6A Act amended**

This part amends the *Liquor Act 1992*.

**6B Amendment of s 46 (Compliance orders for licensed premises etc.)**

- (1) Section 46(1)—  
*insert—*
- (da) complying with requirements under section 173EHAA for a re-entry pass system for the premises, including for re-entry passes for the re-entry pass system; or
- (2) Section 46(1)(da) and (e)—  
*renumber* as section 46(1)(e) and (f).

**6C Amendment of s 173EH (Scanning obligations of licensees for regulated premises)**

- (1) Section 173EH—  
*insert—*
- (2A) Subsection (1) also does not apply during regulated hours starting on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday if the regulated premises are not open for business after 1a.m. on the following day, regardless of whether the licence, extended hours permit or extended trading hours approval for the premises authorises the premises to be open after 1a.m. on that day.
- (2B) Despite subsection (3), subsection (1) applies during regulated hours starting on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday that is the day before a public holiday if the licensee is authorised to sell or supply liquor on the regulated premises after midnight of that day.
- (2) Section 173EH(3), 'subsection (2)'—  
*omit, insert—*  
subsections (2) and (3)
- (3) Section 173EH(4), '(3)(b)'—  
*omit, insert—*  
(5)(b)
- (4) Section 173EH(5), 'subsection (1) or (3)'—  
*omit, insert—*  
subsection (1) or (5)
- (5) Section 173EH(6), 'subsection (5)(a)'—  
*omit, insert—*  
subsection (7)(a)
- (6) Section 173EH—  
*insert—*  
(8A) This section is subject to section 173EHAA.
- (7) Section 173EH(2A) to (9)—  
*renumber* as section 173EH(3) to (12).

**6D Insertion of new s 173EHAA**

After section 173EH—

*insert—*

**173EHAA Re-entry pass system for regulated premises**

- (1) The licensee of regulated premises to which section 173EH(1) applies is not required to comply with the subsection for a person who is re-entering the premises as a patron during a trading period for the premises in the premises' regulated hours if—
- (a) the licensee has a re-entry pass system for the regulated premises that complies with the requirements for a re-entry pass system for regulated premises under subsection (2); and
- (b) the licensee complied with section 173EH(1) for the person when the person first entered the premises as a patron during the same trading period for the premises in the premises' regulated hours; and
- (c) the licensee applied or issued to the person a re-entry pass for the trading period that complies with the requirements for a re-entry pass for the re-entry pass system under subsection (3); and
- (d) the person has on the person, or in the person's possession, the re-entry pass when the person re-enters the premises.

- (2) A re-entry pass system for regulated premises must—
- (a) be in writing; and
  - (b) be available for inspection by an investigator at the regulated premises; and
  - (c) include details of the types of re-entry passes for the system to be applied or issued to persons for the purpose of re-entering the regulated premises during trading periods for the premises in the premises' regulated hours.
- (3) A re-entry pass for a re-entry pass system for regulated premises is an identifying mark applied, an object issued or a type of electronic identification applied or issued under the system to a person that is—
- (a) unique to the regulated premises and to each trading period for the regulated premises; and
  - (b) able to be identified as a re-entry pass for the purpose of the person re-entering the premises as a patron during the same trading period as the trading period in which the person first entered the premises as a patron in the premises' regulated hours; and
  - (c) not able to be falsified, copied or transferred from the person to another person.

*Examples of a re-entry pass—*

a stamp, a wristband

- (4) In this section—

**regulated hours**, for regulated premises, see section 173EH(12).

**trading period**, for regulated premises, means a continuous period, including a period starting on a day and ending on the following day, during which the premises are open for business.

Motion agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 10, as amended, agreed to.

### Third Reading

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

**Mr SPEAKER:** A division has been called. As there has been no intervening debate, the bells will ring for one minute.

**AYES, 49:**

**ALP, 46—**Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Lynham, Madden, McMahon, McMillan, Miles, Miller, Mullen, B. O'Rourke, C. O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Pegg, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Stewart, Trad, Whiting.

**Grn, 1—**Berkman.

**KAP, 2—**Katter, Knuth.

**NOES, 41:**

**LNP, 37—**Bates, Batt, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyce, Crandon, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Hart, Hunt, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McArdle, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Sorensen, Stevens, Stuckey, Watts, Weir.

**KAP, 1—**Dametto.

**NQF, 1—**Costigan.

**PHON, 1—**Andrew.

**Ind, 1—**Bolton.

Pair: Mellish, Wilson.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a third time.

**Long Title**

Question put—That the minister's amendment No. 2, as circulated, be agreed to.

Amendment as circulated—

**2 Amendment of long title**

Long title, 'and the *Industrial Relations Act 2016*—

omit, insert—

, the *Industrial Relations Act 2016* and the *Liquor Act 1992*

Motion agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

Division: Question put—That the long title of the bill, as amended, be agreed to.

**AYES, 49:**

**ALP, 46**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Lynham, Madden, McMahon, McMillan, Miles, Miller, Mullen, B. O'Rourke, C. O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Pegg, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Stewart, Trad, Whiting.

**Grn, 1**—Berkman.

**KAP, 2**—Katter, Knuth.

**NOES, 41:**

**LNP, 37**—Bates, Batt, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyce, Crandon, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Hart, Hunt, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McArdle, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Sorensen, Stevens, Stuckey, Watts, Weir.

**KAP, 1**—Dametto.

**NQF, 1**—Costigan.

**PHON, 1**—Andrew.

**Ind, 1**—Bolton.

Pair: Mellish, Wilson.

Resolved in the affirmative.

## **CRIMINAL CODE (CHILD SEXUAL OFFENCES REFORM) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Introduction**

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (3.46 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2004, the Childrens Court Act 1992, the Corrective Services Act 2006, the Criminal Code, the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1978, the Disability Services Act 2006, the Evidence Act 1977, the Justices Act 1886, the Oaths Act 1867, the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994, the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and the Youth Justice Act 1992 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 [\[2149\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, explanatory notes [\[2150\]](#).

I am pleased to introduce the Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The bill comprehensively reforms the criminal justice system's response to child sexual abuse through a range of amendments responding to both the criminal justice report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council *Classification of child exploitation material for sentencing purposes* report, as well as criminalising the possession, supply and production of child abuse objects.

On 15 June 2018, the Queensland government response to all of the royal commission's recommendations was tabled, accepting or supporting in principle more than 240 of the recommendations. Since that time the Palaszczuk government has continued to implement reforms based on the royal commission's recommendations, including most recently a range of amendments in response to civil litigation recommendations, but the journey is not over and there is more to be done.

The *Criminal justice report*, one of the royal commission's earlier reports, was delivered on 14 August 2017. It contained 85 wide-ranging recommendations aimed at reforming the Australian criminal justice system to provide a fairer response to victims of institutional child sexual abuse. The recommendations span all areas of the criminal justice system, including police and prosecution responses, offences, conduct of trials, evidence, judicial directions, sentencing and appeals. While the royal commission focused on child sexual abuse in institutions, it considered these 85 recommendations are likely to improve responses to child sexual abuse in all contexts.

The bill introduced today is the product of extensive consultation and consideration, including a public consultation process on a draft of the bill earlier this year. This consultation process elicited over 50 submissions from various organisations, stakeholders and individuals. I would like to thank all of those submitters for their considered feedback on these significant reforms and their ongoing interest in protecting Queensland's children and in the operation of Queensland's criminal justice system. I would like to acknowledge those in the gallery today who are observing this bill's introduction, many of whom are survivors and advocates on behalf of those who were sexually and physically abused as children.

The issues raised during consultation have very much informed the shaping of the bill introduced today. Feedback provided during the consultation largely focused on the new failure-to-report child abuse offence and the proposed amendments relating to the admissibility of certain types of evidence. As a consequence, the bill differs from the consultation draft in a number of key respects which I will outline.

The royal commission heard evidence suggesting that some institutions emphasised reputational protection over the protection of children in their care. This informed its recommendations that jurisdictions create offences of failure to report and failure to protect against child sexual abuse in an institutional setting. Accordingly, the draft bill contained two new third-party offences of failure to report and failure to protect, both targeted at child sexual abuse in an institutional context.

Whilst feedback on these provisions generally supported the need for the new reporting and protecting offences, strong concerns were raised that the complexity of the failure-to-report offence made the offence extremely difficult to apply and enforce. The complexity arose largely because detailed definitions are necessary to establish the institutional parameters of the offence. Having regard to these concerns, the bill contains a reporting offence that applies beyond an institutional context. This sends a strong message to the entire community that child sexual abuse is not something that can be ignored by any adult. This approach is also consistent with New South Wales, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania, which have all introduced broad failure-to-report offences that are not limited to an institutional context.

The new reporting offence applies to all adults aged 18 years and over. The offence is established when that adult gains information that causes the adult to believe on reasonable grounds, or ought reasonably have caused them to believe, that a child sexual offence is being or has been committed against a child under 16, or a child under 18 who has an impairment of the mind, and the adult fails to disclose the information to police. Consistent with the draft bill, a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment applies to the offence.

The failure-to-report offence will not apply where a person has a reasonable excuse. Without limiting what may constitute a reasonable excuse, the bill provides that a reasonable excuse exists where the person has already reported the information, or believes on reasonable grounds that the information was or will be reported by another person under existing reporting obligations in the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, Child Protection Act 1999 or Youth Justice Act 1992. Consistent with the royal commission recommendations, this will assist in reducing duplicate reports to police regarding the same information.

To avoid possible impacts on vulnerable members of the community arising from the expansion in scope of the failure-to-report offence, an explicit provision is also included excusing liability where a person reasonably believes that disclosure would endanger the safety of a person, other than the alleged child sexual abuser.

Unlike most other jurisdictions, in Queensland there is no statutory evidential privilege applying to religious confessions. Whether a common law religious confession privilege exists is not entirely clear due to a paucity of case law. To remove doubt, both the failure-to-report and the failure-to-protect offences in the bill include express provisions to apply to information and knowledge gained during, or in connection with, a religious confession. While this government respects the rights of individuals to practise their religion freely and understands there are strongly and sincerely held views about the sanctity of religious confession and the human rights concerns raised about this and the retrospective nature of some of the reforms in the bill, these concerns must be balanced against the need to protect children from child sexual abuse. The royal commission heard evidence in relation to the issue of religious confessions but ultimately concluded that there should be no exemption or privilege from the failure-to-report offence for clergy who receive information during religious confession that an adult associated with the institution is sexually abusing or had sexually abused a child.

Notwithstanding the expanded approach to the reporting offence, the failure-to-protect offence retains an institutional context. This is because the types of offending the provision captures are unique to an institutional context. It includes, for instance, an organisation moving a known child sex offender to different branches of its organisation, despite knowing the danger that person poses to vulnerable children. This type of behaviour cannot be allowed to continue.

Consultation undertaken on the draft bill also elicited strong objections about the proposed reforms aimed at facilitating greater admissibility of evidence of earlier wrongful conduct in criminal trials. In shaping recommendations 44 to 51 of the *Criminal justice report* in relation to the admissibility of evidence, the royal commission observed that, of all Australian jurisdictions, the common law which applies broadly in Queensland is the most restrictive approach. The Palaszczuk government acknowledges the need for reform in this area.

The draft bill proposed amendments to increase the admissibility of propensity and relationship evidence and to change the standard of proof required for this evidence in criminal trials. Propensity and relationship evidence is generally evidence of earlier wrongful conduct by an accused person. This can include evidence of prior convictions, uncharged conduct or past conduct that is not necessarily criminal. Consultation on these provisions revealed vastly divergent views and yielded significant concerns that the amendments were complex and difficult to apply and could potentially result in more pre-trial applications, longer trials and more appeals. This would have a detrimental impact on the entire criminal justice system, including victims.

The Palaszczuk government has listened to the feedback from stakeholders and recognises the need for ongoing work with those who apply and interpret the law to ensure the reforms operate effectively as intended. I also note the work underway by uniform evidence law jurisdictions on these royal commission recommendations at the national level through the Council of Attorneys-General. In light of the significant and complex nature of these reforms and the need for ongoing consultation with key stakeholders on options for implementing the intent of the royal commission's recommendations in a Queensland context, the provisions relating to recommendations 44 to 51 of the *Criminal justice report* are not included in the bill being introduced today.

I will now outline some of the other changes since the draft bill was released for public consultation. In expanding the offence of grooming to persons other than the child, the bill being introduced today has adopted a more comprehensive definition of a person who has the care of the child. This definition will include a parent, foster-parent, step-parent, guardian or other adult in charge of the child, whether or not the person has lawful custody of the child. However, the expanded application does not extend to a fictitious carer.

The bill being introduced clarifies the retrospective application of the offence of maintaining a sexual relationship with a child in relation to maximum penalties. It provides that the maximum penalties applying to a pre-1989 offence of maintaining will mirror those applying when the offence was first enacted in 1989. Retrospective application of the current maintaining offence to post-1989 conduct retains the maximum penalty in place when the maintaining offence was committed.

The evidential threshold of the failure-to-report offence has been clarified to ensure that it requires a belief to be reasonably held. Also, the protections against civil and criminal liability for disclosure under the provision have been clarified to require the disclosure to be made in good faith. This will help address concerns raised in consultation about malicious reporting.

Some changes have been made to the provisions in the draft bill relating to jury directions which were intended to implement recommendation 65 of the *Criminal justice report*. These changes are in response to feedback and have regard to the approach in other jurisdictions and intention of amendments made to section 4A of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1978 in 2003.

Importantly, the bill also incorporates further amendments to provide the legislative basis to support a pilot program for intermediaries. The Palaszczuk government is giving a voice to vulnerable victims of child sexual abuse through the provision of funding to support establishment of a pilot Queensland intermediary scheme.

The *Criminal justice report* recommended intermediary schemes be established to mitigate the difficulties that witnesses, including survivors and victims, in child sexual abuse matters may experience in participating in the criminal justice process. At the investigation stage of a child sexual abuse matter, police may request an intermediary through the Queensland Intermediary Scheme's matching service to support a witness to give their most complete and accurate evidence. Under the provisions in the bill, courts will be able to appoint qualified intermediaries for prosecution witnesses who are under 16 years, have an impairment of the mind, have difficulty communicating or fall within another class of persons prescribed under regulation.

The bill provides for pre-trial hearings to enable the court to give directions about communication issues, which the royal commission referred to as 'ground rules' hearings. The intermediary, who is an independent impartial officer of the court, ensures the witness understands the questions being put to them and is given the opportunity to give their best evidence.

Not only will the use of intermediaries ensure that the best evidence is obtained from the witness for the police and courts to assess the child abuse case properly; the communication support provided by the intermediary will also reduce the stress experienced by these vulnerable witnesses in criminal justice proceedings. These proceedings can be daunting and intimidating for any witness but particularly for a child, someone with an impairment of the mind or someone who has difficulty communicating.

Potential intermediaries will need to satisfy appropriate suitability requirements. While intermediaries are typically speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers, the pilot program will explore drawing intermediaries from other occupations according to skills and qualities witnesses require. There are already comparable schemes operating in New South Wales and Victoria. It is my hope that the intermediary scheme will be able to assist vulnerable witnesses better interact with our judicial system to achieve justice for survivors.

In addition to funding a pilot intermediary scheme, the government has committed funding to support implementation of other criminal justice report recommendations including new victim liaison officers for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and training for all police to better equip them to respond to people who have experienced trauma.

The bill creates new offences in the Criminal Code criminalising the possession, supply and production of child abuse objects. An offender convicted of one of these offences is liable to up to 14 years imprisonment, and that increases to 20 years imprisonment where an offender is convicted of supply or production of a child abuse object for a commercial purpose. The organised crime circumstance of aggravation is also available for this sickening offence.

The example I give is that sadly there are people in possession of, or seeking to possess, a childlike doll that is made to be as realistic as possible that can be used for sexual gratification. These can be very young-looking dolls that reflect very young adolescent children. We must end this. We must send a very strong message that the production, the distribution, the possession of these types of objects will be a criminal offence that carries with it a very significant imprisonment term.

Finally, a minor amendment is made to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to enable a police officer to seize the blue card of a person who has been charged with a serious offence under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000.

I wish to thank all of those brave individuals who came forward to advocate for change to the royal commission and acknowledge the survivors who continue to carry the pain of child sexual abuse as well as those no longer with us. Again, I acknowledge those in the gallery today. I acknowledge that Bob Atkinson today stated that there were some 8,000 individuals—8,000 individuals—who gave private statements to the royal commission about their abuse. We acknowledge each and every one of those people.

The fact that we are here today introducing another bill so soon after the passage of the Civil Liability and Other Legislation Amendment Bill to address the scourge of child sexual abuse demonstrates our ongoing commitment to reform. This is just the next step on a very long road. I commend the bill to the House.

## First Reading

**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (4.03 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

## Referral to Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Weir): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) BILL

### Message from Governor

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (4.03 pm): I present a message from His Excellency the Governor.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Weir): The message from His Excellency the Governor recommends the Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

#### MESSAGE

COMMUNITY SERVICES INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) BILL 2019

*Constitution of Queensland 2001*, section 68

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

A Bill for an Act to provide for an equitable and efficient system of portability of long service leave in the community services industry, and to amend this Act, the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991, the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 2005, and the Industrial Relations Act 2016 for particular purposes

#### GOVERNOR

Date: 26 November 2019

*Tabled paper:* Message, dated 26 November 2019, from His Excellency the Governor, recommending the Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019 [\[2151\]](#).

### Introduction

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (4.04 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for an equitable and efficient system of portability of long service leave in the community services industry, and to amend this act, the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991, the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 2005, and the Industrial Relations Act 2016 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019 [\[2152\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019, explanatory notes [\[2153\]](#).

I am proud to be introducing today a bill to establish a portable long service leave scheme for the community services sector. This is a reform whose time has well and truly come. To quote from the Services Union who have campaigned tirelessly for their hardworking members and workers across the sector to see this come to fruition—

... these are workers often working in high stress, crisis and trauma environments. They are dedicated to the industry, and have a passion for the work they do and the clients they support. Yet they are denied access to long service leave due to the nature of the industry, not because of their lack of service to it.

The portable long service leave scheme established under this bill will, for the first time in Queensland, allow community service workers to accumulate service across the community sector as a whole, providing many of the estimated 45,000 workers in the sector with access to long service leave entitlements for the first time.

These are workers who are on the front line day in and day out, supporting and advocating for some of our most vulnerable fellow Queenslanders—providing alcohol and drug services, child safety and support services, family and domestic violence services, disability support, mental health and homelessness support, to name a few. If anyone deserves long service leave, it is these workers, and that is exactly what this bill delivers.

This bill continues the evolution of long service leave, a particularly Australian workplace innovation that began back in the 1850s as a way to provide public servants with the opportunity to return 'home' to England for a period of extended leave. Over time it extended to become a general entitlement for all workers, whether in the public or private sector, as recognition of a period of long service with the one employer and to provide some rest and respite before returning to work.

In more recent history we have seen the introduction of various portable long service leave schemes across the country. These schemes have recognised that in some industry sectors it is very difficult for workers to accrue sufficient service with the one employer to attract long service leave. This is no fault of the workers or employers in those industries. It is simply a reflection of the way those industries are structured and organised in terms of their contractual or funding arrangements.

This started from the 1970s onwards with the establishment across the country of portable schemes for the building and construction industry. Queensland, under the Goss Labor government, came on board with the Queensland building and construction portable scheme introduced in 1991. This was followed in 2005, when the Beattie Labor government introduced a portable long service leave scheme for contract cleaning workers in Queensland.

The tradition continues today, with the Palaszczuk Labor government recognising the special circumstances in the community services sector that warrant a portable long service leave scheme and taking action to deliver it. In doing so, we are delivering once again on our election commitments, which included a commitment in 2017 to investigate options for a portable long service leave scheme for the community services sector.

In introducing this bill, I would like to pay tribute to the way the sector as a whole has worked together to help make this scheme a reality. Late last year we went through the regulatory impact statement consultation process which showed there was broad in-principle support for a scheme. Over 300 submissions were received through this process from workers, employers and peak bodies in the community services industry. Workers wrote of their own experiences and why this scheme was so important to them. One worker recounted how she had worked in disability services since 1983 and had never qualified for long service leave with one employer.

Throughout this year we have been continuing the detailed policy and actuarial work required to underpin this scheme. To bring the sector together to work through the detail, in May this year I established a stakeholder task force to provide advice on the development, design and implementation of such a scheme. This was an important step because our experience is that these schemes work best when there is a broad level of support and consensus across the sector.

The task force included a range of peak bodies and unions: QCOSS, the Services Union, the Community Services Industry Alliance, the Australian Workers' Union, National Disability Services, United Voice—now the United Workers Union—Community Legal Centres Queensland and the Queensland Council of Unions. The task force has met 10 times since May and was able to reach consensus on the key design features of a portable scheme which forms the basis of the bill before the House today, including: broad coverage of community services workers, including administrative staff and other workers supporting the provision of community services; no recognition of retrospective service, but earlier access to leave after seven years service; and a starting levy rate as low as possible. This agreed model provided a good way forward, and I thank all members of the task force and other stakeholders across the sector who participated in the consultation processes thus far. The bill will now be referred to the committee for scrutiny, and I look forward to the results of that further consultation process.

I turn now to further details of the bill and the scheme it establishes. As with existing schemes, the scheme will work by employers registering and providing a return to QLeave about the hours worked and the earnings of their workers covered by the scheme for each quarterly return period, then paying a levy based on the earnings recorded. The levy rate, to be prescribed in subordinate legislation, is based on actuarial advice and is proposed to be 1.35 per cent of a worker's ordinary wage. A levy rate of 1.35 achieves the aim of keeping the rate as low as possible for employers while delivering the most beneficial entitlement to workers. It is also lower than starting levy rates for similar community services

schemes. In terms of other jurisdictions, Victoria started their community services scheme this year with a levy rate of 1.6 per cent and the ACT commenced at 1.67 per cent in 2010, but I believe it is a lot lower now.

In terms of coverage, the bill provides portable long service leave for all workers in non-government organisations in either the profit or not-for-profit sectors that are established for, or whose purpose includes, providing community services. Because coverage under the scheme includes those workers providing support to frontline community workers such as administrative and management staff, I acknowledge some ASU delegates who are in the gallery today listening to me introduce this bill. It has been a long road for them. It has been many, many years, and as Minister for Industrial Relations I am very proud to be delivering on our election commitment by introducing this bill today.

It also includes aged-care or childcare workers if their work supports the employer to provide community services. For example, childcare workers who work in a domestic and family violence service or neighbourhood community centre would be covered, but those working in standalone kindergartens or long day care centres would not, so it is about the provision of the service. The scheme is not retrospective; that is, actual accruals for the purposes of the scheme start once the scheme commences and when workers are registered. However, eligible workers will be able to access long service leave after seven years service in the community services sector rather than the standard 10 years with a single employer under the Industrial Relations Act. While access to the entitlement will be earlier, the entitlement under the scheme is accrued at the same rate as provided under the Industrial Relations Act, so it is all pro rata.

The governance and compliance provisions of the scheme are modelled on the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 2005 and the scheme will be administered by Queensland's existing portable long service leave authority: QLeave. This recognises the efficiencies that QLeave can provide both in establishment costs and in administration as well as the long and successful record of QLeave in administering existing portable long service leave schemes. Under the bill, a new governing board will be established to oversee QLeave's administration of the scheme similar to the structure and governance model already in place for Queensland's existing scheme. The board will consist of a chair and deputy chair with financial and investment expertise and an equal number of employer and employee representatives. It is proposed that the scheme commence from 1 July 2020.

The bill also amends the Industrial Relations Act to confirm that employees have access to pro rata long service leave in circumstances where they are dismissed by their employer due to an illness based incapacity. This amendment follows the case of David Schipp, a worker at the Star Casino who was dismissed after nine years and eleven months service with that employer. Mr Schipp just missed out on the general entitlement to leave after 10 years and was also denied access to pro rata long service leave on termination after seven years because he was deemed not fit because of illness to perform the inherent requirements of his role. The decision by the employer to not pay pro rata long service leave was upheld by Commissioner Thompson in the QIRC and then on appeal by Deputy President Merrell of the Industrial Court.

In my public comments after the appeal was dismissed I indicated that this case highlighted an anomaly that needs to be addressed, as it was never the intent of the legislation for a worker in this situation to be denied access to their long service leave entitlements. The interpretation that was taken in relation to Mr Schipp creates the untenable situation where a worker who resigns because of illness would be entitled to pro rata long service leave, but the same entitlement does not apply if it is the employer who dismisses the employee for the same reason. The government's view is that, in cases of termination due to illness related incapacity, the entitlement should apply equally in all cases. That was the original intent. It should not be dependent on whether it is the employer or the employee who terminates the employment. The amendment makes this clear.

In introducing this amendment I would like to personally acknowledge the efforts of David Schipp in this matter. While it may be of no great consolation in terms of his own personal situation, he should be proud of the way he has advocated on this matter, taking this matter to the commission and then on appeal to the Industrial Court. His advocacy has highlighted the need for legislative change and will benefit workers in future who are faced with a similar scenario.

The bill continues the proud record of the Palaszczuk government in leading the nation in standing up for workers' rights and continually striving to improve the lives of working people. We have done it through labour hire licensing, our industrial manslaughter laws, our domestic and family violence

leave, our response to silicosis, our reforms to workers compensation—the list goes on—and in particular, our wage theft inquiry. Through this bill we are ensuring that community services workers will get well-deserved access to long service leave after seven years service in this critical industry.

I again acknowledge those in the gallery and I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

**Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (4.18 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### Referral to Education, Employment and Small Business Committee

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Weir): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee.

## HEALTH TRANSPARENCY BILL

Resumed from 4 September (see p. 2642).

### Second Reading

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (4.19 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I quote—

The aged care system lacks fundamental transparency. Witnesses from the Australian Department of Health told us that there is very little information available to the public about the performance of service providers. The number of complaints against them are not published ... The number of staff they employ to provide care are not published ... The Department has said that it will publish differentiated performance ratings of residential aged care providers, but there is still no clarity on what this information will look like.

Those are not my words. That is what the royal commission's interim report into our aged-care sector said. This is why we introduced this bill. The Palaszczuk government cannot and will not wait for the Commonwealth government to act. I thank the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee for its careful consideration of the bill. The committee's report on the Health Transparency Bill 2019 made seven recommendations. The first recommendation was that the Health Transparency Bill be passed. I welcome the committee's support for the important changes this bill will bring.

I thank everyone who made submissions to the committee's inquiry and attended the public hearings on the bill. Most stakeholders expressed support for the reforms in the bill. They clearly recognise the importance of providing people with open and accessible information about health and residential aged-care facilities. Just last week the Grattan Institute's Stephen Duckett published a piece for the ABC saying a TripAdvisor for hospitals was sorely needed. We are way ahead on that one. This bill will allow us to gather and publish information about public and private health facilities and residential aged-care facilities. Transparent reporting about health care and aged care will allow more informed decision-making by consumers and lead to improved safety and care outcomes.

On aged care, I do not ever want to see another incident like Earle Haven. It is disgraceful that the Commonwealth took so long to revoke the accreditation of Earle Haven despite the repeated warning signs. During the inquiry into the bill, the committee heard that, while the number of elderly people requiring residential aged care has increased, the number of nurses providing care to seniors in aged-care facilities has fallen. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's interim report is a heartbreaking read. It describes Australia's aged-care services as fragmented, unsupported and underfunded. It highlights numerous instances of neglect in residential aged care, and it describes a convoluted system that leaves our most vulnerable waiting, sometimes for years, for the care that they need. That is why we are taking action to give consumers greater visibility of Queensland's aged-care sector by asking residential aged-care facilities to report their average care hours.

The Health Transparency Bill addresses three main issues—health transparency in public and private facilities, minimum standards of staffing and care for public residential aged-care facilities, and reforms to the Health Ombudsman Act. The bill establishes minimum standards of staffing and care for public residential aged-care facilities by introducing a minimum nurse and registered nurse skill mix ratio, and a requirement for minimum hours of care to be provided to residents per day. We want to ensure that the residential aged-care facilities operated by the Queensland government are appropriately staffed to provide quality aged care.

The bill also amends the Health Ombudsman Act to implement the recommendations made by the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee to improve the operation and efficiency of Queensland's health complaints system. I note that there was general support for these amendments from stakeholders and the committee.

I will now address the main recommendations from the committee's report on the bill and table the government response to their report.

*Tabled paper:* Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 27, 56th Parliament, October 2019—Health Transparency Bill 2019, government response [\[2154\]](#).

Recommendation 2 of the committee's report recommended Queensland Health establish an advisory committee to provide feedback on existing information and any future information published about health facilities. The government accepts this recommendation. Queensland Health currently has an advisory group in place to guide the build and implementation of the website. After commencement of the bill, the advisory group will become an advisory committee that provides feedback on the existing data that is published and guides the identification of future information to be published. The advisory committee will consist of representatives with subject matter expertise, both from within Queensland Health and from external stakeholders. There are numerous stakeholders involved in the health system, and we value their contribution. Queensland Health will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure that any information published now and in the future is useful to consumers.

Recommendation 3 of the report suggested that residential aged-care facilities should have the opportunity to provide contextual information about the information they report. The website is being developed with the needs of consumers as the primary consideration. It is important that the information made available on the website is meaningful and easily understood by consumers. A residential aged-care facility that opts to report its 'average daily resident care hours' can provide supporting information to explain this information. For example, a facility that cares for residents with high needs could include information to explain why its care hours are higher compared to other facilities. The additional information will be published on the website so consumers can consider the data within the relevant context to inform their decisions about a provider. The website will also include links to the Commonwealth's My Aged Care website. This will make it easy for people to seek further information about facilities.

Recommendation 4 proposed that Queensland Health consider expanding the information collected and published about residential aged-care facilities through consultation with an advisory committee. Recommendation 6 also asked that I address how the reporting framework for residential aged-care facilities will align with possible Commonwealth requirements with a view to minimising any overlap of obligations. I would like to address these two recommendations together.

The Commonwealth government is primarily responsible for the regulation and funding of aged-care services. However, it does not require residential aged-care facilities to report staffing data about public and private aged-care facilities on a regular basis. Without this information, elderly Queenslanders and their families are having to choose a facility without knowing what level of care is on offer. The Palaszczuk government is addressing this by asking aged-care facilities in Queensland to report on their average hours of care. This requirement will apply to private aged-care facilities. Private aged-care providers can opt not to provide this information, but their decision to opt out will also be published on the website. These providers will then need to explain to residents and their family members why they are choosing to hide this information.

The information proposed to be collected and published under the bill and draft regulation is intended to be a starting point. This government is committed to increasing the information that is available to Queenslanders about residential aged-care facilities. The legislative framework is designed to be flexible and avoid duplication with Commonwealth reporting processes. Reporting requirements for residential aged-care facilities will be prescribed by regulation and can be amended to address any changes in Commonwealth legislation or reporting obligations.

We will monitor the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety before considering further reporting for aged-care facilities. The Commonwealth government does not require residential aged-care facilities to have minimum staffing or levels of care. This bill introduces minimum standards of care in the aged-care facilities that are run by Queensland Health. We may not be able to compel private facilities to follow suit but we can ensure that our public facilities lead the way in caring for elderly Queenslanders.

I wish to foreshadow amendments that I will move during consideration in detail of this bill. The opposition and crossbench members have been briefed on the proposed amendments. Firstly, amendments are provided to the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to provide clarity about the scope of the regulation-making power for section 20(4) of the act. The amendments are technical in nature. They clarify that a regulation can be made to remove employment powers from hospital and health services.

The amendments also allow transitional arrangements to be made by regulation, such as allowing for benefits and entitlements of employees to be preserved. Currently, eight of our hospital and health services have the power to employ non-executive health service employees under section 20(4) of the act, while the other eight do not. This means that some of our non-executive health service employees are employed by a hospital and health service while others are employed by the Department of Health. Changing it so all staff are employees of the Department of Health will have no effect on their terms and conditions. However, there will be improvements, including improved ease of access when moving from one HHS to another or for staff who work for multiple HHSs at any one time. Importantly, hospital and health services will continue to be responsible for the day-to-day management of all staff who work in them.

I will also be moving amendments during consideration in detail to the Corrective Services Act 2006, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Youth Justice Act 1992 and the Youth Justice Regulation 2016. These amendments will provide a clearer framework for the management of children detained in court cells. Queensland Corrective Services, the Queensland Police Service and Youth Justice officers work cooperatively to transport, care for and manage children in court cells and have been doing so for many years. The amendments will ensure appropriate powers for dealing with children in court cells including relevant safeguards and that each agency can use the most suitable mix of staff to provide improved operational responses. The amendments will also provide for related efficiencies for Queensland Police by providing that watch house officers can undertake all aspects of prisoner escort duties.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to giving Queenslanders an aged-care system they can trust. We will ensure our public aged-care facilities provide the best care to elderly Queenslanders. I hope the publication of information about staffing levels in aged-care facilities will drive Queensland's private providers to be transparent and improve the level of care they provide to vulnerable elderly Queenslanders. The reporting requirements for public and private hospitals will strengthen Queensland's already world-class health system by increasing openness and accountability in both the public and private healthcare sectors. I again thank the committee for its detailed consideration of the bill and the stakeholders who participated in the committee's inquiry. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.31 pm): I rise to speak on the Health Transparency Bill 2019 introduced in the parliament on 4 September 2019 and reviewed by the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee. It is ironic that we are here today debating health transparency because when it comes to health transparency this health minister and this Palaszczuk Labor government have been anything but transparent. We have seen cover-ups and secret reports. We have seen that when the going gets tough, this minister hides behind bureaucrats and hides as much information as he can. This is a minister who would not know transparency if he fell over it in the street. Only recently I had to complain to the Speaker about three questions on notice that were not answered properly that the minister has to answer again and provide a more fulsome response. How embarrassing!

**Dr MILES:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is clearly not speaking to the bill and I ask that you direct her to do so.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Weir): I think the member is coming back to talk to the bill.

**Ms BATES:** I refer to the long title of the bill, which is the Health Transparency Bill, and that includes health transparency. You need to know the standing orders, Minister.

**Dr MILES:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The bill clearly does not relate to questions on notice and the Speaker's guidance in relation to those questions on notice. I ask that you provide the member guidance.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It is about health transparency. I will listen closely. The entire contribution is not going to be along those lines. We need to discuss the bill, but the bill opens itself up for a bit of leniency. Hold on a second longer while I take some advice. The long title of the bill states 'an act to facilitate the publication and collection of information about public facilities and private facilities that provide health services' et cetera. Member for Mudgeeraba, you have the call.

**Ms BATES:** Of course, this also comes on the back of the fact that in response to surgery waiting lists blowing out and emergency departments in crisis, rather than addressing the core issues and providing better patient care, the Palaszczuk Labor government just tries to quietly scrap the targets. So much for striving for better performance!

The committee recommended that the bill be passed and made a total of seven recommendations to improve the operation of the bill. As a former member of that committee, I want to thank them for their work on this bill which will enhance the objectives if these seven recommendations are adopted. What Queenslanders want to see is world-class aged-care facilities that look after our most senior residents. These are Queenslanders who have worked hard all their lives and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

There has been a disturbing trend of failures in the system and we need to ensure that standards of care are improved. We need to take the politics out of this issue and focus on better care and improving the system. The LNP supports the federal aged care royal commission and I would hope that all levels of government can work together in the interests of elderly Queenslanders without the political grandstanding and blame game that we have seen from the Palaszczuk Labor government. There are 16 state owned and operated residential aged-care facilities which have not been included in the review even though I wrote to the committee—and I am still waiting for a response. I also wrote to the minister seeking to visit those 16 state owned residential aged-care facilities and I am still waiting to hear back.

The politicking we have seen from the health minister and the member for Gaven around Earle Haven has been nothing short of a disgrace. The member for Gaven along with her Labor Senate mate Murray Watt even tried to drum up the issue when protesting recently—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Hold on, member for Mudgeeraba. Members to my right—

**Ms Farmer** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Bulimba, I was speaking. You might not like what the member is saying, but as I said, this bill covers a lot of areas and you will get a chance to speak.

**Ms BATES:** The member for Gaven along with her Labor Senate mate, the failed former state member Murray Watt, even tried to drum up the issue when protesting recently outside the federal member for Moncrieff's office. I table the photographs.

*Tabled paper:* Photograph of aged care rally involving members of the Labor Party [\[2155\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Photograph of aged care rally involving members of the Labor Party [\[2156\]](#).

They would have been lucky to have 20 people there. They were holding a protest on a Saturday when the member for Moncrieff's office was closed. That was just pathetic and nothing more than a stunt—more political stunts and grandstanding from Labor on an issue that should be about better patient care.

The member for Gaven gave evidence at the parliamentary committee and I asked some pretty pointed questions. In fact, I quote from *Hansard*. It states—

**Ms BATES:** Thanks, Meaghan, for your evidence.

**Mr HARPER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is talking about the Earle Haven inquiry, which has nothing to do with the Health Transparency Bill that we are talking about today.

**Ms BATES:** You just talked about Earle Haven.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Excuse me! The member is quoting from *Hansard* of hearings into this bill I believe.

**Mr Harper:** Not this bill, Earle Haven.

**Ms BATES:** The minister has just raised Earle Haven.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Ms BATES:** We are talking about Earle Haven.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba, you have the call.

**Ms BATES:** During that inquiry I asked the member for Gaven, who has made such a spectacle and a media and public relations exercise for her own benefit, how many times she had visited the Earle Haven high-care facility in the 18 months that she was the member before the tragic circumstances of that night. The answer was that she had not ever visited the high-care facility. Fifty patients were transported from Earle Haven to another nursing home in Nerang, many of whom I presume were voters of the member for Gaven. I actually asked the member for Gaven again how many of those 50 patients who were transferred to Nerang Nursing Centre had she visited since that had occurred. Guess what the answer was? None!

In an article in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* the member for Gaven has either deliberately misled a parliamentary committee or she has misled the readers of the *Gold Coast Bulletin* with a very cryptic answer—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Weir): Member for Mudgeeraba, if you have issues about misleading the House I suggest you write to the Speaker. I ask you to now come back to the long title of the bill. I have given you enough leeway.

**Ms BATES:** Thank you. I will table both documents.

*Tabled paper:* Article by Paul Weston, undated, titled ‘Scanlon fires up in LNP pile-on: Aged care sparks political brouhaha’ [\[2157\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Social media posts, dated 20 November, including exchange between the member for Mudgeeraba, Ms Ros Bates MP, and the member for Gaven, Ms Meaghan Scanlon MP [\[2158\]](#).

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms BATES:** You don’t like it, do you? When the Carnell review was handed down, the federal government supported all 23 recommendations. In an interview on *ABC Drive* with Steve Austin on 13 November 2019 the minister attacked Kate Carnell, the reviewer, because he could not handle the truth. When asked by Steve Austin to identify some of the failures she addressed in her report, Ms Carnell said—

What we found—that there was different information being held by different parts of government. We knew of the federal government, even the Fair Work Commission had some cases occurring. ASIC was involved, the Queensland government was involved and they didn’t share the information.

The health minister said in response—

Well let’s first of all be clear, Kate Carnell is not an independent commentator on this—she’s a Liberal Party hack who was appointed to do this review ...

...

I think her brief was very clear that she was to ensure that all of the blame did not rest with the Commonwealth ...

What a disgusting slur. It is typical of how this health minister deals with patient care—all politics and nothing else. We saw it with the introductory speech to this bill. He never fronts up when there is a bad news story, he hides behind bureaucrats as his favourite pastime, and when his political agenda gets interrupted with the truth he spits the dummy. Queenslanders have had enough of his ‘dog ate my homework’ excuses and continually wrong health priorities.

The Carnell report was not about attacking paramedics or any of our hardworking health staff. No-one was doing that. They did a tremendous job in responding to the Earle Haven disaster, which should never have happened. This was about how to ensure Earle Haven never happens again—and, if it does, how best to respond and care for our elderly residents. We are not interested in blaming the state government, the federal government or anyone else; it should always be about the patients.

As outlined in the explanatory notes, the Health Transparency Bill establishes a legislative framework for collecting and publishing information about public and private hospitals and residential aged-care facilities; amends the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to introduce a minimum nurse and support worker skill mix ratio and minimum average daily resident care hours in public residential aged-care facilities; and amends the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 to implement recommendations of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Committee's inquiry into the performance of the Health Ombudsman's functions pursuant to section 179 of the Health Ombudsman Act 2013. The minister also tabled two draft regulations that accompany the bill: the draft Health Transparency Regulation 2019 and the draft Hospital and Health Boards (State Aged Care Facilities) Amendment Regulation 2019.

We note that this bill implements an election commitment from the 2017 state election. One could hardly say that this commitment has been a priority, given that it has taken two years to come to fruition and will take another two years for implementation. The draft amendment regulation amends the Hospital and Health Boards Regulation 2012 to prescribe the specific operational aspects of the aged-care ratio for public residential aged-care facilities; a minimum nurse percentage—that is, registered nurses and enrolled nurses—of 50 per cent, with a minimum of 30 per cent required to be registered nurses during a 24-hour period; and a minimum average daily resident care requirement of 3.65 hours. In relation to how the figure of 3.65 hours was determined, the then acting director-general, Dr Wakefield, told the parliamentary committee—

The evidence base that suggests there is a relationship between staffing and outcomes in residential aged care is that there is very little research underpinning that at this stage.

...

We did a traditional literature search looking at literature that may be international. Given that there is little research, one of the commitments under this policy is that that research occur. On this implementation of minimum hours per resident day in the public sector, we would seek to research and evaluate that so we understood what the impact would be of putting a floor into the hours per patient or resident day.

In relation to the actual time spent with each individual resident, the then acting director-general also confirmed to the committee that the calculation is an average across the whole facility, not a guaranteed minimum for each patient. Where one patient might get one hour, another may get eight hours per day. There is no consistency for how the model is to be applied to all aged-care residents and no guaranteed minimum that is reported to families and loved ones.

Implementation and maintenance of the minimum care standards in public RACFs is expected to cost approximately \$10 million annually. This cost will be managed within Queensland Health's existing resources. While I note that Queensland Health has a significant budget—the biggest in government—it is a concern that these resources are being met internally, which means that existing savings will have to be made. Once again, it shows that this commitment has not been a priority for the Palaszczuk Labor government.

As outlined in the explanatory notes, the bill provides an enabling framework to compel public and private health facilities and residential aged-care facilities to provide information and to enable that information to be published to a public, interactive website. The legislative framework will apply to public and private health facilities, including licensed private hospitals and licensed day hospitals, as well as public and private residential aged-care facilities.

The chief executive—that is, the director-general of Queensland Health—will be empowered to collect and publish general information about public and private health facilities and residential aged-care facilities; quality and safety information for public and private health facilities; and residential care information about public and private residential aged-care facilities.

The bill also enables the chief executive to request other general information, including safety and quality information, from public and private health facilities. The chief executive may also request quality and safety information prescribed in a regulation, with a head of power created in legislation. This will allow future flexibility to expand reporting requirements of health facilities and enables the chief executive to request information outside of existing data collections. Of course, if any further reporting requirements or information is sought in the future, it should be done in consultation with all providers and with their input.

The bill will enable the publishing of information provided under the new framework as well as information provided for another purpose under other legislation. The explanatory notes outline that this could include information such as the Queensland Perinatal Data Collection, Queensland Hospital

Admitted Patient Data Collection and Queensland Elective Surgery Data Collection. The information or data published must not contain personal information about an individual. I understand that the information may be published on mechanisms other than the website. I would appreciate the minister elaborating further on what these mechanisms may include in his reply to the second reading debate.

Of course, when one talks about IT projects and Queensland Health and Labor, one begins to shudder. Everyone still remembers the Queensland Health payroll debacle, which still lives on almost a decade later. Of course, that occurred under the Bligh Labor government, when senior members of the current government, including the Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, sat around the cabinet table. The Palaszczuk Labor government is no better when it comes to failed IT programs.

**Mr HARPER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. The member is drifting away from the long title of the bill.

**Ms BATES:** Transparency.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Weir): Transparency. This applies to you as well. It is a very broad-ranging bill.

**Ms BATES:** There was the bungled rollout of the integrated electronic Medical Record—slammed by the Auditor-General last year—with a \$256 million blowout that has since blown out further, but the minister has said that the rollout has been an incredible success. The AMAQ doctors have also said that the rollout needs to be halted because it is putting patient safety at risk. On top of that there was the medical ordering debacle, with the failed replacement of the old FAMMIS system. This is another debacle that has seen nurses having to order band-aids on the bankcard while small business suppliers are being treated like a bank by Queensland Health and are having to chase up their bills. Recently I referred this program and the bungled rollout to the Auditor-General, because Queensland taxpayers should not have to continually pay for Labor's Health IT debacles and nurses are at their wits' end. I would not let this minister near a keyboard, let alone a multimillion dollar IT project.

We have grave concerns with the implementation of this website and whether it will become yet another Labor IT debacle. We urge the minister to get it right and ensure it is not prematurely launched next year before it is ready to go live. In doing so, I also trust that Queensland Health is liaising with aged-care providers and private hospitals to ensure the appropriate publication of data and how that process works from an administrative point of view.

I also note the amendments that relate to the Health Ombudsman Act 2013. The bill implements recommendations 1, 2 and 4 from a parliamentary committee review that occurred in 2016. The committee made four initial recommendations aimed at improving the performance of the health complaints system.

Recommendation 1 was that the Queensland government investigates the merit of amending the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 to introduce a joint consideration process for health service complaints between the OHO and AHPRA and its national board. Recommendation 2 was that the Queensland government considers options for ensuring potentially serious professional misconduct matters are able to be dealt with as a whole rather than being split between the OHO and AHPRA and the national boards. Recommendation 3 was that the OHO, AHPRA and the national boards produce a joint plan which identifies the information needs of all parties and any barriers to the sharing of information and an approach to resolving data issues that prevent nationally consistent data about health service complaints. Recommendation 4 was that the Queensland government considers introducing legislative amendments suggested by the Health Ombudsman.

It is vitally important that the Health Ombudsman works in the interests of health consumers and protects public safety—a fundamental pillar of trust and confidence in our public health system. As a nurse, I know that our nurses, doctors, midwives and paramedics do an amazing job every day, but the Health Ombudsman provides a process for complaints to be made and systems errors to be addressed. Queenslanders deserve the world-class public health system that the Palaszczuk Labor government promised at the last state election but is failing to deliver. Our hardworking nurses, doctors, midwives and paramedics need more help on the front line, not more wasted money and wrong priorities. Only the LNP will put patient care ahead of politics. Patient care will always be our No. 1 priority.

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.50 pm): I rise to support the Health Transparency Bill. This bill was a very important piece of work to our committee and has many links to our broader aged-care, palliative care, end-of-life and voluntary assisted dying inquiry and the Earle Haven investigation. Our committee has been extremely busy with those three pieces of important work, all occurring

simultaneously. From the start I want to acknowledge the entire secretariat for the work achieved on this. A special mention and thanks to Stephanie Galbraith for her work on our report into health transparency. I also give my thanks to each of the committee members for their hard work.

It was good to hear the minister's comments with regard to the government's response to our recommendations. The intent of this bill is, at its core, to ensure our elderly, vulnerable citizens are looked after safely and well in the residential aged-care facilities in which they reside. I heard the shadow minister's contribution and point out that in the former term we brought in nurse-patient ratios—that is, over 100 nurses up until 1 am—and the opposition vehemently opposed that, so it was not surprising to hear the attack about aged-care ratios on this particular bill from the shadow minister. I know that the residents themselves will be the benefactors of this decision to ensure that our 16 state-run facilities, with Parklands in my electorate of Thuringowa, will provide increased nurse-to-resident ratios. The bill will also provide clarity for families that residents will receive the best level of care, particularly in our state-run facilities, and we hope that the private sector will follow suit.

Sadly, that is not supported by the Commonwealth Department of Health, which stated in a letter that this would create a reporting burden on facilities. Let us hope it listened and paid attention to the royal commission interim report which calls for increased transparency in the aged-care sector. I find it unbelievable that our committee did not receive the level of support we required from the federal agency responsible for ensuring quality and safety is ensured in the aged-care sector. Our requests for information were met with an unwillingness to even engage. We were basically snubbed. The committee's parliamentary inquiry into health transparency was snubbed by that particular agency because it said that it was too busy. Residents and families need confidence in the aged-care sector, yet our committee could not receive the information it requested. What does that say for the families seeking assistance? What hope do they have? The Commonwealth Department of Health and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission need serious reform if we are going to provide the best and appropriate level of care required in the aged-care sector, because it is well overdue.

The recently released interim report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety sets out a chronically underfunded and understaffed aged-care system that is letting down some of our most vulnerable Queenslanders. The report states—

We have uncovered an aged care system that is characterised by an absence of innovation and by rigid conformity. The system lacks transparency in communication, reporting and accountability. It is not built around the people it is supposed to help and support, but around funding mechanisms, processes and procedures.

...

This cruel and harmful system must be changed. We owe it to our parents, our grandparents, our partners, our friends ... We owe it to future generations. Older people deserve so much more.

We have found that the aged care system fails to meet the needs of our older, often very vulnerable, citizens. It does not deliver uniformly safe and quality care for older people. It is unkind and uncaring towards them. In too many instances, it simply neglects them.

...

Expert evidence on clinical and personal care has also contributed to our understanding of the extent of substandard care:

- the Dietitians Association of Australia use current research to estimate that 22-50% of people in residential aged care are malnourished

...

- recent Australia research reveals that pressure injuries occur in a third of the most frail aged care residents at the end of their lives
- research involving 150 residential aged care facilities found that 61% of residents were regularly taking psychotropic agents ...

...

- there were 4013 notifications of alleged or suspected physical and/or sexual assaults in aged care in 2017-18.

The report continues—

The aged care system lacks fundamental transparency. Witnesses from the Australian Department of Health told us that there is very little information available to the public about the performance of service providers. The number of complaints against them are not published. The number of assaults in their services are not published. The number of staff they employ to provide care are not published.

...

While there are exceptions, most nurses, carer workers and allied health practitioners delivering care are doing their best in extremely trying circumstances where there are constraints on their time and on the resources available to them.

The same evidence was delivered to Queensland's own parliamentary inquiry into aged care. Given the federal government's responsibility for the regulation and funding of the aged-care sector, Queenslanders are being badly let down by the Morrison government. This is about ensuring that all Queenslanders can be confident that our parents and grandparents and loved ones are treated with respect, dignity and a high level of care that they deserve. The findings of the royal commission are a stark reminder that our current aged-care system is treating people without respect, without dignity and with an appallingly low level of care in some instances.

This government is sickened by the findings of the royal commission. The lack of humanity shown towards Queenslanders in their old age and lack of transparency for loved ones and their families is utterly appalling. Is it too much to ask that Queensland families know that their loved ones who give their life savings to a company to care for them in their old age are getting what they paid for? That is why the Palaszczuk government is acting to do all we can to deliver a better aged-care system in Queensland while we continue to wait for the Morrison government to act. Just this week the Morrison government has announced that it will put back half of the funding it cut from the aged-care system as if this was some great reform or step forward. It is not. Only the Palaszczuk government is doing the hard work to deliver a better aged-care system for all Queenslanders.

This bill will deliver world-class safe staffing levels in our 16 state-run public residential aged-care facilities. We know that staff-to-patient ratios work in the health system and that they save lives and money. Staffing ratios are a vital factor in ensuring that enough people work at a facility to ensure everyone is getting the appropriate level of care and support. Private aged care is the responsibility of the Commonwealth government, but this is an initiative that we believe should be in place for the sake of elderly Queenslanders. We call on the Commonwealth government to follow our lead in Queensland to commit to safe staffing levels in all aged-care facilities.

This bill will require all of the 16 state-run residential aged-care facilities to have a minimum skill mix of 50 per cent nurses and a minimum of 30 per cent registered nurses out of the total care staff team. The bill also requires these public aged-care facilities to provide a minimum of 3.65 hours of nursing and personal care to residents daily. Given the horror stories we have heard from the royal commission and elsewhere of private residential aged-care facilities with one nurse to 100 patients or even one nurse to 200 patients across two separate facilities, these reforms will ensure Queensland Health aged-care facilities are setting the strongest example for the aged-care industry of what it means to provide a high-quality aged-care model which is centred around the person rather than a business model.

We need the Morrison government to follow Queensland's lead. This bill will also require transparency from the aged-care industry. The royal commission interim report stated that the aged-care system lacks fundamental transparency. Even the Commonwealth freely admits that the sector provides very little public information. That is why, as part of this bill, public aged-care facilities will report staffing levels and average daily resident care hours quarterly. In addition, all private aged-care facilities will be asked to publicly report staffing levels and average daily resident care hours quarterly.

Providing public information to elderly Queenslanders and their families is vital to ensuring that they can make the best choice about their living arrangements now and into the future. For the sake of transparency the Palaszczuk government is giving all private aged-care facilities an opportunity to voluntarily share their staffing levels. However, if private aged-care facilities choose not to, we will not be afraid to reveal the identity of those facilities that are unwilling to provide transparent information for elderly Queenslanders and their families. When it comes to transparency and accountability, it makes sense that public and private facilities are on the same playing field. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Harper, adjourned.

## MOTION

### Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness, Parliamentary Inquiry



**Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.00 pm): I move—

1. That the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly by 31 March 2020 on the effectiveness of the Queensland government's bushfire prevention and preparedness activities leading to the 2019 Queensland fires.

2. In undertaking this inquiry, the committee should consider:
- (a) analysis of fire reduction practices conducted and coordinated by QFES including its responsibility to issue notices to landowners to reduce fuel loads including state controlled land and national parks;
  - (b) the IGEM 2018 bushfire report's findings that overall bushfire prevention activities undertaken by QFES declined 83 per cent, completed hazard reduction burns declined 75 per cent, completed firebreaks declined 82 per cent and community education activities declined 88 per cent in 2018 compared to 2016;
  - (c) the impact that a \$13 million, or 25 per cent, cut in 2019-20 funding compared to the previous financial year had on the Rural Fire Service;
  - (d) Auditor General's report No. 5, *Follow-up of bushfire prevention and preparedness* finding that QFES still did not know if Queensland's fuel loads were being managed effectively;
  - (e) the appropriateness of funding provided by government to implement fire reduction practices on state owned land and national parks,
  - (f) the failure to implement any of the Auditor-General's recommendations in report No. 10, *Bushfire prevention and preparedness*; and
  - (g) whether juveniles being charged and convicted of arson and endangering property are being appropriately dealt with.

In a bushfire-prone state like ours, the government must stop at nothing to ensure that our communities are kept safe. Queensland should be as bushfire ready as it possibly can. That is why Queensland deserves a parliamentary inquiry into the ferocious fires that have threatened lives and properties. The next bushfire season may be even more destructive if lessons are not learned from what Queensland has gone through and may continue to go through this season. The current season still has a long way to go and homes, lives and animals are at stake across this great state of ours. We owe it to the general public and we owe it to our firefighters and our volunteers to ensure that the state's bushfire management practices are working the way they should.

After the recent brutal bushfires that swept across Queensland, the importance of a parliamentary inquiry cannot be played down. Last year, more than one million hectares were blackened in a fortnight of fires. I visited the devastated areas, including Baffle Creek, Bloomsbury and Agnes Water. At that time, those on this side of the House called for a parliamentary inquiry, but those opposite, on the Palaszczuk government side, were too weak and opposed it.

In September this year severe bushfires began to flare up again. Countless communities were put in harm's way, including on the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast hinterland, the Somerset area, the Darling Downs and the Southern Downs area. In Beechmont, I met Pamela Skeen, who lost her house. She fled the fire with little more than her canaries and Stewart's bag of undies, which she keeps telling me about. At Stanthorpe Kim Vogel and I stood in the ashes of his home after a fire raced up a gully and destroyed his property. I want to give a shout-out and thanks to Megan Stiffler and her QFES team for the work of QFES and what they did to save that town. Those firefighters were absolute heroes.

There were also the heroes of the Queensland Police Service who dealt with the fires around Peregian. I want to give a shout-out to senior constables Cam McLean, Mark Johnston, Darryl Campbell and Gabby Zwaan-Ward from the Nambour road traffic branch who went through the embers to get people out of their homes, making sure that people were safe in those Peregian fires. Those are the people who this motion is for—so that we can protect the lives of our hardworking volunteers, our police, our firefighters, the lives of the mums and dads and also the livestock and the properties that are getting burnt to the ground because of unsafe fire management practices across this great state. A parliamentary inquiry would guarantee that this state's bushfire management policies are helping, not hindering them.

We know that those opposite voted against this motion last year. When we look at the facts, we see that Queenslanders need to know why those opposite have failed to implement the Auditor-General's bushfire recommendations from five years ago—five years ago! The Rural Fire Service deserves to know why those opposite in the Palaszczuk government have slashed their funding by \$13 million. In 2018, bushfire prevention activities by QFES plunged by 83 per cent compared to the number of bushfire prevention activities undertaken in 2016. Those opposite should be doing more to prevent bushfires, not cutting back on proven safety measures.

A parliamentary inquiry would get to the bottom of these issues and provide a path forward for the people of Queensland. If this government wants to be more open and transparent—and it is clear, through its actions, that it does not—it will listen to the stakeholders it is ignoring. Why do landholders in this great state of ours say that the state Palaszczuk government is the worst neighbour they can have when it comes to bushfires? That is not the reputation that I want a government of this state to

have. The concerns of rural firefighters and communities in regional Queensland must be listened to. The LNP will continue to fight for the right of communities to feel safe. I call on this House to support a full, open and frank parliamentary inquiry.

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (5.06 pm): I rise to oppose the motion. It is a real shame that outrageous commentary by those opposite brings us here once more to fend off the politicisation of bushfires. At the height of the state of fire emergency declaration, our QFES staff and volunteers were battling more than 80 fires across this state. What did we get from the LNP members? Baseless accusations, misinformed headlines and the undermining of authorities. They do not understand that each time one of these ridiculous claims was made, it took QFES staff off operational duties. When their complete focus should have been on the emergency at hand, QFES staff were pulled away to debunk LNP attempts to scaremonger Queenslanders. It was frustrating, it was disappointing and it was disrespectful to our people.

I want to thank and acknowledge those opposition members who came to me, or to my office, to clarify and raise concerns rather than run a scare campaign in the media. That allowed QFES to fact check or take action for a swift resolution. I welcome all members of this House—government members or otherwise—to contact me or my office during operational events if they have concerns or issues rather than attempt to score political points. To those members, I say thank you.

Unlike those members opposite, I have nothing but gratitude and pride in our emergency services. Since September ground and aircrews have worked tirelessly to protect lives, businesses and vital infrastructure. I thank them for their selfless service to the people of Queensland.

I have been the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services for two years now. As a previous first responder, like many others in this House, I know nothing ever goes perfectly to plan and that we should always strive for better. That is why last month I requested the Inspector-General Emergency Management to undertake a thorough investigation into the state's emergency response to the September bushfires and the rest of the bushfire season. IGEM has consulted with relevant local, state and federal agencies and entities, the Queensland Police Service, QFES and, most importantly, bushfire affected communities such as Stanthorpe, Sarabah and Peregian Springs.

As the Palaszczuk government did after last year's fires and this year's floods, we want to hear where our preparation and response efforts were most effective and where improvement may be needed. This ensures that best practice is followed and areas where improvements can be made are identified. Future community consultation from IGEM will occur right up until the end of this season. IGEM will compile its seasonal review once the bushfire season is over. This review will be benchmarked against its own 2018 recommendations.

Despite all of that, here we are facing another call from the opposition leader for a parliamentary inquiry. In case the member for Nanango has forgotten, it was the one-term LNP government that established the IGEM role. To jog her memory, I refer the opposition leader to a media release of the then minister, now mayor, Jack Dempsey of December 2013 in which he said—

... the Inspector General role ... ensure ... emergency services work together efficiently and ensure all emergency responses meet high standards.

He further said that it—

... ensures all police, emergency services workers and volunteers will be able to spend more time on the frontline rather than battling bureaucracy.

I do not always agree with Jack, but Jack was right. By her own party's admission, my request for an IGEM review will ensure we meet high standards and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. Yet here we are.

If we want to talk about bushfire mitigation the numbers do the talking. The Palaszczuk government has approved on average 27,463 hazard reduction permits each year since 2015. Our highest year was 28,655 permits—1,300 more than the LNP's highest. Opportunities for hazard reduction burning this year were severely limited by the smaller window to burn safely. It is landholders who ultimately decide when or whether to undertake a mitigation burn and there are many reasons they may not do so. This includes the ongoing drought in many areas and the need to preserve fodder and feed for stock.

Our government will always work closely with QFES and with IGEM to ensure our preparations and our responses are in line with best practice. In relation to the QAO report, that was a report on a fire that was 10 years ago in a different state. We have our own report; it is called the IGEM report.

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.11 pm): In rising to speak in support of the motion, never before has Labor's warped and irresponsible ideology been demonstrated so publicly than when one reviews their dangerous policies and public statements on bushfires. There are those who are blaming a lack of action on climate change for the escalation in life-threatening bushfires. This issue has become the ultimate play of hysteria and political hypocrisy from those opposite. The real reason bushfires are burning out of control in Queensland right now is the crazy, zealotry way the left wing of the Labor party now controls the state in relation to these issues.

Last year the Burnett region saw some of the most terrifying bushfires Queensland has ever experienced and this year we are bracing for more. Already our crews have been put to the test this season and sadly it is only just beginning. Currently our crews in the Bundaberg and Burnett region are run off their feet. There are fires still burning all over the Burnett region: near Woodgate, Apple Tree Creek, Biggenden, Lowmead and near Colosseum. How long can we ask these people to keep up with this? When Labor stopped effective vegetation management, removed stock grazing permits, made it impossible to do any mitigation—many times on people's own country—natural disasters through man-made nonsense are now commonplace. Over the last two disastrous fire seasons our volunteers, who risk so much, are sick of putting their lives at risk while functioning under a system that is now effectively working against them.

Those opposite, who gleefully repealed sensible vegetation laws under instruction from those of the left of Labor, were warned. Farmers warned them that back-burning bans would cause fires, yet they all ignored the pleas of landowners, many who marched on our parliament—I remember—to tell the government what it should have done. Our state deserves a mature review into the devastation that continues to plague many parts of Queensland. Our state deserves the parliament to seriously review the effectiveness of the government's bushfire prevention and preparedness activities leading up to the 2019 Queensland fires. Most recall just how underprepared we were in 2018. We knew, farmers knew and regional communities knew that decades of neglect were going to transfer into major fire disasters. That is why this inquiry reviews fire reduction practices conducted and coordinated by QFES, including its responsibility to issue notices to landowners to reduce fuel loads, including on state controlled land and in national parks.

When the government tries to deflect and sanitise the IGEM 2018 bushfire review report findings to deflect that overall bushfire prevention activities undertaken by QFES had declined by 83 per cent, completed hazard reduction burns had declined by 75 per cent, completed firebreaks had declined by 82 per cent and community education activities had also declined we know we have a serious problem—a problem that sadly happens under incompetent Labor governments. The Labor government has failed to implement a single recommendation from the Queensland Auditor-General's 2015 bushfire prevention and preparedness report.

The question from Queenslanders is why are vital bushfire prevention measures not happening under Labor? Over the last few weeks I cannot tell the House how many calls we on this side have had to our offices. Many fires have started in national parks and on state controlled land. We owe it to our hardworking rural fire volunteers and the thousands of Queenslanders who have been affected by these devastating fires to get answers through a full inquiry. Can members believe that 136 children have been charged with endangering property in Queensland by lighting fires? Eighteen have been convicted.

Over the past five years Labor has failed to act on improving our preparedness and prevention activities which will save lives, communities and also save native vegetation and protect wildlife and livestock which is crucial to our economy. Queenslanders deserve to know from their government if it has conducted due diligence or whether it is bowing to environmentalist pressures not to back-burn. I share the concerns many Queenslanders hold about land management practices to control fuel loads and how our national parks are managed. Landholders want to protect their property and livestock. They need the support of QFES. Queenslanders are scared about what this season will bring. They are angry that nothing has been done since the horror we saw last year. In 2018 over one million hectares around the state, including a huge area of my electorate, was burnt out because of the mismanagement of state controlled land assets. It was absolutely devastating but was something we could have learnt from. Today there are 8.2 million hectares of national park in Queensland, with large areas currently being incinerated by fires that could have been avoided.

The Labor government has restricted access to millions of hectares of densely thickened eucalypt forests that have not been back-burned this millennium and that have no firebreaks. There is sadly no doubt that the Labor government has allowed our state and our people to become susceptible

to bushfires through its mismanagement. There is no question that the intense wind and heat we are experiencing has escalated the fires, but they are not the reason or the cause. The real reason is mismanagement under this government and its constant need to lock up more and more national parks and native forests. A high-risk bushfire area does not simply grow overnight. Labor kicked all the graziers out of the state forests so now they are overgrown and thick with combustible fuel. Labor has failed to conduct vital cool burns and as a result put our communities at risk. We can take actions now that could prevent these devastating bushfires in the future. It is time we talked about these issues, had a full inquiry, and got on with the job of protecting Queensland.

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (5.16 pm): I rise to oppose the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition because the review into bushfires in Queensland is already underway. Those opposite are late to the party when it comes to inquiries into bushfires in this state. The minister has already instructed the Inspector-General Emergency Management to undertake a review and that review is already underway. The people of Central Queensland, the people of Queensland more broadly, do not want politicians running an inquiry into bushfires. They want experts on the ground—through the Inspector-General Emergency Management, which was established by those opposite when they were in government—to undertake a full inquiry into how we manage disasters and, in particular, how we manage bushfire risk in Queensland. I believe that it would be a serious waste of taxpayers' funds to be flying politicians around Queensland to undertake an inquiry which is already underway by experts in the office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management.

I was quite shocked that the Leader of the Opposition came into this place to talk about bushfires and did not once mention Yeppoon, did not once mention Lakes Creek, Frenchville, The Caves, Gracemere, Stanmore—any of those communities, particularly those that have most recently been impacted by bushfire west of Yeppoon, like Maryvale, Lake Mary, Cobraball, Bungundarra, Bondoola.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs LAUGA:** I would be very pleased to invite the Leader of the Opposition to Central Queensland, to Keppel, to talk to some of the people in these bushfire affected communities. There was not a single mention in her motion about the people in my community who were affected, not a single visit in the aftermath of this bushfire.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left, the member for Keppel is not taking interjections. I ask you to cease so I can hear the speaker on their feet.

**Mrs LAUGA:** A single member of the opposition visited the Central Queensland region most recently.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs LAUGA:** I said one single member visited Central Queensland out of all those members opposite. Do the people of Lake Mary, Adelaide Park, Bondoola or Cobraball not matter to those opposite? In a five-minute contribution in this place why could the Leader of the Opposition not even mention the word Yeppoon—after 15 homes were lost, after 12,000 hectares of land was burnt, after thousands of lychee and mango trees were destroyed, after cattle was lost?

I have heard stories from people such as Leon Clothier, with whom I was talking the other day. He told me about the number of native wildlife that have come onto his property and that he has had to euthanase as a result of the fires. After such events, it is important that the people in this place visit communities to hear from the people affected. I can tell the House that if members asked Leon, Eddie or any of the other people affected by the bushfires whether politicians should travel to Central Queensland to undertake an inquiry into bushfires and how best to manage them, they would say that it would be a waste of money because the Inspector-General Emergency Management is doing just that right now.

The responsibility for hazard reduction rests primarily with landholders. They do a great job, working with our rural fire brigades and the 19 brigades that supported landholders during this most recent event. They work with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. They work with Ergon Energy and all of our utility providers. They work with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Bushfire mitigation and prevention is a partnership. I think that the government has the right balance. We have the right laws and frameworks in place for bushfire mitigation. We can always do better. After events

such as this, review and subsequent reform are important. They are integral. I appreciate that the minister has already taken action and that an inquiry into the most recent events is already underway. I do not support the motion before the House.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (5.21 pm): I rise to support the call for a parliamentary committee inquiry into Queensland's bushfire preparedness. Queensland has seen an unprecedented number of fires in 2019. Those fires have burned statewide, from the Far North to the border of New South Wales. The ongoing drought and unfavourable weather conditions have not helped and neither has the lack of controlled burning in many areas. An enormous volume of grass and vegetation adds fuel to any fire that is started deliberately, accidentally or environmentally.

On 13 February 2019 I asked the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, Craig Crawford, a question on notice, which I am happy to table.

*Tabled paper:* Answer to Question on Notice No. 55, asked on 13 February 2019, in relation the fire mitigation plan for the Ravensbourne area [\[2159\]](#).

My question was about the fire mitigation plan for an area within the Condamine electorate. I asked—

Will the Minister outline the department's fire mitigation plan for the Ravensbourne area north east of Toowoomba given the current ongoing dry conditions and large volume of vegetation in close vicinity to residential areas?

In his response the minister advised—

The Darling Downs AFMG considers and assesses the bushfire risk in the Ravensbourne area. This group, which includes local stakeholders such as representatives from Council, Rural Fire Brigades (RFBs) and QPWS met on 6 March 2019 to discuss risks, solutions, and plan mitigation operations for Operation Cool Burn 2019.

He further advised, 'The risks and the associated mitigation activities will be documented in the 2019 Bushfire Risk Mitigation Plan, that is currently being compiled.'

On 12 November a fire started in the Pechey and Hampton areas near Ravensbourne, in exactly the area that concerned locals have raised with me. That fire is still burning today. It has destroyed almost 20,000 hectares of land and seven properties, as well as vehicles and equipment. People in Crows Nest were forced to flee their homes as the fire came dangerously close to the township and an aged-care facility had to be evacuated. The huge fire caused a power outage in Toowoomba's water supply and a dozen surrounding smaller communities. That was due to no easement being granted along the power corridor and thick regrowth growing unmanaged underneath the powerlines. Residents were restricted to domestic water use only, as the council worked to repair the damaged network.

At the end of the second week of November, there were 80 active fires in Queensland, 293 vehicles deployed throughout the state, and 100 interstate and international firefighting personnel sent to assist local firefighters already deployed in Queensland. Surely that is of great concern to the minister and his 2019 bushfire mitigation plan?

Last week I met with a group of residents from Hampton. They advised me that no controlled burning activity has taken place for a number of years in the area. Their homes are on the edge of the Hampton National Park, which is so overgrown with vegetation that the signage can no longer be seen. I have a photo that I took at three metres distance from the national park sign, which I am happy to table.

*Tabled paper:* Photograph of national park signage covered by foliage [\[2160\]](#).

Controlled burning activities across Queensland needed to have taken place in the winter months of 2019, but from my inquiries very little has taken place. For the past 19 months, weather forecasters have continually predicted little to no rainfall for most of Queensland, but there has been no action on controlled burning. The damage and losses are considerable in Condamine and across the state. The cost to individuals, communities, native animals and infrastructure has not yet been counted. It will be significant and it will take time for the recovery process to take place. Again I ask the minister: what was the 2019 bushfire mitigation plan for the Ravensbourne area?

I take this opportunity to thank all of the firefighters who volunteer their time, those locally based and those from interstate and overseas, and the police and SES services personnel. The fact that the fire is suspected of being deliberately lit is frustrating and disappointing. We can only hope that the culprit is arrested and charged. There are many questions around that fire. It needs a parliamentary committee inquiry to cover all aspects, both before and after the event.

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (5.25 pm): I rise to oppose the motion. Firstly, I acknowledge the victims of these terrible fires. I acknowledge the communities, the families and the

individuals who have lost everything. People have lost their lives. I acknowledge that many members of this House have close family affected and, indeed, some of their communities have been absolutely devastated. I refer to members from both sides of the House. Personally I acknowledge my friends Susan, Michael, Lil, Eva and Jacob, who have pretty much lost their whole property near Thorburn. I also acknowledge the firefighters, police and other emergency services workers who have been working day and night. They are absolute heroes. We all pay tribute to them and thank them for their tireless efforts.

It is for the victims that I make this contribution. I will speak particularly to paragraph 2(g) of the motion of the opposition leader, which refers to the treatment of juveniles. We were all very distressed to hear that, unfortunately, a number of young people were involved in starting the fires. I think that horrified all of us. The solution that the opposition leader suggests goes to the heart of our Youth Justice Strategy.

We know that the community expects young people to be accountable for their actions and so do we. However, the community does not want young people to reoffend or indeed to offend in the first place. There is no person, no family and no community affected by a fire who would ever want to see that happen again to either themselves or to anyone else. We owe it to people right across the community to do things to break the cycle of offending. We have to ensure that what we are doing is working and that it is based on evidence.

That is why since February last year we have committed half a billion dollars to doing things that work. One of those things is restorative justice, in which offenders are confronted by their victims and hear about the impact of their crimes. The success rate of that is extraordinary, with 77 per cent of young people either not reoffending or reducing the magnitude of their offending. QFES's version of restorative justice conferencing is the Fight Fire Fascination program, which is aimed at young people aged between three and 17 who have committed at least one offence. The program has a great success rate, as 90 per cent of young people do not reoffend. Those are the sorts of results that we want to see. Those are the sorts of results that the communities, the families and the individuals who have been affected want to see. They want to know that never again will those young people do that to them or to anyone else.

When the LNP was in government, what were some of the programs that they cut? Restorative justice conferencing and the Fight Fire Fascination programs were two of the many programs that the LNP cut. I note that now the opposition leader—oh, my goodness—is very keen on those programs. She has said—

These kids should face real consequences for their actions & be made to apologise to their victims & even attend a burns unit.

She has said that they should consider real treatment programs for offenders.

It is a pity that the opposition leader did not have the same sentiments when she was the assistant treasurer and sitting around the budget table making cuts in those programs. There are probably a few reasons she made those decisions. One is that they meant so little to her that she cannot even remember making them. If she did, she would not be coming up with such helpful suggestions now. Another reason could be that she either could not understand or did not bother to find out how important those programs were. Another is that she is showing the ultimate hypocrisy and engaging in political pointscoring.

It is all very well to suggest these programs now. The opposition leader has not even bothered to find out that these are exactly the things the government is doing now. These are exactly the things that are showing results. These are exactly the reasons that those young people will not be going back and causing such damage to everyone else.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member, please do not rise to your feet unless you are rising to a point of order whilst a speaker is on their feet.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (5.30 pm): I support this motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. In doing so, I stand in solidarity with everyone who has been affected by bushfires across Queensland, in particular with those in the electorate of Scenic Rim. The region has now seen approximately three months of nonstop bushfire activity of some sort. The people affected by fires deserve answers. The people who have been fighting fires deserve an opportunity to air their issues openly and to know that they are being heard and listened to—not some type of in-house, behind-closed-doors inquiry. They deserve the truth.

**Mr Mickelberg:** Labor can't handle the truth.

**Mr KRAUSE:** That is right: Labor cannot handle the truth. Ten family homes at Binna Burra and in the Beechmont region were lost. Lives have been torn apart by the destruction of the most special place for families.

When we have unexplained deaths in the community, open coronial inquests are conducted. Thankfully, no deaths occurred in our region during this bushfire event. However, the next worst thing in anyone's life is the loss of their home. We owe it to those people in all parts of Queensland to get to the bottom of what went wrong when it comes to bushfire management.

On behalf of the hundreds of fireys and volunteers all over our communities affected by fire, I support the motion. They are tired. They are sick of fires and they are sick of smoke. The people of Scenic Rim are sick of being covered in smoke.

I was out at Cunninghams Gap a couple of weeks ago when the fire went up Mount Cordeaux on the Boonah side of Cunninghams Gap. Land which had not been subjected to back-burning and hazard reduction burning for 20 years went up in 45 minutes. It looked like a nuclear explosion from the other side, such was the ferocity and the amount of smoke going into the air. There was too much fuel on the ground in that national park. We should have an open inquiry into the management of state owned land and national parks. The fireys know what has gone on in the past. The fire wardens and the people who have been around these regions for years know what went on in the past and they know what is not going on right now and what has not gone on for too long.

One of the fire wardens in my area told me that, in the good years, National Parks used to drop firebombs out of helicopters on the Main Range National Park to do their hazard reduction burns. They said that it has not been done for years. We are seeing the result of that inaction on the Main Range, where people cannot put out those fires.

It might be alright if we could put up a wall between parks and private land, but we cannot. The people who are bearing the most costs from these fires are landholders who are suffering already from drought and now the remainder of their feed is being burnt out by fire. It is a tragic disaster for these people who have suffered so much and are suffering more as a result of the mismanagement of state owned land.

Fireys also want to talk about whether there is enough local input into decision-making when it comes to fighting fires on land that they know best. They want to talk about hazard reduction burning on private property especially and the processes involved so that when they go into people's properties and are expected to put out fires they do not have to deal with overgrown vegetation on a range of private properties because hazard reduction burns are too hard to do. We need to look at that and not internally. People's homes have been lost. We need to look at it in an open and transparent manner. That is why we should have this inquiry. People are demanding answers. They deserve answers and they also deserve to know that everybody is listening to what they say in an open and transparent manner.

We also need to have a real talk about managing bushfire risk in these peri-urban areas like Tamborine Mountain that are surrounded by national park. There are an awful lot of burn-offs that have not been done there as well. Some 7,000 people live on a plateau more or less surrounded by national park. We need to have a serious talk about what will happen and whether steps need to be taken immediately, or at least when the terrible conditions that exist right now abate, to reduce fuel loads in those areas. If we do not, I fear that the next time we have a motion like this in parliament we will not be able to say, 'Thankfully, no lives were lost.' I support this motion entirely.

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (5.35 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the opposition leader. There is no need for the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to undertake an inquiry into the effectiveness of the Queensland government's bushfire prevention and preparedness activities. This motion is simply politicising an issue that should have bipartisan support from both sides of parliament.

I have five minutes to speak, and I would much rather spend five minutes praising the heroic efforts of our firefighters who have been fighting bushfires than opposing this motion. As an example, the Pechey fire covers 17,895 hectares and has been burning since 12 November 2019. This fire has required 282 responses by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and has involved 120 vehicles. The response has involved three brigades, three stations, one command vehicle, two trailers, eight appliances and 118 volunteers.

The Palaszczuk government saw this horrendous bushfire season coming. We invested more than \$52 million directly into the Rural Fire Service in 2018-19. This included \$36.7 million in operating budgets and \$15.3 million in funding for appliances, which was a significant increase for the Accelerated RFS Fleet Program. This accelerated program resulted in 119 new RFS appliances delivered to brigades right across Queensland. These appliances were positioned in communities based on risk and fit-for-purpose capability. Many of these appliances were utilised in the recent events by interstate firefighters to assist the community and provide additional surge capacity.

The 2019-20 budget for the RFS is \$40.8 million including additional funding for P3 masks. By claiming there was a decrease in state funding for the RFS, the opposition leader is playing with numbers and ignoring the facts. The Palaszczuk government provided \$15.3 million in extra funding in 2018-19 with the accelerated fleet program. As the accelerated fleet program has now been completed, the annual RFS budget can continue to build on appliances at a manageable pace while still focusing on ensuring the operations of the service are maintained.

I have nothing but praise for the firefighters in my electorate of Ipswich West who have been heroically fighting fires in Ipswich and surrounding areas for weeks. Firefighters from stations like Pine Mountain, Marburg and Rosewood have been fighting fires in Thornton, Left Bend Creek, Rosevale and Hidden Vale for weeks. They are the true heroes.

As I said, I oppose the motion moved by the opposition leader. I am disappointed that she is politicising this issue. What the opposition leader is doing is just what we expect from LNP members: misleading and scaring Queenslanders. Their claim of funding cuts to the Rural Fire Service is baseless. In fact, the Palaszczuk government is fast-tracking delivery of new service equipment to our brigades.

The Palaszczuk government has delivered 332 new appliances to the RFS as part of our commitment since we came to power in 2015. That is an average of 58 new trucks every single year compared to just 81 new vehicles in the entire three years of the Newman-Nicholls government. Putting aside spending on trucks, the \$40.8 million in current funding is still 11 per cent higher than the LNP's last budget. We are also investing in an unprecedented \$7 million in aerial operations to add a new dimension to our firefighting capability. As I have said, the opposition leader is just reinforcing what is increasingly apparent to Queenslanders: the LNP does not have a clue about the regions or the safety of Queenslanders.

 **Mr BOYCE** (Callide—LNP) (5.40 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by my colleague the member for Nanango, the Leader of the Opposition, Deb Frecklington, for an inquiry into the effectiveness of the Queensland government's bushfire prevention and preparedness activities leading to the 2019 Queensland bushfires. Here we go again: another session trying to convince an out-of-touch, incompetent Labor government that we need to have a serious look at how we are managing and preparing for bushfires.

What are those opposites doing? They are doing absolutely nothing. They argue that everything is okay, that nothing needs to be done, meanwhile people's lives are at risk, homes and businesses are being lost, our beautiful forests and parks have been destroyed—all costing millions. Wildlife, flora and fauna and koala habitats have been totally wiped out in some areas. Those opposites parade around as environmentalists who are nature lovers. What a load of rubbish. They are hypocrites and endoplasms who want to blame it all on climate change.

NASA scientists report that global wildfires have been decreasing—in fact, 24 per cent over the last 20 years—and the proportion of the world's population affected by fire has massively decreased. Academic studies on damage due to weather and Australian bushfires report that there is no increasing trend and conclude that there is no discernible evidence that the losses are being influenced by climate change due to emissions of greenhouse gases.

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology website provides a mass of easily accessible data. These charts show no trend in the frequency of droughts over the past 100 years, nor in total rainfall. That future warming may increase fires in Australia is speculative. What will definitely matter is where people build their homes and how we plan and manage for bushfires. Again, the trend all around the world shows that we are becoming more resilient thanks to technology and planning.

The Labor government does not want to do any planning or use better technology. Instead it says, 'Let's make sure every firefighter has a blue card. Let's fine a farmer a million dollars for putting in firebreaks. Let's cut funding to the Rural Fire Service by 25 per cent.' Hazard reduction burns have declined 75 per cent, and completed firebreaks have declined 88 per cent. These figures are absolutely shameful because the government is appeasing the sacred cow—'let's protect the environment'—and the insane ideology of the inner-city, goat-cheese-eating basketweavers who think they are environmentalists.

As a result, our environment is being destroyed because of a lack of understanding, poor planning and inaction. Australia will always have bushfires. Our eucalypt forests are disasters waiting to happen if they are not managed properly. Let us have this inquiry and get better results for the next time that this happens.

I have been the first officer on the local fire brigade for 20 years. I have recently relinquished my position simply because I am not there. Over that time I have seen the slow erosion of what works in practical terms in fighting fires, so you can take it from me that we need to re-evaluate how we do things in regard to bushfires. I support the motion.

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (5.44 pm): I rise to oppose the motion. One year ago the region around Mackay was on fire. Large bushfires are new to my region, and one thing that we found out was that rainforests do burn. I would like to recount a story from someone caught up in the bushfire.

Trapped in her car as a fireball rolled over the bonnet, Eungella resident Marilynne Wright heard the banging on her passenger seat window. Looking across, Mrs Wright saw a rural firefighter yelling one thing: 'Get out!' It was around midday on Tuesday, 27 November. A fire on Dalrymple Road was moving towards the Wrights' home. With only minutes to spare before the fire arrived, Mrs Wright said that she ran through the house to see what she could save. 'My husband said that it was all clutter, but to me it was memories. It was one of those moments—I realised there was nothing I could take. We grabbed some food and shoved it in the car. The fire was all around us—crawling through the grass. It was so hot things were spontaneously combusting around me. Even the dust in the air was exploding.'

Ian Wright, her husband, went first down the driveway, which was already bordered by flames. When she tried to follow, a fireball exploded over the bonnet of her car. 'I disappeared under the fireball,' Mrs Wright said. The rural firefighters helped her escape the flames and retreat to safety. The Wrights did not just get to safety; they rolled up their sleeves and supported all of the volunteers who were out there on the fire lines and provided food for them.

At Eungella and Finch Hatton 121,000 hectares were burnt from 16 November 2018 to 5 December 2018. There were 10 emergency alerts, 120 bushfire community warnings, two evacuations, three dwellings destroyed and four damaged, eight sheds destroyed and one damaged, and 21 dispatched using eight aircraft.

Today what we have heard from those opposite and from the Leader of the Opposition comes from a 2019 report from New South Wales. We need to follow up-to-date evidence and reports from Queensland. The response from those opposite is to want to fly politicians around the state looking at the damage. People on the ground do not want to see politicians who do not know about fires in their backyard. They want the experts to get on with the job.

It is clear that the members opposite do not understand the role that QFES plays in managing bushfire risk. Landholders decide when to undertake a mitigation burn. The role of QFES is to grant a fire permit and to assist landholders. There are many reasons they may not seek a bushfire permit. This includes ongoing drought and landholders preserving fodder and feed for stock.

The responsibility for managing fuel loads rests with the landholder. QFES actively encourages this responsibility through a range of activities such as leading area fire management groups, using the permit-to-burn systems, constructing firebreaks, grazing, slashing and mulching. Andrew Houley from the Rural Fire Service told me that his biggest problem is landholders who want to have bushland right up to their house. We are out there educating landholders so they know that they need to get out there and apply for their permits.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs GILBERT:** Members opposite who are calling out should have some respect for the landholders because some of them probably vote for them but maybe not after today. In my area we are assisting QFES and the rural fire brigade. After the fires we handed over keys to trucks for Eungella, Seaforth, Calen and Eton. Andrew Houley showed me areas where landholders needed to burn off. He found it very frustrating that they had not done so.

*(Time expired)*

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.49 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the opposition leader. The motion we are debating tonight is important. This motion is a heartfelt call for a public inquiry into bushfire preparedness across the state. It is about getting real answers for those Queenslanders who want us to have a public parliamentary inquiry and who have suffered the impacts now of not one, but two, unusual and frightening fire seasons. This is a genuine and reasonable request made on behalf of all Queenslanders. We deserve to know the truth.

All Queenslanders deserve to know why this Labor government has overseen an 83 per cent reduction in overall fire prevention activities. Those volunteers who are still battling fires in the Scenic Rim deserve to know why there was a 75 per cent reduction in completed hazard reduction burns. Those farmers who have had their crops destroyed at Byfield near Yeppoon—which I saw—deserve to know why there was an 82 per cent reduction in completed firebreaks. Those Queenslanders who lost their homes to bushfires in Ravensbourne deserve to know why there was an 88 per cent reduction in community education activities. Do not believe me: it is right there in the Labor government's own IGEM report into last year's bushfires. The Labor government's own Operation Cool Burn figures show alarming falls in bushfire prevention measures by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services in 2018 compared to 2016. While the Labor Party should be doing more to prepare for bushfires, instead they are cutting back on proven bushfire prevention measures. That is why we need a bipartisan public inquiry into these bushfires.

The LNP is not alone in calling for this bushfire inquiry. Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland, the group that represents those volunteers fighting on the front line against these devastating bushfires, has called for answers. At the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland general meeting on 28 September 2019, the volunteer group moved a motion calling for a full parliamentary inquiry into the bushfires. Those fighting the fires want answers, and the only thing between them and the truth is the Labor government.

Our fireys do an incredible job protecting the public and property, but they are being let down by a Labor government that is failing to ensure emergency services have the resources they need to do their job. Despite the report identifying the massive drop in measures, strangely IGEM failed to make any recommendations to address this shortfall. Why was this? Clearly, the IGEM report was politically sanitised to soften the blow on the Labor government, but they could not stop some truth slipping through the cracks. The same report shows that Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, which is responsible for issuing notices to clear fuel loads, only issued 12 notices to landholders to reduce fuel loads on properties and state-controlled land or national parks.

To make matters worse, Queensland Audit Office report No. 5 of 2018-19, titled *Follow-up of bushfire prevention and preparedness*, found that Queensland Fire and Emergency Services does not know if Queensland's fuel loads are being managed effectively. This seems a crazy state of affairs when you consider the role that Queensland Fire and Emergency Services plays in servicing Queenslanders. Clearly, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is failing to discharge its duties in directing private and state government owners of land to properly manage their land and conduct fire reduction burns. In fact, the Auditor-General says that all five recommendations—fully agreed by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services from the 2014-15 report—were still incomplete and outstanding five years later.

It is completely unacceptable that for five years Labor has failed to act on improving preparedness and prevention activities that will save lives, communities and native vegetation and protect wildlife and livestock. It is completely unconscionable for Labor to have let down Queenslanders by failing in their responsibility to coordinate and manage bushfire mitigation. But the Labor government has not stopped there. It is now clear that Labor is making a massive cut to Rural Fire Service funding in Queensland. Rural Fire Service funding has been cut by \$13 million this financial year, which is a 25 per cent reduction from the 2018-19 budget. That means less money for fire trucks, materials and the training needed to protect Queensland lives and property. Why should those tasked with fighting bushfires in Queensland be given less at a time they desperately need more? We need to make sure we have a full parliamentary public inquiry into bushfires, and the Labor government should support this motion.

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts) (5.54 pm): I rise to speak against the motion. The combination of severe prolonged drought and persistent hot, dry and windy conditions have shaped a bushfire season unlike anything any of us have ever seen before. The 2018 bushfires stand out in our state's recent history as the first time in Queensland the 'catastrophic' fire danger category was triggered. We saw rainforests burn for the first time, and this year we have experienced severe fire conditions earlier in the fire season than we have ever seen before. Records have been broken, traditional owners are telling us there are no stories to compare to what we are seeing now, and experts in fire management are telling us that this is the new normal. All of this points to the fact that the impacts of climate change cannot be ignored, but in the Leader of the Opposition's long motion there is not a single reference to a changing climate.

We know that the LNP members like to bury their heads in the sand when it comes to this issue—just ask the member for Callide—and we know they have no plans for tackling it. Instead, as we have heard today, they would rather attack the hardworking men and women who risk their lives protect the community. It is a sad day for this parliament when the LNP opposition would rather criticise fireys and park rangers than acknowledge the impacts of a changing climate. In my portfolio, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service firefighting crews have been deployed across the state, and many departmental staff have been helping behind the scenes in coordination centres, incident management teams and the state operations centre. Those men and women work hard to protect our communities, and they deserve nothing less than our full support and respect.

What is ironic about this motion is that it was the former LNP government that recklessly slashed \$10 million from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's salaries budget, which meant there were 60 fewer rangers to look after protected areas and respond to bushfires under their watch, yet the LNP members come in here and attack rangers and dedicated firefighters. It is a disgrace! Since the start of this year's bushfire season, officers from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service have been engaged around the clock working with emergency services to keep communities safe. The Department of Environment and Science has more than 500 staff trained as fire crew, and our government is investing \$13 million for fire management this financial year. In contrast, in 2014-15 the LNP government spent just \$8.5 million on fire management. In addition, in this year's budget we have allocated an extra \$16 million over four years and \$2.6 million in ongoing funding to provide improved capability for bushfire management in Queensland's parks and state forests.

Since January, QPWS staff and rangers have conducted over 290 planned burns covering more than 1.4 million hectares. This is the largest area covered in the last six years and is more than double the target—something the member for Callide might like to pay attention to. Since the Palaszczuk government was elected QPWS rangers consistently met their targets for planned burns, and in the last two years they have exceeded those targets. It is increasingly apparent that Queensland will face more severe bushfire conditions as we experience a changing climate. The IGEM review report acknowledged that in this era of climate change such large-scale bushfire events are likely to become more common as bushfire seasons become more prolonged. I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition to read this report. Our protected areas will not be immune from these fires.

I know that the LNP members like to throw mud, but I would like to state for the record that I am extremely proud of the efforts of rangers, emergency services and members of the community during these unprecedented events. In particular, I would like to praise the mammoth effort of QPWS rangers who, on top of fighting unprecedented fires, have also conducted more than double the targeted planned burns this year. I would again like to encourage the Leader of the Opposition to read the full report, which praises the work of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, particularly their good neighbour policy, as a 'good example of a collaborative approach to cross-boundary management'.

Unlike those opposite, we are stepping up to tackle complex issues like a changing climate. It is a sad reflection on the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP that they would rather play politics than acknowledge this issue and attack the vital work our public servants do to protect the community and our unique environment. The government will oppose this motion.

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

**AYES, 43:**

**LNP, 37**—Bates, Batt, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyce, Crandon, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Hart, Hunt, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McArdle, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Sorensen, Stevens, Stuckey, Watts, Weir.

**KAP, 3**—Dametto, Katter, Knuth.

**NQF, 1**—Costigan.

**PHON, 1**—Andrew.

**Ind, 1**—Bolton.

**NOES, 46:**

**ALP, 46**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Lynham, Madden, McMahon, McMillan, Miles, Miller, Mullen, B. O'Rourke, C. O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Pegg, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Stewart, Trad, Whiting.

Pair: Mellish, Wilson.

Resolved in the negative.

## HEALTH TRANSPARENCY BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 3887, on motion of Dr Miles—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (6.05 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the bill before the House. I want to start by thanking the members of the secretariat who have worked hard not just on this bill but on the inquiries that we are undertaking into aged care and other matters. It has been a difficult time but also a very rewarding time. I would like to place on record that there would not be a person in Australia who has seen and heard the royal commission who would not be moved by the tales of horror and the like that it has heard. It is bringing to us an image of a situation that needs major change and review. I also want to praise those workers who are in aged care who are doing the right thing every day. We hear of the very sad stories, and there are many of those, but there are many operators and employees, both public and private, who are doing their very best in a very difficult situation and they should also be acknowledged.

I turn now to the bill itself. There are three purposes of the bill: to establish a worker skill mix ratio and fix the minimum average daily resident care hours, to collect and publish data from public and private hospitals, and to amend the Health Ombudsman Act. The draft regulations set the minimum hours of care in a state aged-care facility at 3.65 hours per patient or resident per day. When we questioned the health department, we learnt that no research existed to establish how that figure was derived. There is no international research, from my recollection, that could be pointed to which shows how that figure was derived. In fact, during the inquiry it was made quite clear that the figure was such an unknown that research would now begin to establish what it could be and perhaps what it should be. To reinforce that fact, the bill has a two-year period of introduction to implement the ratios established by the research. If the government is going to put into the House a bill and regulation that sets a requirement, one would have thought there would be research to substantiate the figure. That is not the case in this scenario.

The other point is that the minimum daily resident care hours will apply to state aged-care facilities, as stated in the draft regulation. There are 16 of those across Queensland that are operated by Queensland Health, but there are 33 multiservice providers in Queensland Health that offer a similar service and there are 11 transition healthcare programs operated by Queensland Health that provide a similar service. Illogically, it is only the 16 state aged-care facilities that are required to comply with the regulation. The multipurpose services and the transition healthcare program operators, which are all operated by Queensland Health and provide similar care to aged-care individuals, are not required to comply. That is an inconsistency that needs to be addressed.

There is another question that arises in relation to who will be providing the care to the resident in terms of their level of training. The regulations indicate that in the state aged-care services one half of the staff must be nurses but only 30 per cent of those need be registered nurses, or RNs. The regulation makes it clear that there is no set pattern as to what proportion of the 3.65 hours a patient is to receive should be provided by an RN, an EN or an AIN. In fact, what takes place is that the number of patients are added up and divided into the number of hours of care provided. It could well be that a patient would not see an RN from one day to the other and would not see an EN from one day to the other. They may see an AIN on an ongoing basis. My understanding of the proposal behind the bill is that it will ensure the best possible care by qualified personnel is provided to residents. The way the ratio works, by breaking it down into the relevant hierarchy of qualifications, does not substantiate that. That is a real concern and it needs to be properly addressed.

The other issue that the bill deals with is the quality and safety of information. The bill provides quite clearly that the department or Queensland Health can seek information from private providers in relation to certain information. That information must be supplied. If it is not, up to 100 penalty units can be imposed. The private operator has the right to opt out of providing that information if they so desire. The concern that I have is how will that information be utilised? How will the placement of that information on the website be put together? More importantly, how can we be satisfied that the information on the website is going to reflect the accuracy and the quality of the work provided by the private operators? That is a concern going forward and needs to be very carefully addressed.

The chair of the committee spent the bulk of his time talking about the federal government and also the royal commission. I am not going to get into a debate about who is right or who is wrong. Tonight what this is about and what the other inquiries that have either been completed or are ongoing

are about is getting a solution for those who need help because they are in their later years and they require treatment and a proper home to reside in. The royal commission's interim report did make this comment at page 12—

Our work over the past year has shown a system that needs fundamental reform and redesign—not mere patching up. The scope and complexity of this task are great. We are strongly of the view that our recommendations must be comprehensive and must reflect all of the evidence. Therefore, this Interim Report sets out what we have learned to date, draws some preliminary conclusions and outlines key areas for our work over the next 12 months.

In due course, we will recommend comprehensive reform and major transformation of the aged care system in Australia.

That comment is absolutely accurate. It is not a piecemeal answer that we want. We want to completely change the system. We do not want politics. What we want is answers and a new way forward because our parents or our grandparents are either in a home or will be in a home and we owe them an obligation to ensure we get this right. Please let's keep the politics out of the debate here tonight.

The last point is about the amendment to the Health Ombudsman Act 2013. There are four recommendations that stem from an inquiry that took place in 2016, if I recall correctly, and those recommendations have been agreed to by the government. The OHO is perhaps one of the most important offices in this state. It provides a venue and an avenue for consumers to lay complaints against registered and unregistered practitioners across a field of endeavours. The amendments moved here tonight will allow a better, seamless undertaking by the OHO with regard to AHPRA and the national boards as well. The bill should be supported, but a lot more work needs to be done.

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (6.15 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health Transparency Bill 2019. Like my colleague the member for Caloundra said, it would be lovely to keep politics out of this important debate. Unfortunately, not all of those on that side of the debate listened and have displayed that sense of integrity.

The member for Mudgeeraba had the audacity to stand up and talk about how valuable they consider the elderly in their community to be and how important it is that we look after them. Can I just take the opportunity to remind the members here tonight and also the rest of the community of the appalling way they treated health workers including during the doctors dispute but, most importantly, what they did to the elderly in my community. At Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit 85 residents lost their home that day when, with the stroke of a pen, the current Leader of the Opposition sat at the table and decided that it was appropriate that a fully functioning and operating Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit could be closed. Where was the integrity there?

**Mr Crandon:** What happened to you wanting to keep politics out of it?

**Ms PEASE:** I will take that interjection from the member for Coomera because I am reflecting on the fact that your people on that side of the House—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stewart): Through the chair, please.

**Ms PEASE:** Through the chair, I say to the member for Coomera that the member for Caloundra has indicated that we keep politics out of it. However, no-one else has. The member for Mudgeeraba got up and had a go at everyone and I am responding to that.

**Mr Crandon:** What about you?

**Ms PEASE:** Where was your level of integrity, member for Mudgeeraba?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Through the chair, please, member for Lytton.

**Ms PEASE:** I would like to remind everyone of the harrowing videos that we have seen of the treatment of residents in some of the aged-care facilities across Australia. In common with many others, they will stay with me forever. Australians watched in horror as vulnerable aged-care residents were abused by those charged with caring for them. Let us not forget those vulnerable residents who were used as a corporate pawn in the recent Earle Haven debacle.

We can do so much better than this. It is time and it is timely that this bill is before the House. The main purpose of the bill is to improve transparency in public and private health facilities and in residential aged-care facilities; and to amend the Health Ombudsman Act in order to improve the operation and efficiency of the health complaints system. The bill sets out to establish a legislative framework for collecting and publishing information about public and private hospitals and residential aged-care facilities on a transparent website being developed by Queensland Health.

The bill will also amend the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to introduce a minimum nurse and support worker skill mix ratio and minimum average daily resident care hours in public residential aged-care facilities. The bill will also amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 to implement the recommendations of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's inquiry into the performance of the Health Ombudsman's functions pursuant to section 179 of the Health Ombudsman Act.

International research indicates that transparency of health service information leads to better quality care and outcomes. Queenslanders presently do not have easy access to information about public and private health services or aged-care facilities. This bill will enable consumers to make informed choices through being able to easily access and compare different providers. Consumers will have access to open, current and relevant important information published about providers. This visibility will encourage providers to be competitive and accountable, ultimately leading to a better health system for Queenslanders.

A new Queensland Health website will be developed to improve the transparency of the health and aged-care sectors in Queensland. The website, co-designed with consumers, will be an easy way to access information about health and residential aged-care facilities that is up to date, informative and Queensland focused. This website will provide a single point of reference for consumers to view and compare information about public and private hospitals, health facilities and residential aged-care facilities. This website will help consumers make informed decisions about their health care and the care of their beloved elders and will also contribute to important health literacy.

Public health facilities, including all public hospitals, and private health facilities, including day hospitals and private hospitals, will be required to provide general information and quality and safety information. Quality and safety information includes information about the facility's accreditation statement, information about activity performed by that service, access to care information and, importantly, information on patient outcomes. It will also include information about waiting time for surgeries and outpatients as well as things like infection management and hygiene practices. The types of quality and safety information able to be required from health facilities can and will be expanded by regulation. This will provide flexibility to expand the available information over time.

The bill also allows Queensland Health to request and publish information from both public and private healthcare facilities about staffing levels. Contextual information will also be provided to help consumers understand how staffing ratios impact and relate to quality of care. Private aged-care facilities will be able to opt out of providing information for the website. If an aged-care facility chooses not to provide information, it must indicate in writing to the department its decision to opt out, and this will be published on the new transparency website.

This bill will require residential aged-care facilities operated by Queensland Health to maintain a minimum nurse and support worker skill percentage and also to provide a minimum average number of care hours to residents on a daily basis. I am optimistic that private providers will follow our lead on this, given their terrible track record to date.

I acknowledge the secretariat of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee who did an amazing job assisting the committee in its deliberations during what has been a particularly busy time for the committee. I also thank the department for its briefing and acknowledge my fellow committee members.

As I said at the start, it is timely that this bill is introduced. I wish that we did live in a world where everyone did the right thing—a world where we took care of our vulnerable and elderly because it is the right thing to do, a world where we do not provide just the bare minimum, and a world that is not ruled by the mighty dollar. Our elders have worked hard to provide for their families, our economy and our state. We cannot keep letting them down. They deserve so much better. With this bill, we will have relevant information about public and private health facilities and, importantly, residential aged-care facilities so that we can make informed decisions about our beloved elders who have contributed so much to our lives. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (6.23 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Health Transparency Bill. I thank all members of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, particularly, as my colleagues pointed out, the hardworking secretariat, headed by Rob Hansen. Our committee has certainly had a busy time over the last two years with inquiries and legislation, with particular inquiries receiving thousands of submissions requiring a great deal of work by the secretariat. They have done an amazing job. Indeed, over the last year or so the committee has

done a lot of work in the aged-care area and is due to report to the House next March. I also acknowledge the work being conducted by the federal government in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

I note that one objective of the bill is to establish a legislative framework for collecting and publishing information about public and private hospitals and residential aged-care facilities. I note also that the bill amends the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to introduce a minimum nurse and support worker skill mix ratio and minimum average daily resident care hours in public residential aged-care facilities. The third objective of the bill is to amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 to implement recommendations of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's inquiry into the performance of the Health Ombudsman's functions pursuant to section 179 of the Health Ombudsman Act 2013.

Every Queenslanders—indeed, every Australian—deserves the highest quality of world-class care in our residential aged-care facilities. We need to ensure that all levels of parliament focus on our older citizens. As the demand is bound to increase over the years to come, we need to stay ahead of it in terms of quality care and quality of life for all.

Whilst the LNP will not be opposing the bill, we acknowledge that this particular bill was part of a Palaszczuk Labor government commitment to the union. Whilst it appears to be a solution, particularly to some of the Queensland state-run aged-care services to which the bill relates, the actual ratios are not really evidence based. Indeed, in the committee hearings there was much confusion as to how the ratio was arrived at. It turns out that it was pretty much an average of the lowest and the highest currently in the services, with no real evidentiary basis able to be provided to the committee. During the committee hearing the then acting director-general—

The evidence base that suggests there is a relationship between staffing and outcomes in residential aged care is that there is very little research underpinning it at this stage.

...

We did a traditional literature search looking at literature that may be international. Given that there is little research, one of the commitments under this policy is that that research occur. On this implementation of minimum hours per resident day in the public sector, we would seek to research and evaluate that so we understood what the impact would be of putting a floor into the hours per patient or resident day.

This is similar to the approach this government seems to try with other departments. Whenever this side of the House challenges Labor on its relevant ministers' poor oversight and outcomes of various departmental areas, its default position tends to be to try to attack former governments and announce how many staff it is employing. What departments need as well as highly trained, capable staff are the policies, procedures and legislation to operate effectively. This is where research and evidence based policy and legislation are important.

How exactly was the ratio of 3.65 hours that forms part of this legislation arrived at? As pointed out in the statement of reservation from the LNP members of the committee, the acting director-general's explanation was—

I think it is fair to say that, because we were focusing on a minimum rather than an optimum, we felt that it was appropriate—at some level there was an arbitrariness to determining what that was. We used both of those data inputs to make that decision, noting that more research was needed to make a determination about the link and the relationship between staffing and resident outcomes and that there was a commitment by government to put a minimum in place. Essentially that is how the figure was arrived at.

He also stated—

There was the existing range, which is what we knew to be the case across our services, noting that the various services had different levels of acuity.

Therein lies an issue, because not all residential aged-care services are the same and not all deliver services to a high number of patients with greater need. I think the trouble with a simplistic ratios approach based on arbitrary figures, as outlined by the director-general, is it can overlook greater needs across the sector and overlook better solutions. Our committee report recommendation No. 7 states—

The committee recommends that the results of the research project as acknowledged by the Director-General, Queensland Health, on page 7 of the transcript of the public briefing of 9 October 2019, be made publicly available upon completion.

I look forward to the publication of that research to better inform how these ratios are actually impacting service delivery. I note that the ratio minimums, however, only apply to the 16 named Queensland Health state aged-care facilities. As noted in our statement of reservations and as outlined by the member for Caloundra, there are 33 multipurpose health services and 11 transitional healthcare

programs operated by Queensland Health offering aged-care services and, surprisingly, the ratio will not apply to these residents even though significant numbers of Queenslanders access and use these services. Also of some concern is the phase-in period of two years. If it is asserted that ratios below what is proposed are inadequate care, then people may be living in conditions in Queensland state-run facilities with substandard care for another two years. Also, the \$10 million cost is to come from the existing health budget resources.

If statistics continue to play out the way they currently are, a good number, if not the majority, of the members here today will reach well into their senior years and require some level of care. The member for Caloundra was right when he talked about us all having a responsibility to work together to ensure that all of those different facets that make up quality care are looked at. This bill deals with only one aspect that has no real evidentiary base. It is a measure of our society how we look after our seniors, what efforts we make to improve their lives and give them the highest quality of life possible, because it is not just about medical care; it is also about care in general—that people in residential aged care receive good quality food, activities, outings, general care and, most importantly, personal love and friendship that comes not so much from how many people are there but from people who actually care.

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (6.32 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health Transparency Bill 2019. As part of the health committee we visited numerous aged-care facilities and a common issue raised by residents was that staff were good but there were just not enough of them. When chatting to residents, some spoke of having to wait for extended periods of time when they had pressed the buzzer for personal assistance. Queensland's elderly residents in aged-care facilities deserve to be treated in a timely manner to ensure their dignity. We heard stories of elderly residents waiting for long periods after pressing the buzzer due to limited number of staff and that, given the delays, they had soiled themselves or worse—that is, they got out of bed and had a fall causing injury, and some of those injured residents died as a result.

As members are aware, what happened at Earle Haven on the Gold Coast should never happen again. It was disgraceful, it is not good enough and it cannot be allowed to happen again. Leading Age Services Australia has released a report stating that there are approximately 200 aged-care facilities that were at an unacceptable risk of going broke. Insufficient federal funding has led to stories. For example, we heard that some aged-care facilities had not provided high-quality care for residents and that some are just so underfunded they are running on skeleton staff. We also heard stories of feeding residents on \$6 a day and letting staffing levels fall dangerously low. Some also believe that chemical and physical restraints have been used in a way to match staffing levels. This bill will allow family and friends to know how many staff are at an aged-care facility that they are considering for a loved one and if the aged-care facility refuses to provide this information we will advise the public on the website. As for the 16 publicly owned and operated aged-care facilities, we will mandate staff-to-patient ratios. Our ageing Queenslanders need to be looked after and provided with high-quality aged care in a timely way.

As part of the aged-care review, we also heard horrific stories of people waiting in excess of four years for their in-home support packages and some had passed away before they had been received. These delays in receiving their packages mean that we have seen an increase in hospital admissions as a result. This is an absolute disgrace. Our Prime Minister and the federal government should hang their heads in shame for treating our ageing Queenslanders in such an appalling way. This is about making aged care better for our loved ones, and they deserve to be treated with dignity and provided with high-quality care. Our ageing Queenslanders deserve the best.

This bill will also provide expanded transparency of information from public and private hospitals. This publicly reported information from both hospitals and aged-care facilities will be reported on an interactive website which is being developed to help consumers compare private and public facilities when making decisions about their health care. This website will publish transparent public information about public and private hospitals including general information, compliance information, process of care and patient outcome data for clinical specialties. The availability of this public information is a win for all Queenslanders and their families. We on this side of the chamber believe in transparency and this will allow Queenslanders to make informed decisions about their health care based on the best available publicly reported information. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (6.37 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Health Transparency Bill 2019. Like my colleagues on the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, I want to begin by thanking my fellow committee members for their

participation but especially the secretariat for the incredible amount of work that it has done not just on the inquiry into this bill but also the much larger and very closely related inquiry that we are undertaking into aged care, palliative care, end-of-life care and voluntary assisted dying. It is an enormous body of work and in some ways the inquiry into this bill was indistinguishable from what we were doing in that inquiry, but I am eternally grateful for the support that it provides all of us in the work that we do.

I support the bill in what it seeks to achieve, specifically that objective of shining a light on practice in our healthcare facilities and some of the most serious dysfunction that we are seeing now in the aged-care sector. Fundamentally, the Greens support ratios in the provision of residential aged-care services, and I would argue that that should be a fairly uncontentious proposition. We do not dispute in very many other circumstances that ratios are appropriate—for example, in the provision of child care, where we are obviously talking about equally vulnerable members of our community. We do not dispute that class sizes should be capped in our schools with the provision of that essential service and we do not really have any debate anymore that patient-staff ratios in hospitals are appropriate, and it should be no different here.

During the hearing we heard some of the predictable responses that ratios in aged care are unnecessary, that they are a blunt instrument and that they will drive up the cost of care unnecessarily by not taking into account the level of care required—for example, where care requirements are relatively minimal.

To be frank, from what I have seen and heard as a member of the health committee during both the inquiry into this bill and the committee's broader work over the past 12 months, these arguments really just do not wash. Ratios represent a minimum standard. They do not represent a cap on care. They do not and should not prevent more rigorous monitoring and enforcement of broader, more detailed standards of care and required outcomes. There is nothing at all that is mutually exclusive about having staff-patient ratios and safeguards around the quality and safety of care provided to some of our most vulnerable Queenslanders. I support the government's decision to impose ratios in our state-run facilities and, of course, expect that this rollout would be closely monitored to better understand the consequences of implementing ratios in different facilities and to ensure that other standards of care and support for residents are not compromised.

In the broader context of this bill, we need to largely put aside issues that arise with in-home care, but many of the same fundamental problems are evident there as well. We cannot ignore the fact that most people want to age in place and they are being let down by a system that does not facilitate that. At the moment there is just not enough money being put towards home care packages, and the federal government's most recent offering in this space falls far short of what we need to see this problem addressed. Ultimately, we are forcing people into residential aged-care facilities when they do not want that outcome. We are robbing these people of their dignity and their autonomy. Quite aside from that, in pure dollars and cents terms it is often far more costly an outcome than if they were able to continue to age in place.

Ultimately, all the pushback against ratios and disputes over the costs and benefits of any new reporting requirements all just masks the more fundamental problem that I suggest is at the core of our aged-care system at the moment. The crux of this issue is that governments continue to assume that the needs of our elderly and vulnerable can be met almost exclusively by the market. Over the past year, the stories that the committee has heard, the evidence given to the royal commission and the findings in its interim report lay bare that our aged-care system is deeply dysfunctional. As we have heard from other members, all the indicators are that it is getting worse. The demographic shift that we are seeing at the moment and will see over the coming decades is almost beyond comprehension. In looking forward to 2050, the aged-care sector is desperately ill equipped to care for the number of people who are going to require hands-on residential care.

Dementia is soon going to be the biggest killer of Australians, but it can be a horrifically slow decline. The additional demands on residential aged-care facilities as a consequence of that growing cohort cannot be overstated. I think it is now blindingly obvious that we need a complete paradigm shift in the provision of aged care in Queensland and in Australia. We need to acknowledge the fundamental conflict between the pursuit of profit and the universal provision of high-quality aged care. Aged care has to be treated now as an essential service.

Ensuring that we all have access to high-quality aged care should be considered a fundamental responsibility of governments at all levels. If left to the private sector, high-quality aged care that affords dignity and autonomy to residents will be available to ever fewer of our vulnerable elderly loved ones.

For-profit aged-care facilities may provide high-quality services to those who can afford it, but where does that leave everyone else? The cost of decent food, the activities and outings that we would like to think people get to enjoy, individual attention and basic health care will be continually squeezed to fatten profit margins. The chances are that one day most of us will need this kind of care and almost certainly each one of us will have a family member or a loved one who does. I support the bill. I particularly welcome the additional transparency it will allow in the aged-care sector, but it is really just the tip of the iceberg. I trust that the broader issues being exposed in the aged-care sector will be addressed by all levels of government with the urgency that they deserve. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (6.44 pm): I rise in this House to speak in support of the Health Transparency Bill. We know how important this bill is to Queensland families, our older Queenslanders and the future of providing good quality care for the ones we love. My mum is 73. When you are propositioned with the thought that you might have to put a loved one into aged care, it is a really tough decision. I have friends who have had to go through that process of trying to find a place for their family member and worry that they are going to get the care that they need. As we have seen writ quite large this year, that is sometimes not the case.

I have been privileged to visit a number of aged-care facilities in the Redlands electorate. I was just at Marebello for its Remembrance Day service. The staff there are just an absolute delight. They are possibly under the pump, but they are an absolute delight and provide the best quality care with the resources and the time they are allotted. As I said, we have seen some of the most appalling treatment and really poor care of our elderly and frail in aged-care homes play out before our eyes—treatment I know I would never want anyone in my community to experience, treatment that I would never want anyone I loved to experience, treatment that is just unacceptable.

We saw this treatment play out at Earle Haven in the middle of the night. I know that the member for Gaven and Minister Miles were very quick to react, help get that situation under control and find places for those poor elderly and frail people in the middle of the night. It is just unfathomable that that situation could ever have occurred. We have since learned that there was a lot more detail known and that a number of red flags at Earle Haven should have been picked up well before that point in time in the middle of the night.

The royal commission into aged care, the Moreton Bay aged care centre at Wynnum that the member for Lytton pointed out and, again, Earle Haven have shone a light on how badly our federal government has dropped the ball on regulating aged care. Some private operators are simply putting profits before people. We have heard through the committee process that some residents are being fed on \$6 a day. I do not think one person in this chamber could be fed on \$6 a day. I would love to see a show of hands. Some private facilities have staffing levels that fall dangerously low. As Minister Miles noted in his introductory speech to this bill, it is disturbing that the federal government opposed this bill and wrote a lengthy and detailed submission opposing it. Again, it is unfathomable that anybody would oppose providing better care. More people means more care. That is what providing desirable staff ratios will deliver.

We on this side of the House know that we have to care for our elderly. We know that we are all going to be elderly one day. The framework that this bill puts in place will help the provision of aged care in the future. Aged care is a growing trend. As we continue to live longer and have an increasing aged population, we really have to think about this issue.

The Palaszczuk government is focused on ensuring that we provide the best level of care to Queenslanders, particularly in the facilities that we control. The Redlands electorate has one of Queensland's largest ageing communities. My electorate has many different types of aged-care facilities, both public and private. It was wonderful to have the members for Thuringowa, Rockhampton and Lytton from the health committee join me on a visit to the Redlands aged-care facility that is co-located near Redland Hospital. It was wonderful to speak with the staff there who are already operating at staffing levels that are appropriate. That was made very clear in the conversations that I had with some of the patients there on that day as well as from talking with the staff. It was wonderful to see that that facility is already doing what it should be doing. In our meeting with the staff they all agreed that this legislation would reinforce what was already happening for them on the ground and that it was something that should be happening on the ground in every single aged-care facility in the state of Queensland.

This bill deals with three main issues. The most significant of those issues is to establish a legislative framework for obtaining and publishing comparative information about public and private health facilities and residential aged-care facilities. The bill makes it a requirement for public residential

aged-care facilities to maintain a minimum nurse and support worker skill mix ratio and a minimum number of hours of care per resident each day. This bill seeks to mandate the minimum care hours per resident. It will encourage private facilities to report their care hours to the public.

This bill is about making sure that our parents, our grandparents, the ones we love and members of our community are treated with respect, with dignity, and are provided with the appropriate level of care. I do not think there is a person in this House who would want to go into a place that did not offer those basic fundamentals.

It is mindboggling that the federal government has opposed this for so long. Shonky contractors and greedy owners have been let off the hook so that they can continue to exploit elderly and vulnerable people. It has continued to let dodgy contractors and greedy owners exploit vulnerable Queenslanders for profit. It is absurd to claim that this legislation will create some sort of regulatory burden. It is crazy. Every operator should know how many staff they have. I am sure they run a weekly, fortnightly or monthly payroll. They will know what their staffing levels look like. This is not an onerous burden. It is pretty darn simple, in fact. They should just be made to provide that information.

We know there are some private facilities operating where one nurse can be covering 50 patients. This split shift nonsense, where one nurse might be operating between two different facilities that are 10 minutes apart, is crazy. I do not think anyone would want this level of care for their family members. Nurse-to-patient ratios are used in hospitals, educator-to-child ratios are used in childcare facilities and teacher-to-student ratios are used in our schools. All these important sectors have improved reporting and openness. It is on the record. The research shows that when you are transparent about what you do you are obviously providing a very good service. It is time we applied this same logic to the elderly, who are equally deserving of our respect and of our care.

A properly federally funded and staffed aged-care system will relieve pressure on our public hospital system as well. I had the privilege of visiting Redland Hospital, meeting with our nurse navigators and the people who work in the emergency department and understanding what drives that emergency department. There are a lot of presentations from our aged-care facilities in our emergency departments. Better staffing will improve outcomes within our public hospital system. We are blessed in Queensland to have a world-class healthcare system. We know that transparent information about health care leads to better patient outcomes, increased safety and higher quality care.

This bill also makes changes to the Health Ombudsman Act that will continue to improve how complaints are dealt with and the performance of our Health Ombudsman's functions. Our government is committed to delivering better health outcomes for all Queenslanders and increased safety and higher quality care in private and public hospitals, health facilities and aged care. We know that access to transparent information is an integral part of that commitment. This bill will give comfort and certainty to our families—our sons, our daughters, those who have to make that really tough decision about putting their loved one into an aged-care facility—that their loved one is going to get the best quality care. It is something every son, daughter, family member or friend deserves to be assured of.

Our seniors have been the hardworking Queenslanders who built this state. They deserve to be looked after. They deserve a better aged-care system than we are delivering. It is incumbent upon us to make sure that we set the frameworks that provide better care for the increasing number of people in Queensland who will continue to age. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (6.52 pm): As the Liberal National Party shadow minister for communities and shadow minister for disability services and seniors, I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Health Transparency Bill 2019. From the outset I wish to note that the Liberal National Party opposition will not be opposing this bill.

The true measure of any society is how it treats and looks after its most vulnerable. Sadly, when it comes to some of our most senior Queenslanders there has been a number of devastating failures in the provision of care for senior residents, as numerous reports of recent events have shown. To that end I acknowledge and commend the federal Morrison coalition government for establishing the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, a decision which has the full support of the Queensland Liberal National Party.

The recently released interim report by the royal commission makes for some truly devastating and heartbreaking reading. As all elected representatives in this House will know, this 10-month inquiry has revealed systemic failures in the aged-care sector, with the royal commission even going so far as to label the sector as 'a shocking tale of neglect'.

Following the release of the interim report, the prompt response by the federal LNP government is to be commended. The Prime Minister announced more than half a billion dollars in funding for the sector, including nearly \$500 million for 10,000 additional home care packages, more than \$25 million to be spent on better medication management programs to reduce the use of chemical restraints and close to \$5 million to be spent on meeting new targets to stop young people with disabilities being placed into aged-care facilities.

Against this backdrop, this legislation before the House today seeks to establish and amend and forge a number of substantial legislative changes aimed not just at the residential aged-care sector but also both public and private hospitals. The main purpose of this bill is to improve transparency in public and private health facilities and in residential aged-care facilities. This bill also seeks to amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 in order to improve the operation and the efficiency of the health complaints system.

As per the stated policy objectives, this bill sets out three key objectives: firstly, to establish a legislative framework for collecting and publishing information about public and private hospitals and residential aged-care facilities; secondly, to amend the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to introduce a minimum nurse and support worker skill mix ratio and minimum average daily resident care hours in public residential aged-care facilities; and, thirdly, to amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 to implement recommendations of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's inquiry into the performance of the Health Ombudsman's functions pursuant to section 179 of the Health Ombudsman Act 2013.

In my time I would like to focus on two of the key aspects of the bill: nurse-to-patient ratios and the new reporting framework. As has been articulated by my Liberal National Party colleagues—and I take this opportunity to thank in particular the shadow minister for health, Ros Bates MP, as well as the member for Caloundra, who is the deputy chair of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, Mark McArdle MP, for their extensive and considered examination of this legislation—the genesis for implementing nurse-to-patient ratios in aged-care facilities dates back to the 2017 state election after commitments that were made by the Labor Party at that time. Now, more than two years later and as we approach the final 11 months of this parliament's term, Labor seeks to amend the Hospital and Health Boards Regulation 2012 to prescribe the operational aspects of the aged-care ratios for public residential aged-care facilities, including a minimum nurse percentage—that is, registered nurses and enrolled nurses—of 50 per cent with a minimum of 30 per cent of nurses required to be registered nurses during a 24-hour period and a minimum average daily resident care requirement of 3.65 hours.

It has been foreshadowed that these changes will be implemented over a two-year phase-in period. By the time these changes will be fully implemented it will be some four years since Labor first made this commitment to Queensland seniors. It really does beg the question as to why it has taken this length of time. It also invites many Queensland seniors and their families to question the importance that the Palaszczuk Labor government is placing on quality care services for residents in aged care and the priority that Labor places on its own obligations to deliver its commitments.

Turning briefly to the new reporting framework, I note that this bill will enable a new legislative framework to compel public and private health facilities and residential aged-care facilities to provide information and to enable that information to also be published. I also note that it is intended for this information to be published on a new interactive website. As stated in the bill's explanatory notes with regard to public and private health facilities, this bill will empower the chief executive of Queensland Health to request general information and quality and safety information. As for public and private residential aged-care facilities, again as per the explanatory notes, the chief executive of Queensland Health will be empowered to collect and publish general information and residential care information and that will certainly enhance transparency and accountability.

The chief executive may also request information which aids in the understanding of this information. That will potentially allow for shared learnings to occur across various health institutions and across the entire sector here in Queensland. Importantly, the information or data that is ultimately published must not contain personal information about an individual, in accordance with privacy provisions. Whilst the website will not publish confidential information, this legislation does provide a mechanism for information obtained under health legislation to be used for and on the website, and this will ensure that relevant confidentiality provisions are not breached when information obtained under such legislation is used for publication.

Ultimately, this comes down to what the Liberal National Party has been saying all along: Queenslanders deserve a world-class healthcare system and, what is more, Queenslanders want to see world-class aged-care facilities that look after our most senior citizens in Queensland. As I said at

the start of my contribution, the true measure of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable. In our society, Queenslanders who have worked hard all of their lives deserve nothing less than to be treated with the utmost dignity and respect, particularly those who require the services of aged-care facilities.

Sadly, in recent times when concerns have been raised regarding the provision of care by state owned facilities, we have seen the Palaszczuk Labor government more interested in reverting to its usual political blame games and its blame-Canberra approach. Queenslanders deserve better. It is time that the Palaszczuk Labor government worked collaboratively to deliver what is in the best interests of all Queenslanders.

I acknowledge all members of the Queensland parliament's Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee for their work in examining this legislation. Today it was a pleasure to be a co-patron of the inaugural gathering of Parliamentary Friends of Dementia, along with the member for Lytton, Joan Pease. I acknowledge Dementia Australia and the various members who attended and contributed to today's event. I look forward to supporting Dementia Australia into the future, given that dementia is a significant issue in our community. I have run out of time, so I will conclude by saying that the Liberal National Party and I will not be opposing the Health Transparency Bill 2019.

Debate, on motion of Dr Rowan, adjourned.

## ADJOURNMENT

### Vogler, Ms S; Nanango Electorate, Bushfires

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (7.01 pm): Tonight I would like to wish a member of the media gallery all the best for her future. For more than a decade Sarah Vogler's by-line has been at the top of political reports in the *Courier-Mail* and the *Sunday Mail*. As the Speaker has mentioned, this is Sarah's last parliamentary sitting week in this House. Fairness and professionalism have been hallmarks of her longstanding and valued contribution to Queensland politics.

From election campaigns and estimates hearings to the everyday arena of state politics, I have always enjoyed working with Sarah. She is diligent in attending almost every major LNP event, with pen and pad in her hand. Sarah broke stories first, told her stories fairly and pursued leads fearlessly.

Over the past three years, Sarah has been the *Courier-Mail's* state political editor. Her leadership of the team has delivered compelling and professional journalism to all Queenslanders. Sarah will certainly be missed. On behalf of the Liberal National Party, I thank Sarah for her contribution to state politics and wish her all the very best for her future career.

I also place on the record my thanks to the Emergency Services workers and volunteers who have fought so hard to protect communities in the Nanango electorate and right across Queensland, including Yeppoon. They have gone to extraordinary lengths in extreme conditions, sometimes even risking their lives, to protect us. Acting Inspector Bruce Groer has shown me where the fires came right up to the edge of Kingaroy and spoke of the amazing job that the hardworking crews did to protect local properties and infrastructure.

In the southern part of the Nanango electorate, more than 20,000 hectares have burned across the Crows Nest and Somerset region. That was the start of the Pechey fire, which has burnt all the way around into the Somerset region. Local fireys have been aided by New Zealand firefighters. On the weekend David Littleproud, the federal member for Maranoa, and I met with them and the local crews. Local fireys have worked hard to save some 1,400 homes. My thoughts are with the four local property owners who have tragically lost their homes.

Crews have also battled difficult conditions near Kilkivan at Black Snake, near Jimna, Kilcoy, Villeneuve, Monsildale and Kinbombi. On behalf of the community, I express my sincere thanks for their diligence, professionalism and determination to fight the fires. I wish them all a very safe and merry Christmas.

### Mining Industry, Automation

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (7.04 pm): Two weeks ago BHP announced that they were automating 300 jobs at their Goonyella Riverside Mine. That was accompanied by an almost laughable promise that there would be no redundancies. We all know why that is. The federal LNP government

has allowed them to get away with the casualisation of most of their workforce, which means that they can axe those 300 staff at a moment's notice and without the bother of having to pay out their entitlements. That is a situation that should have the federal LNP hanging their heads in shame. However, the greater worry here is what comes next. I am told that what BHP is attempting here is a world first: automating trucks at an existing strip mine. If they succeed, we can bet that automation will spread like cancer throughout Central Queensland's mining industry, killing jobs and livelihoods as it goes.

We also know that many of the jobs that remain will probably be shifted south to Brisbane, which is what we have seen happen over the past few decades with fly-in fly-out workforces. I always shudder when I hear resources minister Matt Canavan talk with pride about how Brisbane is the biggest mining town in Queensland. He may be happy with that situation, but as far as I am concerned those are jobs that have been taken away from regional Queensland. Of course, both Senator Canavan and the member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, must bear some personal responsibility for allowing casualisation to spread in the first place. When those people call themselves champions of the mining sector what they really mean is champions of BHP and Glencore, not the people who work at the mines.

To the mining companies I say this: our region will not stand by and watch as more jobs are shifted south. We may not be able to stop automation, but we can at least avoid a repeat of the Western Australian experience where you have operators in Perth controlling trucks in the Pilbara. Every single automation hub needs to be built in Central Queensland—in Rockhampton, Mackay and other mining towns. There should be no such thing as a Brisbane based automation hub. They need to be staffed by permanent employees. BHP and its fellow miners, not to mention the federal government, need to understand that we are absolutely fed up with this and that if they do not listen they are going to have a fight on their hands.

### Gold Coast, Infrastructure

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (7.07 pm): It is all happening on the Gold Coast and, in particular, in the fabulous electorate of Mermaid Beach, which is ably represented by the current state member who has been lobbying extensively on his constituents' behalf. Stage 3A of the Gold Coast Light Rail project, which will run from Broadbeach to Burleigh, almost exclusively through the electorate of Mermaid Beach, has been made into a reality by a \$269 million funding commitment of the Scott Morrison federal government to infrastructure projects that build better cities. This is a fantastic funding package, as opposed to the Bill Shorten Labor funding commitment of only \$112. Labor Senator Murray Watt, a reject from this state parliament, should hang his head in shame as a lobbyist for the Gold Coast community.

This project would not have come to fruition under a Labor state government without the considerable largess of funding from ScoMo's government. It highlights how this Labor government has sent Queenslanders broke, with its \$90 billion of government debt making it unable to complete state government responsibilities with state funding. State Labor has become a beggar to the federal government for money, because it has borrowed on its credit card to the max and has taxed Queenslanders until they bleed through the pocket. Again we have private enterprise coming to the rescue of a broke Palaszczuk Labor government with Star Casino offering \$100 million to upgrade the Gold Coast Convention Centre, another state government responsibility, in return for exclusivity of operation on the Gold Coast for the next 25 years.

This is a great deal for the Gold Coast, Queensland and a stony-broke Palaszczuk Labor government, because the mooted Global Tourism Hub, centred on another casino licence, was a doomed and fanciful fairytale that not even Labor's spin doctors could identify, promote or justify in their quest for more poker machine revenue which would have killed off many of the community and sporting clubs relying on poker machine revenue for their existence.

The Deputy Premier and Treasurer and the tourism minister need to grab this convention centre deal with both hands, because without Star Casino funding there will be no extension of the Gold Coast Convention Centre which everyone on the Gold Coast agrees is a must-do infrastructure project for the government.

Trying to give free Gold Coast public lands to any aspiring international casino licence operator in return for poker machine revenue is a dodgy look by anyone's calculations, so it is time to stop the fantasising about a so-called global tourism hub and accept the gift-horse being offered by the Star Casino group for an immediate extension of the Gold Coast Convention Centre. Without federal government funding or private enterprise funding, nothing will get done on the Gold Coast under this stony-broke Labor government.

### Morayfield Electorate

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (7.10 pm): I have updated the House on a number of occasions about the upgrade at Morayfield train station. I provide a further update that the upgrade continues. Only a few weeks ago we had the removal of the old wooden footbridge, which is many decades old. The train station itself is over 100 years old. To preserve that local history, that wooden footbridge was donated to the Caboolture Historical Village and will live on, telling the stories of commuters from the Caboolture and Morayfield areas for many more decades to come. I acknowledge Queensland Rail for their very generous donation to the Caboolture Historical Society. I also acknowledge the Caboolture Historical Village for the great work they do in keeping history alive in our local community.

Coming up next week are some exciting local events. My annual seniors forum and Christmas morning tea will be held once again next Friday. I invite all locals in the Caboolture region to attend. Once again, the very famous Everalld Compton will be attending as our guest speaker. He has a wealth of knowledge and a real inspiration for life. I caught up with him just yesterday here at Parliament House. At age 88 he is still going strong. He encourages everyone as they get older to remain active in life and promotes longevity for people in our community. We will also have a very special performance from the Caboolture Community Choir, as well as other presentations from organisations like Energex, local police and local community organisations.

The other local event happening next Saturday is the Drive for Kids in Care Christmas toy appeal. About 10 years ago I helped launch this appeal in the Caboolture region with a great community champion, Michelle Rigger. We started with about \$1,000 to purchase toys for local kids in foster care, supporting the department of child safety's foster care Christmas toy appeal. This year, I am brave enough to say that the single biggest donation to the department of child safety's Christmas toy appeal will come through this Christmas drive appeal at Morayfield. It will be hosted by the Morayfield Shopping Centre. We have many thousands of dollars worth of toys to deliver. The local community will also be supporting it. I acknowledge Morayfield Shopping Centre and all of the local organisations and businesses which donate to this toy appeal. It will be accompanied by a car show and other special presentations. I encourage locals to support the toy appeal.

### Coomera Electorate, Road Infrastructure

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (7.13 pm): Tenacity and determination certainly pay off. I must say, I have had to drag the Minister for Transport kicking and screaming to deliver most of them, but it has been so worthwhile. I must admit, I have been making it easy for the minister by providing a list of priorities for him. I have done much the same for other ministers, with the police minister as a good example.

It is probably best to list some of the successes so far: the opening of exit 54 resulting in the \$500 million Coomera Town Centre as well as hundreds of millions of dollars of additional private investment in the northern Gold Coast—tick; successfully achieved the prioritisation of the opening of the 'bridge to nowhere' at Pimpama, taking pressure off Yawalpah Road—tick; won the fight to locate the Pimpama Railway Station adjacent to the bridge—tick. Still to come on that front though: to double the number of car parks from a reported 250 to at least 500 and a fast-tracked construction. Under Labor it will be 2024, which is far too far away. We need it by 2021-22.

Some more successes are: nominated the site for the Pimpama Police Station on Cox Road, Pimpama, even when I was told it would never be built—well, we did not give up and, yes, it will be built—tick; negotiated the land for the Coomera dredge spoil facility, which should have been up and running three years ago but, thanks to Labor, has only just been opened. Still to come on this list are the off-ramps. We have dredged the river. Now we need the capacity to get the superyachts into dry dock. Under Labor, the off-ramps have stalled. Who would build a highway without building the off-ramps? The answer is simple: Labor.

Further successes are: lobbied for a bus stop on Dixon Drive at Pimpama and ultimately the redirection and extension of the 722 bus route and additional bus stops—tick; fought to stop the proposed Jacobs Well youth bail house facility and the forced closure of the Jacobs Well Environmental Education Centre—tick; established a health subcommittee and hosted the first of many health forums, the main focus being getting a hospital on the agenda for the northern Gold Coast; ensured the second M1, the Coomera Connector, is firmly on the agenda to take 60,000 vehicles off the M1—tick; an additional 14 police officers at Coomera—tick. Still to come: at least 25 more police officers just to catch up with population growth.

Further successes are: the duplication of exits 41 and 49, fighting for the federal funding of \$50 million that forced the minister to be dragged kicking and screaming to announce \$96 million on budget day—tick; worked behind the scenes with the member for Forde to ensure these projects were on the agenda and part of the mix for the recently announced bailout of the Labor government—tick; and increased car parking at Ormeau Railway Station from the announced 70 to at least 110 additional car parks—tick.

This list is not exhaustive. There are many more wins, but it is important to look to the future, including the upgrade of exit 38, an additional exit 45 South, south of the Pimpama River, and an additional northbound entry onto the M1 on the western side at exit 45 North, as well as improvements to exit 45—and the list goes on.

### Springwood Electorate, Road Infrastructure

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport) (7.16 pm): I want to let everyone know how pleased my community and I are with the progress of the Palaszczuk government and its contracting partner Lendlease on the M1-Gateway merge upgrade project and with the delivery of the South East Busway extension to Springwood. This project is ahead of schedule and already delivering reduced travel times to the locals I represent.

We have already cut the ribbon on the new four-lane Underwood Road bridge. Our significant investment has created 131 jobs and has been a big boost to the local economy. Just ask any of the businesses at Centre Place, the Rochedale Shopping Village or the Springwood hotel. Jobs have been created through locally sourced contractors on the project—local suppliers of construction materials, providers of equipment and local contractors and workforce.

It is exciting that works will now get underway for the northbound stage of this congestion-busting upgrade, a significant upgrade that will see 8.5 kilometres of widening, including construction of a new Lexington Road on-ramp, five lanes between Paradise Road and Logan Road, and repurposing of the Fitzgerald Avenue off-ramp to the busway. With construction expected to commence in early 2020, people can expect to reap the benefits of this Labor delivered project very soon.

Delivering local, job-creating, congestion-busting infrastructure, especially that which supports public transport, is good for our community. It is good for families, who can then spend more time with each other, and it is good for the business community. Every dollar saved by not sitting in traffic helps fund another job or another apprenticeship for local business. That is why I was excited to join the Premier, members of this parliament and the Prime Minister in Rochedale South—right opposite the new park-and-ride that will soon be delivered—to announce a \$1.9 billion package of infrastructure investment. This announcement has been welcomed across the community and on this side of the House as it will deliver more jobs for Queenslanders.

Like others, I was shocked to hear the LNP Leader of the Opposition criticise the agreement that will create 6,000 jobs in our community. Let the record show that the Liberal National Party in Queensland are opposed to job-creating infrastructure. Let the record show that they are opposed to the Rockhampton Ring Road, the Linkfield Road Overpass, the Mount Crosby Road interchange upgrade, the Beerburrum to Nambour rail project and the Loganlea station relocation.

In fact, the LNP in Queensland are opposed to everything. They are opposed to the upgrades to the M1 and opposed to the jobs on the Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3. We know that they are opposed to the construction of the North Queensland Stadium. We know they are opposed to the thousands of jobs being created on Cross River Rail. We know that they were even opposed to the Commonwealth Games and the significant economic uplift that brought to the state. They are opposed to everything because the LNP stand for nothing.

### First Home Owners' Grant

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (7.19 pm): Expanding the First Home Owners' Grant to existing homes in regional Queensland would help boost floundering economies. Amendments to the existing First Home Owner Grant Act 2000 would help sell existing homes stagnating on the property market in rural and regional Queensland.

There are thousands of Queenslanders outside of metropolitan areas who would stand to benefit from an expansion of the grant. If you live outside a metropolitan city in Queensland, you would be hard-pressed to find an expanding community in rural and regional Queensland where there is a large, new housing market. There is already a substantial oversupply of established homes sitting on the market that could become affordable to first home owners if the grant was available to them.

With next year's budget looming, this will be Labor's last chance to rebuild their credibility in rural and regional Queensland. By expanding the First Home Owners' Grant, they would be able to help people achieve their dream of owning their first home and get off the rental merry-go-round. There is very little housing development happening in small towns such as Ingham, Cardwell and Tully. Expanding the grant to existing homes would help reduce the market saturation while helping people to own their own home sooner.

I tabled a draft bill earlier this year for the consideration of members and in my introductory speech I outlined the KAP's version of the First Home Owners' Grant and what it may look like. The provisions of expanding the First Home Owners' Grant would allow first home owners to use the \$15,000 grant to purchase an existing home valued under \$300,000 in a rural setting in Queensland. The same \$15,000 grant could be made available for improvements when purchasing an existing property of the same value. The bill is a commonsense solution to a prevalent problem that would help rural and regional Queensland's property market bounce back, especially after the recent floods and drought.

Young families keep telling me that, while the First Home Owners' Grant currently applies to only new homes, they are forced to rent properties at rates in excess of \$300 a week. Yet there are perfectly good established homes where the loan repayments would be \$300 a week if they were able to access the First Home Owners' Grant to help with their deposit.

After recently gaining the support of the HIA, I will continue to lobby strongly for the expansion of this grant in next year's budget. Next year, 2020, is an election year and voters should think carefully about who is backing policies like this which could stimulate the communities of rural and regional Queensland. Regional Queensland is the backbone of this great state—

**An honourable member:** Hear, hear!

**Mr DAMETTO:** I take that interjection. It is schemes like the First Home Owners' Grant, if applied correctly, that could be just the tool needed to help decentralise this great state.

### Woodridge Electorate

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.22 pm): I am proud to be part of a government that is listening to and delivering for the Woodridge electorate and the great community of Logan. When it comes to health care, education, jobs and infrastructure, it is only Queensland Labor that will put our community first.

This week I was pleased to be able to contact principals, parents and staff at the many fantastic state schools in my electorate with some very cool news ahead of the school holiday period. That is because the Queensland Palaszczuk government is fast-tracking funding to accelerate the air-conditioning of state schools across southern Queensland. This means that in 2020 every classroom in every state school in the Woodridge electorate, both primary and secondary, will be air-conditioned. This is a decision that will benefit Berrinba East State School, Browns Plains State School, Browns Plains State High School, Burrowes State School, Crestmead State School, Harris Fields State School, Kingston State School, Kingston State College, Marsden State School, Regents Park State School, Woodridge North State School, Woodridge State School, Woodridge State High School and Yugumbir State School.

I am also pleased to say that schools close to the Woodridge electorate, schools where a very large number of students who live in the Woodridge electorate are enrolled—schools like Mabel Park State High School, Mabel Park State School and Marsden State High School—will also be air-conditioned. It will not just be classrooms that will be air-conditioned; libraries and staffrooms will also be air-conditioned.

This air-conditioning investment is about creating a better learning environment for our students and teachers, and it builds on the fantastic work being done every day by our schools and P&Cs. The Department of Education will now work closely with our schools to ensure that this work starts as soon as possible in 2020. This project will not just benefit our schools; it will also help support jobs in our community.

Another big announcement made recently that will also be of great benefit to the Woodridge community is the relocation of the Loganlea train station—a smart infrastructure decision that has the backing of all levels of government. This move will complement the Palaszczuk government's \$500 million investment in the expansion of Logan Hospital—allowing us to activate a health and knowledge precinct for our city, including the hospital, Loganlea TAFE, Griffith University and the

University of Queensland. It will make our hospital and TAFE more accessible, particularly for public transport users, while helping to attract greater private sector investment to this part of Logan to create an innovation hub of wellbeing for our community. Both of these job-creating projects show that the Palaszczuk Labor government continues to deliver for the Woodridge electorate.

### Nambour Police Beat

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (7.25 pm): Last year my friend the member for Bonney brought a deal to the House that the Minister for Police simply could not refuse—a police beat for a \$1 lease—and he was rewarded with a police beat. Well I have even better news for the minister. I have negotiated a premises for a police beat in the CBD of Nambour at no cost for a lease!

The police minister and I have had some running battles over the last two years about the much needed Nambour Police Station, and I was pleased to see some movement on this recently, but Nambour also desperately needs a community police beat in the central business district. This opportunity, like the one in the Bonney electorate, is too good to refuse.

I am sure that the minister would know the great benefits of having police beats, as I see that he has at least one in his own electorate of Morayfield, and will be open to hearing about this great opportunity for one at Nambour. Nambour has been calling for a permanent police presence downtown in the streets of the CBD for many years through the chamber of commerce and community support.

Recent robberies at our local Nambour jewellery store saw the owner, Keira Fiorenza, start a petition at her shop and other businesses for a police beat. She has presented my office with a petition of around 2,000 signatures which I now table a copy of.

*Tabled paper:* Nonconforming petition regarding a police beat for Nambour [\[2161\]](#).

In around 2006 a permanent police beat crew were assigned to walk the CBD of Nambour, but this has been discontinued as the Nambour police face staffing shortages. It is therefore imperative that if the minister agrees to a police beat at Nambour the appointment of an officer is not from the current allocation at Nambour but an extra officer.

High levels of disorderly behaviour, drug use and crime have made the streets of Nambour develop a reputation of being unsafe. Landlords in the CBD have also reported losing shop tenants due to this behaviour. Indeed, the Nambour CBD is struggling, with more and more empty shops and business struggles. I have spoken to businesses who have 'given up' calling for police assistance on disorderly behaviour such as drinking, swearing and fighting in the streets. They have given up because the hardworking police are stretched to the limit, policing a larger area, and they know that the response times to incidents such as these that occur regularly makes it difficult for police essentially to be on the spot when they occur. To have an officer appointed to the CBD in a police beat will provide a deterrent to this sort of behaviour and would mean that there is often an officer close by to call on for help. I will be writing to the minister with further details about this proposal so we can work at getting this important resource that Nambour desperately needs.

### Mercury Theatre Wynnum

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (7.28 pm): I do not know about you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I love a good night out, enjoying a little glass of something cool and refreshing whilst being entertained by our local thespians. I am delighted that tonight in the gallery I have some of those very talented locals from the fabulous Mercury Theatre Wynnum.

The Mercury Theatre is celebrating 70 years of, in the words of its founder, Miss Win O'Neil, sharing the love and fostering an appreciation of the great art which is the whole of human life, with its laughter and tears, sorrow and tragedy. I am thrilled that I can participate in a small way in this significant anniversary. Since 1949 this dynamic theatre company has been entertaining baysiders because of Miss O'Neil's vision to fill the needs of a rapidly growing district which she stated, while slightly remote from city opportunities, is rich in latent talent—and this is evident today.

Castings for the productions were held at Miss O'Neil's home at 93 Esplanade, Wynnum Central. The productions were initially held at various locations, including: the Albert Theatre, Brisbane; the Greenslopes Military Hospital; and the beautiful Star Theatre in Wynnum. The Mercury Theatre has been going strong since that time. This community based amateur theatre company is managed and run completely by volunteers. Mercury, which was named after the London Theatre Company of the same name and the Orson Welles New York Mercury Players, performs three productions a year at the lovely Lota Manly RSL hall. Auditions or castings are also conducted at the hall. Mercury has an impressive array of equipment and costumes and a strong following across all of Brisbane.

The productions are eagerly awaited. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the most recent production, but I have heard all about it. It sounded like great fun and I am very sorry I missed it. It is always a great night out. The Mercury Theatre has touched the lives of so many in the bayside, including my own family. My sister auditioned and had a part in one of their productions, as did my cousin. My two children auditioned for the part of the donkey in the production of *Puss in Boots*. They were exciting times in my household during that era because my son very proudly was the 'arse of the ass'.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stewart): Pause the clock. I will ask you to withdraw the unparliamentary language.

**Ms PEASE:** I withdraw. I think that Miss O'Neil would be delighted with the impact of her vision to bring the arts to Wynnum. What a significant legacy and how lovely that we can celebrate with my friends from the Mercury Theatre here tonight. Thank you so much for coming in. Most importantly, thank you for entertaining baysiders!

The House adjourned at 7.31 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, Jones, Katter, Kelly, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lister, Lui, Lynham, Madden, Mander, McArdle, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, 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, Stuckey, Trad, Watts, Weir, Whiting