



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Wednesday, 22 April 2020

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WEDNESDAY, 22 APRIL 2020



The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

ABSENCE OF SPEAKER AND DEPUTY SPEAKER

The CLERK: Honourable members, I have to inform the House of the unavoidable absence of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker for this day's sitting. In accordance with standing order 13, the members present shall appoint a member to act as Speaker for this day only before proceeding to any other business.



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.30 am): I move—

That the member for Greenslopes be appointed to act as Speaker for this day's sitting.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Joe Kelly, Greenslopes) read prayers and took the chair.

Mr ACTING 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.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS OF BUNDAMBA AND CURRUMBIN

Swearing in of New Members; Suspension of Standing Orders



Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Honourable members, I inform the House that the writs for the election of members at each of the Bundamba and Currumbin by-elections have been returned and tabled by Mr Speaker on Thursday, 9 April 2020. I inform the House that, although Mr Speaker is unavoidably absent today, His Excellency has previously issued a commission under the public seal of the state authorising the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, the Hon. Jacklyn Anne Trad and the Hon. Cameron Robert Dick, or any one of them, to administer to any member of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland the oath or affirmation of allegiance and of office that is required by law to be taken or made by every member before the member is permitted to sit or vote in the Legislative Assembly. However, in order for one of the commissioners to swear in the new members, standing order 38(2), which requires the Speaker to swear in new members, must be suspended.



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.33 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That standing order 38(2) be suspended to enable the commissioners to swear in new members in Mr Speaker's absence.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.



Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I will, therefore, be calling on one of the commissioners to administer the oath or affirmation of allegiance and of office to the new members. Normally, each new member is escorted by two members into the House and is introduced to the Speaker. The oath or affirmation is then usually handed to each member, together with the Bible if an oath is being taken. However, given the social distancing requirements in the current COVID-19 pandemic, we must adapt our procedures. Therefore, as each new member is called forward in turn, I would like the two members who would normally escort the new member to instead stand in their place as a measure of support for the new member. I would ask each new member to come forward and take the oath or affirmation and, if required, the Bible from the end of the table of the House. The commissioner will then administer the oath or affirmation from their place. Once the new member takes the oath or affirmation they will then sign the Roll of Members and may take their seat.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF BUNDAMBA

By-Election, Return of Writ

The CLERK: I have to report that the writ issued by Mr Speaker on 24 February 2020 for the election of a member to serve in the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Bundamba has been returned and endorsed by the Electoral Commissioner of Queensland with the election on 28 March 2020 of Lance Richard McCallum to serve as such member. The writ having previously been tabled, I now call the honourable member forward to take the oath of allegiance and of office.

Member Sworn

The CLERK: Mr Lance McCallum, having waited at the bar of the House, was invited by the Clerk to enter the chamber.

Ms Palaszczuk administered the oath of allegiance and of office to Mr McCallum, who then signed the Roll of Members.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I am sure the House will join with me in congratulating you on your election. You may now take your seat in the House.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CURRUMBIN

By-Election, Return of Writ

The CLERK: Honourable members, I have to report that the writ issued by His Excellency the Governor on 6 February 2020 for the election of a member to serve in the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Currumbin has been returned and endorsed by the Electoral Commissioner of Queensland with the election on 28 March 2020 of Laura Jane Gerber to serve as such member. The writ having previously been tabled, I now call the honourable member forward to take the oath of allegiance and of office.

Member Sworn

The CLERK: Mrs Laura Gerber, having waited at the bar of the House, was invited by the Clerk to enter the chamber.

Ms Palaszczuk administered the oath of allegiance and of office to Mrs Gerber, who then signed the Roll of Members.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I am sure the House will join with me in congratulating you on your election. You may now take your seat in the House.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I say to both members that I am sure that all of those members who are not here today are joining us in saying 'hear, hear!' as they watch on their computers at home.

ASSENT TO BILLS



Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from His Excellency the Governor a letter in respect of assent to certain bills. The contents of the letter will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the letter for the information of members.

The Honourable C.W. Pitt MP

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Parliament House

George Street

BRISBANE QLD 4000

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on the date shown:

Date of Assent: 19 March 2020

A Bill for an Act to establish a statutory body called Resources Safety and Health Queensland to regulate safety and health in the resources sector, establish an employing office, provide for the Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health, and to amend this Act, the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999, the Explosives Act 1999, the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999, the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, the Public Service Act 2008, the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Regulation 2019 and the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 for particular purposes

A Bill for an Act to amend the City of Brisbane Act 2010, the Constitution of Queensland 2001, the Economic Development Act 2012, the Electoral Act 1992, the Local Government Act 2009, the Local Government (Dissolution of Ipswich City Council) Act 2018, the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, the Local Government Regulation 2012, the Planning Act 2016, the Public Health Act 2005 and the State Penalties and Enforcement Regulation 2014 for particular purposes

These Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

Governor

19 March 2020

Tabled paper: Letter, 19 March 2020, from His Excellency the Governor to the Speaker advising of assent to bills on 19 March 2020 [624].

ACTING SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Procedures in Chamber



Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Honourable members, I would like to start today by thanking, on behalf of Mr Speaker, the Committee of the Legislative Assembly and leadership on both sides of the House for agreeing to matters such as pairing, quorum and voting to allow the Assembly to operate and also comply with social distancing rules.

Yesterday Mr Speaker circulated to all members a special colour-coded seating plan approved in accordance with standing order 244(1). The colour shaded seats are the only seats which will be able to be occupied by members and are not allocated to any particular members. There are special seats allocated for 'the next speaker' which is similar to the system which has operated at regional sittings whereby members who are entering the chamber to speak will go to and speak from those seats unless they are from the ministry or shadow ministry and are occupying one of the other shaded seats. There are also seats set aside for the crossbench when voting in a 'party vote'. Adherence to Mr Speaker's seating plan and capping the number of members in the chamber to no more than 20 at any one time is essential to observe social distancing requirements.

I note that two parliamentary attendants are sitting at the rear of the chamber. These attendants will provide lecterns and will be sterilising the speaking spots between each new speaker. Another attendant is focusing on supplying items from the printer for members. However, I would ask all members to work with parliamentary staff to reduce the amount of paper circulating. The Clerk or their delegate will distribute documents, including tabled papers and amendments to bills and notices of motion, to members by email. I would ask members seeking to table documents or give notice of amendments, notices of motions and lodging any questions to provide the documents to the clerks-at-the-table via the email tableoffice@parliament.qld.gov.au. I would ask for any ministerial statements or members' speech notes to be provided to Hansard via the email Hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au.

I note that bottled water will be supplied to members in the House, not jugs and glasses, to reduce the risks to staff in handling glassware. I will also allow members to bring their own containers of water into the chamber if they so desire.

Given the large number of pairs and absences in the last sitting period and today, I have asked the Leader of the House to consider moving for the temporary suspension of standing order 263A until the COVID-19 outbreak passes and things return to normal. I also believe it is important that the extensive number of pairs that have been agreed to be entered into the record at some point.

In terms of the roll today, we will once again rely heavily on the whips to give the attendance of party members to attendants, and crossbench members should also report their attendance to the attendants. Lastly, can I urge all members to ensure that they abide by social distancing and limits on numbers in the remainder of the precinct including the cafe, coffee shop, elevators et cetera.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I want to raise an issue in the House already. The member for Whitsunday has now sat in three separate seats. The Speaker has made it clear which seats are allocated to the crossbench. The member for Whitsunday has been in three seats—none of which have been pursuant to the Speaker's statement.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order. I will take some advice. This is very new to all of us and it is taking a while for us to learn these new procedures. I would remind the member for Whitsunday that there are allocated seats for the crossbench. At this point we can have no more than 20 members in the chamber, as ruled by the Speaker. You are fine to stay for the present time, but I would ask that you familiarise yourself with those proceedings and adhere to those numbers as set by the Speaker.

PETITIONS

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

Crime, Penalties

Mr Dametto, from 3,042 petitioners, requesting the House to introduce tougher penalties for offenders, including juveniles [\[604\]](#).

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

Pallara, Former School Site

From 68 petitioners, requesting the House to transfer the former Pallara State School site at 282 Ritchie Road Pallara in trust to the Brisbane City Council at no cost for a multicultural community hub [\[605\]](#).

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

Bald Hills, Bus Services

Mr Mander, from 155 petitioners, requesting the House to provide a bus service for Bald Hills residents [\[606, 607\]](#).

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

D'Aguilar Highway, King Street Merging Lane

From 276 petitioners, requesting the House to install a merge lane where King Street meets the D'Aguilar Highway to allow vehicles to gain the adequate speed to merge with traffic travelling at 100 kilometres per hour [\[608, 609\]](#).

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

Funeral Industry

Mrs Wilson, from 1,356 petitions requesting the House to regulate the Queensland funeral industry [\[610\]](#).

Olympic Games, Queensland Bid

Mr Andrew, from 5,032 petitioners, requesting the House to review priorities and cancel the 2032 Olympics Bid [\[611\]](#).

Eight Mile Plains, Mains Road and Macgregor Park-and-Rides, Infrastructure

Mr Minnikin, from 152 petitioners, requesting the House to construct multi-storey car parks at the Eight Mile Plains, Mains Road and Macgregor park 'n' rides [\[612\]](#).

Cannabis, Legalisation; Drug Support Services, Funding

Mr Berkman, from 13,253 petitioners, requesting the House to legalise the growth, possession, use and supply of cannabis for adults in Queensland, provide amnesty for people with current cannabis-related convictions and increase funding for drug support services [\[613\]](#).

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

Local Government Association of Queensland

From 590 petitioners, requesting the House to implement measures to reduce the risk of corrupt conduct in the Local Government Association of Queensland by separating the membership side from the commercial interests of the LGAQ [\[614\]](#).

Road Infrastructure Projects, Fauna

From 1,599 petitioners, requesting the House to mandate the provision of fauna friendly infrastructure in all new road infrastructure projects [\[615\]](#).

Renewable Energy, Cost

From 296 petitioners, requesting the House to examine the claims in petition 3166, that coal and gas are higher cost than renewables [\[616\]](#).

Road Infrastructure

From 666 petitioners, requesting the House to plan to provide a four-lane carriageway from the New South Wales border to Cairns and at least two-lane carriageways on all major arterial and regional roads [\[617\]](#).

Disaster Management

From 753 petitioners, requesting the House to have disaster management placed under the control of independent specialists [\[618\]](#).

Runaways, Law Reform

From 428 petitioners, requesting the House to enact legislation that would make the harbouring of runaways an offence under law [\[619\]](#).

Swanbank, Environmental Authority and Operating Licence Holders

From 409 petitioners, requesting the House to review the environmental authorities granted and examine the operating licences of the operators on Memorial Drive, Swanbank [\[620\]](#).

Coronavirus, State Election

From 3,397 petitioners, requesting the House to postpone the election by a minimum of four months, or until such a time that coronavirus no longer poses a threat to human lives in Queensland [\[621\]](#).

Bushfires, Hazard Reduction

From 794 petitioners, requesting the House to legislate state-wide mandatory clearing of bushfire asset protection zones around residential buildings and other assets of hazardous vegetation for a minimum of distance fifty metres and beyond into bushfire buffer protection zones if warranted [\[622\]](#).

Public Assets, Maintenance; Alderley, Frederick Street Bridge

From 235 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the maintenance of State Government assets and replace the Frederick Street Bridge at Alderley [\[623\]](#).

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS (SO 31)

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

19 March 2020—

- [448](#) Electoral Commission Queensland—Procedure for electronic lodgement of returns (Version 2.0) [refer to subordinate legislation No. 259 of 2019]
- [449](#) Electoral Commission Queensland—Procedure for electronically assisted voting for local government elections (Version 2.0) [refer to subordinate legislation No. 259 of 2019]
- [450](#) Inspector-General Emergency Management: Report titled 'Queensland Bushfires Review: Report 2: 2019-20', government response
- [451](#) Response from the Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (Hon. Dick), to an ePetition (3260-19) sponsored by the member for Condamine, Mr Weir, from 808 petitioners, requesting the House to amend the Planning Act 2016 to ensure landholders are reasonably compensated if adversely affected from local government changes to flood mapping
- [452](#) Response from the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services (Hon. Crawford), to an ePetition (3230-19) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 1,964 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure our rural fire brigade volunteers have the equipment and resources necessary to perform their firefighting duties and to remain safe while doing so
- [453](#) Response from the Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport (Hon. de Brenni), to an ePetition (3216-19) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 831 petitioners, requesting the House to amend the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Regulation 2018 and remove painting and decorating of residential properties from the Queensland Home Warranty Insurance Scheme
- [454](#) Response from the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development (Hon. Fentiman), to an ePetition (3265-20) sponsored by the member for Southport, Mr Molhoek, from 422 petitioners, requesting the House to gift the site of the former Ridgeway TAFE Campus at Southport to the City of Gold Coast for redevelopment of community service facilities and recreational reserve

20 March 2020—

- [455](#) Transport and Public Works Committee: Report No. 36, 56th Parliament—Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020
- [456](#) Family Responsibilities Commission—Annual Report 2018-2019

[457](#) Letter, dated 20 March 2020, from the Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Dr Chris Sara, to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Hon. Jackie Trad, regarding the Family Responsibilities Commission—Annual Report 2018-2019

[458](#) Attachment to the letter, dated 20 March 2020, from the Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Dr Chris Sara, to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Hon. Jackie Trad, regarding the Family Responsibilities Commission—Annual Report 2018-2019

23 March 2020—

[459](#) Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission—Annual Report 2017-18

[460](#) Queensland Police Service—Device Inspections Annual Report 2017-2018

[461](#) Queensland Police Service—Device Inspections Annual Report 2018-2019

[462](#) Response from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Hon. D'Ath), to an ePetition (3231-19) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 163 petitioners, requesting the House to retain the current safe night precinct license in Ipswich

[463](#) Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee: Report No. 26, 56th Parliament—Inquiry into the redevelopment of the Mon Repos Turtle Centre

24 March 2020—

[464](#) Education, Employment and Small Business Committee: Report No. 31, 56th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 16 October 2019 and 4 February 2020

[465](#) Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee: Report No. 27, 56th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 16 October 2019 and 26 November 2019

[466](#) Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 33, 56th Parliament—Aged care, end-of-life and palliative care

[467](#) Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Paper No. 4, 56th Parliament—Aged care, end-of-life and palliative care, Findings and recommendations (Report No. 33)

[468](#) Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee—Inquiry into aged care, end-of-life and palliative care and voluntary assisted dying, Volume of additional information

[469](#) Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 35, 56th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 20 August 2019 and 4 February 2020

26 March 2020—

[470](#) Speaker's statement—Change of next sitting date

[471](#) Letter, dated 26 March 2020, from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Leader of the House, Hon. Yvette D'Ath, to the Speaker, Hon. Curtis Pitt, regarding change of next sitting date

27 March 2020—

[472](#) State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee: Report No. 46, 56th Parliament—Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020

[473](#) Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 63, 56th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 27 November 2019 and 4 February 2020

[474](#) Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 64, 56th Parliament—Co-operatives National Law Bill 2020

30 March 2020—

[475](#) Transport and Public Works Committee: Report No. 37, 56th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 27 November 2019 and 4 February 2020

[476](#) Economics and Governance Committee: Report No. 39, 56th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 27 November 2019 and 4 February 2020

[477](#) State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee: Report No. 47, 56th Parliament—Consideration of Auditor-General Report 4: 2019-20—Water: 2018-19 results of financial audits

[478](#) State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee: Report No. 48, 56th Parliament—Consideration of Auditor-General Report 6: 2019-20—Energy: 2018-19 results of financial audits

[479](#) State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee: Report No. 49, 56th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 16 October 2019 and 26 November 2019

[480](#) Rail Safety National Law (South Australia) Act 2012: Rail Safety National Law National Regulations (Application of Law) Variation Regulations 2019

[481](#) Rail Safety National Law (South Australia) Act 2012: Rail Safety National Law National Regulations (Application of Law) Variation Regulations 2019, explanatory notes

[482](#) Brisbane Grammar School—Annual Report 2019

[483](#) Rockhampton Grammar School—Annual Report 2019

[484](#) Ipswich Grammar School—Annual Report 2019

[485](#) Queensland College of Teachers—Annual Report 2019

[486](#) Toowoomba Grammar School—Annual Report 2019

[487](#) Townsville Grammar School—Annual Report 2019

[488](#) Brisbane Girls Grammar School—Annual Report 2019

[489](#) Ipswich Girls' Grammar School and Ipswich Junior Grammar School—Annual Report 2019

31 March 2020—

[490](#) Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 34, 56th Parliament—Voluntary assisted dying

[491](#) Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Paper No. 5, 56th Parliament—voluntary assisted dying, Findings and recommendations (Report No. 34)

[492](#) Queensland Theatre Company—Annual Report 2019

[493](#) Rockhampton Girls Grammar School—Annual Report 2019

[494](#) University of Southern Queensland—Annual Report 2019

[495](#) Central Queensland University—Annual Report 2019

[496](#) Griffith University—Annual Report 2019

[497](#) University of Queensland—Annual Report 2019

[498](#) James Cook University—Annual Report 2019

[499](#) Queensland University of Technology—Annual Report 2019

[500](#) University of the Sunshine Coast—Annual Report 2019

1 April 2020—

[501](#) Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee—Annual Report 2018-19

[502](#) Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee—Annual Report 2018-19

[503](#) Commissioner for Mine Safety and Health—Annual performance report 2018-19

2 April 2020—

[504](#) Queensland Ombudsman: An investigation into the management of child safety complaints within the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, March 2020

3 April 2020—

[505](#) Economics and Governance Committee: Report No. 40, 56th Parliament—Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Ministerial Accountability) Amendment Bill 2019

7 April 2020—

[506](#) Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee: Report No. 36, 56th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 5 February and 20 February 2020

9 April 2020—

[507](#) Endorsed Writ for the election of the Electoral District of Bundamba

[508](#) Endorsed Writ for the election of the Electoral District of Currumbin

[509](#) Letter, dated 9 April 2020, from the Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Mr Dave Stewart, to the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, enclosing the endorsed Writ for the election of the Electoral District of Currumbin

[510](#) Speaker's statement—Change of next sitting date

[511](#) Letter, dated 9 April 2020, from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Leader of the House, Hon. Yvette D'Ath, to the Speaker, Hon. Curtis Pitt, regarding the change of next sitting date

15 April 2020—

[512](#) Ruling by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt—Multiple allegations of contempt and allegation of breaching sections 70 and 71 of the Parliament of Queensland Act regarding the member for Toohey

[513](#) Brief for Mr Bret Walker SC in respect to allegations of contempt and allegation of breaching sections 70 and 71 of the Parliament of Queensland Act regarding the member for Toohey

[514](#) Advice by Mr Bret Walker SC in respect to allegations of contempt and allegation of breaching sections 70 and 71 of the Parliament of Queensland Act regarding the member for Toohey

[515](#) Ruling by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt—Alleged failure to register an interest by the member for Gladstone

[516](#) Ruling by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt—Alleged deliberately misleading the House by the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services

16 April 2020—

[517](#) Response from the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations (Hon. Grace), to a paper petition (3309-20) presented by the member for Ferny Grove, Hon. Furner, and an ePetition (3289-20) sponsored by the member for Ferny Grove, Hon. Furner, from 238 and 462 petitioners respectively, requesting the House to ensure the Ferny Grove State High School acquires ongoing access to the narrow parcel of land located on the eastern fence line of the school on the site of the Keperra picnic grounds

- [518](#) Response from the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services (Hon. Ryan), to an ePetition (3293-20) sponsored by the member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Dametto, from 11,049 petitioners, requesting the House to reject the proposal for the regulation of gel blasters and that the “toy” exemption remains in the Weapons Categories Regulation 1997
- [519](#) Response from the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services (Hon. Ryan), to an ePetition (3282-20) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 3,136 petitioners, requesting the House to re-classify suppressors as Category A weapons in the legislation Weapons Categories Regulation 1997
- [520](#) Response from the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts (Hon. Enoch), to an ePetition (3188-19) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 1,222 petitioners, requesting the House to establish a new portfolio and coordinated framework for the protection, conservation and maintenance of Queensland's native animals, plants and habitats
- [521](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Hon. Bailey), to a paper petition (3308-20) presented by the member for Maryborough, Mr Saunders, from 37 petitioners, requesting the House to reconfigure the traffic lights and other road infrastructure at the intersection of Pialba-Burrum Heads Road and Serenity Drive/Drury Lane to allow all possible turns and traffic direction
- [522](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Hon. Bailey), to an ePetition (3281-20) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 281 petitioners, requesting the House to ban new internal combustion engines as soon as possible

20 April 2020—

- [523](#) Speaker's statement—Absence from sitting of Speaker and Deputy Speaker

21 April 2020—

- [524](#) Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal: Minor amendment to the Allowances System 2020, Determination 20/2020, 21 April 2020

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Guardianship and Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019:

- [525](#) Guardianship and Administration and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2020, No. 30
- [526](#) Guardianship and Administration and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2020, No. 30, explanatory notes
- [527](#) Guardianship and Administration and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2020, No. 30, human rights certificate

Land, Explosives and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019:

- [528](#) Land, Explosives and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2020, No. 31
- [529](#) Land, Explosives and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2020, No. 31, explanatory notes
- [530](#) Land, Explosives and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2020, No. 31, human rights certificate

Petroleum Act 1923, Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004:

- [531](#) Petroleum and Gas (Safety) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2020, No. 32
- [532](#) Petroleum and Gas (Safety) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2020, No. 32, explanatory notes
- [533](#) Petroleum and Gas (Safety) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2020, No. 32, human rights certificate

Water Act 2000:

- [534](#) Water (SEQ Bulk Suppliers and Bulk Water Customers) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 33
- [535](#) Water (SEQ Bulk Suppliers and Bulk Water Customers) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 33, explanatory notes
- [536](#) Water (SEQ Bulk Suppliers and Bulk Water Customers) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 33, human rights certificate

Nature Conservation Act 1992:

- [537](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) (Great Sandy National Park) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 34
- [538](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) (Great Sandy National Park) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 34, explanatory notes
- [539](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) (Great Sandy National Park) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 34, human rights certificate

Police Service Administration Act 1990:

- [540](#) Police Service Administration (Queensland Corrective Services) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 35
- [541](#) Police Service Administration (Queensland Corrective Services) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 35, explanatory notes
- [542](#) Police Service Administration (Queensland Corrective Services) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 35, human rights certificate

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994:

- [543](#) Rural and Regional Adjustment (COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 36
- [544](#) Rural and Regional Adjustment (COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 36, explanatory notes
- [545](#) Rural and Regional Adjustment (COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 36, human rights certificate

Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011, Public Health Act 2005:

- [546](#) Public Health (COVID-19) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 37
- [547](#) Public Health (COVID-19) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 37, explanatory notes
- [548](#) Public Health (COVID-19) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 37, human rights certificate

Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994, National Injury Insurance Scheme (Queensland) Act 2016:

- [549](#) Motor Accident Insurance and Other Legislation (Administration Fee and Levies) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 38
- [550](#) Motor Accident Insurance and Other Legislation (Administration Fee and Levies) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 38, explanatory notes
- [551](#) Motor Accident Insurance and Other Legislation (Administration Fee and Levies) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 38, human rights certificate

Nature Conservation Act 1992:

- [552](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2020, No. 39
- [553](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2020, No. 39, explanatory notes
- [554](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2020, No. 39, human rights certificate

Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991:

- [555](#) Queensland Building and Construction Commission (Minimum Financial Requirements) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 40
- [556](#) Queensland Building and Construction Commission (Minimum Financial Requirements) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 40, explanatory notes
- [557](#) Queensland Building and Construction Commission (Minimum Financial Requirements) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 40, human rights certificate

Economic Development Act 2012, Planning Act 2016:

- [558](#) Economic Development and Other Legislation (Temporary Use Licence) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 41
- [559](#) Economic Development and Other Legislation (Temporary Use Licence) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 41, explanatory notes
- [560](#) Economic Development and Other Legislation (Temporary Use Licence) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 41, human rights certificate

City of Brisbane Act 2010, Local Government Act 2009, Local Government Electoral Act 2011, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999:

- [561](#) Local Government Electoral (2020 Quadrennial Election) Regulation 2020, No. 42
- [562](#) Local Government Electoral (2020 Quadrennial Election) Regulation 2020, No. 42, explanatory notes
- [563](#) Local Government Electoral (2020 Quadrennial Election) Regulation 2020, No. 42, human rights certificate

Electoral Act 1992, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999:

- [564](#) Electoral (By-elections Before Next General Election) Regulation 2020, No. 43
- [565](#) Electoral (By-elections Before Next General Election) Regulation 2020, No. 43, explanatory notes
- [566](#) Electoral (By-elections Before Next General Election) Regulation 2020, No. 43, human rights certificate

Disaster Management Act 2003:

- [567](#) Disaster Management (Local Disaster Management Group Interim Chairperson) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 44
- [568](#) Disaster Management (Local Disaster Management Group Interim Chairperson) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 44, explanatory notes
- [569](#) Disaster Management (Local Disaster Management Group Interim Chairperson) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 44, human rights certificate

Economic Development Act 2012:

- [570](#) Economic Development (Woolloongabba Cross River Rail PDA) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 45
- [571](#) Economic Development (Woolloongabba Cross River Rail PDA) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 45, explanatory notes
- [572](#) Economic Development (Woolloongabba Cross River Rail PDA) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 45, human rights certificate

Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014:

- [573](#) Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2020, No. 46
- [574](#) Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2020, No. 46, explanatory notes
- [575](#) Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2020, No. 46, human rights certificate

Professional Standards Act 2004:

- [576](#) Professional Standards (New South Wales Bar Association Professional Standards Scheme) Notice 2020, No. 47
- [577](#) Professional Standards (New South Wales Bar Association Professional Standards Scheme) Notice 2020, No. 47, explanatory notes
- [578](#) Professional Standards (New South Wales Bar Association Professional Standards Scheme) Notice 2020, No. 47, human rights certificate

Public Health Act 2005:

- [579](#) Public Health (Emergency Officers (General)) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 48
- [580](#) Public Health (Emergency Officers (General)) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 48, explanatory notes
- [581](#) Public Health (Emergency Officers (General)) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 48, human rights certificate

Disaster Management Act 2003:

- [582](#) Disaster Management (Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2020, No. 49
- [583](#) Disaster Management (Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2020, No. 49, explanatory notes
- [584](#) Disaster Management (Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2020, No. 49, human rights certificate

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991:

- [585](#) Supreme Court (Admission) Amendment Rule 2020, No. 50
- [586](#) Supreme Court (Admission) Amendment Rule 2020, No. 50, explanatory notes
- [587](#) Supreme Court (Admission) Amendment Rule 2020, No. 50, human rights certificate

Tow Truck Act 1973, Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994, Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995:

- [588](#) Transport Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020, No. 51
- [589](#) Transport Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020, No. 51, explanatory notes
- [590](#) Transport Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020, No. 51, human rights certificate

Disaster Management Act 2003:

- [591](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2020, No. 53
- [592](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2020, No. 53, explanatory notes
- [593](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2020, No. 53, human rights certificate

Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020:

- [594](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provision, No. 54
- [595](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provision, No. 54, explanatory notes
- [596](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provision, No. 54, human rights certificate

REPORT BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Clerk—

- [597](#) Report pursuant to Standing Order 169 (Acts to be numbered by the Clerk) and Standing Order 165 (Clerical errors or formal changes to any bill) detailing amendments to certain Bills, made by the Clerk, prior to assent by His Excellency the Governor, viz—

Resources Safety and Health Queensland Bill 2019

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title—

Omit—

‘Resources Safety and Health Queensland Bill 2019’

Insert—

‘Resources Safety and Health Queensland Bill 2020’

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs (Hon. Hinchliffe)—

- [598](#) City of Brisbane Act 2010, Local Government Act 2009: Local Government Legislation (Councillor Code of Conduct) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 52
- [599](#) City of Brisbane Act 2010, Local Government Act 2009: Local Government Legislation (Councillor Code of Conduct) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 52, explanatory notes
- [600](#) City of Brisbane Act 2010, Local Government Act 2009: Local Government Legislation (Councillor Code of Conduct) Amendment Regulation 2020, No. 52, human rights certificate
- [601](#) Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs—Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland, Revised-7 April 2020 [Refer to subordinate legislation No. 52]

MEMBERS' PAPERS

The following members' papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Member for Burleigh (Mr Hart)—

[602](#) Queensland Building and Construction Commission: Client Survey 2017

Member for Maiwar (Mr Berkman)—

[603](#) Nonconforming petition regarding legalising cannabis

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Coronavirus, Update



Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.48 am): The people of Queensland have responded magnificently to the challenge of COVID-19, as we knew they would. On Monday, when I announced that for the first time since early March there had been no new cases confirmed, I held that up as a tribute—a tribute to individuals, families, businesses and organisations throughout our state. They have conscientiously followed the health and safety initiatives for the collective benefit of their relatives, their neighbours, their communities and themselves, despite the sacrifices. It is also thanks to our exemplary health authorities and law enforcement who have been working around the clock, day in and day out, to plan and implement the measures that have kept us as safe as possible during this unprecedented time.

Today we have again recorded zero new cases of COVID-19 and our total number of cases remains at 1,024. There have been more than 90,000 tests conducted across Queensland. Contact tracing has been relentless and 13HEALTH has responded to more than 140,000 calls. Back in late January when the first case was confirmed and predictions showed what could have happened without stringent action—including some 30,000 tragic deaths—there was a very good chance that the COVID-19 curve in Queensland was going to be sharp and shocking. Today that is not so. The curve is flattening because of what Queenslanders have done and will continue to do, because of what has almost become the new normal: social distancing, restrictions of movement, behaviour in terms of washing your hands and considerations that have transformed the way we look after one another. Nevertheless, I also acknowledge that tragically six Queenslanders have died from this terrible disease—a shocking reminder of the seriousness of what we have been confronting these past few months. Today on behalf of the House I offer my deepest condolences to the families of those six men and women. Their deaths, like others throughout Australia and even more throughout the world, ensure that we will never waver from our compelling objective, which is the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders.

COVID-19 has been a dual crisis that requires a dual response. The virus is a dangerous menace to our health and a peril to our economy, so we have responded accordingly to simultaneously keep Queenslanders as well as possible and keep our economy as buoyant as we possibly can during this time. Steps along the journey that we have taken to protect our health have been accompanied by measures to secure our financial wellbeing. Within days of the first confirmed case a public health emergency was declared in Queensland. Screening began at the Brisbane International Airport and fever clinics were set up. In those first few weeks we also held an industry forum and set up an economic recovery group. Within weeks we announced that we were tripling emergency department capacity and doubling intensive care capacity. We also announced our first \$27 million assistance package and payroll tax deferral. We then secured more testing machines and passed public health amendments to give the Chief Health Officer more powers. We also announced a \$500 million business loan facility. Health directions such as bans on mass gatherings and the closure of non-essential businesses began to ensure community health. We were also providing more assistance for manufacturers. There were twin responses to a twin crisis.

Then in the third week of March, as daily cases reached their highest peak so far—78—we announced our \$4 billion health household and business package; \$2.5 billion to protect jobs and businesses; \$300 million for household bill relief; \$1.2 billion for our health system; and a \$24 million housing and homelessness package. Health directions continue to be refined to protect our state, including border and cruise ship entry restrictions. We began to see the dividends of that, and by early April the number of daily cases had dropped below 10 for the first time in more than a fortnight, though we did not drop our guard and we did not stop our efforts. We announced plans for emergency hospitals including the RNA, extra staff from the justice department to help with contact tracing, a Care Army, accommodation plan for health workers, extended testing for community transmissions, \$5.5 million for


DV services, \$17 million for community kindergartens, \$28 million for community health care, an online portal for jobs and training, laptops and other help for home learning, plus rental protections for owners and tenants underpinned by \$400 million in land tax relief.

To again illustrate the importance of keeping the economy going, in the midst of all of this last week we announced that Arrow Energy is moving ahead with its \$10 billion Surat gas protect. I want to emphasise how important this is because shareholders have taken this decision during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, so that is a vote of confidence in Queensland and a vote of confidence in our resources sector.

Where to from here? Every decision we have made, every single step we have taken, everything we have asked the community to do together, has been about getting the balance right—the balance between helping the economy and personal freedom and social responsibility. Temporarily switching off some features of our normal lives, we are continuing with other important activities. This must always be a team effort. We have always left room for life to go on when and where it is possible, whether it is work, education, family time or an afternoon park in the local park. The case figures tell us we are getting the balance right. I repeat: Queenslanders have responded magnificently, for which I will be eternally grateful. That means that, although we are still in it for months, consideration may be given over the coming weeks and months to easing some restrictions as long as we understand that lower case numbers prove that restrictions are working, not that restrictions are no longer necessary.


This is also the work of the national cabinet, which helps guide these decisions whilst listening to the expert advice of chief health officers from around the country, heads of Treasury and other people who provide the national cabinet with expert advice. I previously said that we will get through it by working together, by supporting each other, by keeping calm heads and by listening to accurate, expert advice. Today I am more certain of that than ever.

Coronavirus, Manufacturing Industry

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.54 am): I have been genuinely inspired by the response from our Queensland manufacturers, who have stepped up production, explored new ideas and are going above and beyond in the fight against coronavirus. My government has worked quickly to reach out to them, their suppliers and producers to fill gaps and help keep production lines moving. This includes companies now making essential healthcare supplies such as face masks, hand sanitiser, gowns and ventilators—products they never thought they would have to make. We have enabled businesses to connect across industries with suppliers to continue operations and have seen 179 companies submitting 182 expressions of interest for work packages available to supply personal protective equipment like face masks, hand sanitiser, face shields, ventilators, gowns and protective eyewear.

Queensland manufacturers who are mobilising and repurposing to support the state during the COVID-19 crisis are making their inspiring stories as part of the Making it for Queensland campaign. This campaign celebrates our manufacturers who are innovating and are leading the way during these uncertain times. We have seen some great stories. Beenleigh Rum, Australia's oldest distillery, is starting the production of hand sanitiser to supply the Queensland government. This will help ensure that we have a ready supply for schools and frontline workers. Rockhampton Saleyards Distillery is swapping over its factory floors from distilling to boosting local supplies of hand sanitiser. This is again helping local emergency services, schools and nursing homes in the fight against COVID-19. Bundaberg Rum is also going full steam ahead with the production of ethanol and donating 100,000 litres—enough to produce around 500,000 bottles—to the Queensland government. Once again I want to congratulate all of those businesses for stepping up at this time and showing Queensland that we can do anything in this state if we put our minds to it.


Anzac Day

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.56 am): This Saturday we will honour our fallen heroes, those current serving and those who have returned in an Anzac Day like no other. Anzac Day is steeped in history and tradition, and not even a global pandemic will stop us from marking the occasion and honouring those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Just like churchgoers were able to celebrate Easter with livestream services, virtual and nationally televised Anzac Day ceremonies will be available to observe by people at home. I want to thank the RSL Queensland for their Light up the Dawn initiative, encouraging Queenslanders to get involved and light up the dawn from their driveways, porches and living rooms at 6 am. I encourage all members of parliament to get behind this initiative and really drive it in their local communities this Saturday. I also

want to thank Music for Mateship, which is encouraging people with musical ability to play the last post as they stand in their street. I have seen so many people getting involved in making their own candles and making poppies to display on their lawns and sharing it online, which is fantastic.

I will be joining the Governor of Queensland, Paul de Jersey, Brisbane Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner and RSL state president Tony Ferris at 4.28 am on Saturday to attend a very small but symbolic commemorative service at the Shrine of Remembrance at Anzac Square, where we will be able to lay a wreath. We have an exemption from the Chief Health Officer, and of course we will be entering the shrine one by one and observing social distancing. At 5 am there will be a nationally televised Anzac Day commemoration service from the Australian War Memorial broadcast on the ABC. While it may look a little different this year with social distancing restrictions, I believe the Anzac spirit will shine brighter than ever as we light up the dawn together from our driveways at 6 am. Lest we forget.

Coronavirus, Update


 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.58 am): Today marks day 84 since COVID-19 hit Queensland's shores. The life of every single Queenslanders is precious. Our No. 1 objective since that day has been to save as many Queensland lives as possible. Since then, 1,024 Queenslanders have fallen ill with COVID-19 and sadly six have lost their lives. The deaths of six Queenslanders is tragic, but if it were not for all of our efforts the toll could have been so much greater. Globally, 2½ million people have contracted the disease and 176,323 people have died—many in countries we often compare ourselves to, like the UK and the United States. Personally, I find those scenes from places like New York truly horrifying. Early modelling suggested the same could happen here. We refused to see that as inevitable, refused to accept that thousands had to die. That was a decision we made; it was not a matter of luck.

Overnight, no new positive cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Queensland. We started testing early and we have kept testing levels high. To date, more than 90,168 tests have been conducted and fever clinics have been established right throughout the state. The Palaszczuk government has taken the COVID-19 pandemic seriously since day one, and we will continue to make the health and lives of Queenslanders our top priority.

This virus could be our biggest test. Make no mistake: here in Queensland our early action, planning and preparing for this pandemic has put us in a better position than just about anywhere in the world and it has saved lives. Last month, we announced \$1.2 billion to ensure our hospitals are prepared for this pandemic. This investment included doubling intensive care and tripling emergency department capacity, increasing our PPE stockpiles and employing more frontline staff. We purchased an additional 110 ventilators and brought forward a \$25 million order of medicines, gloves and masks. We also announced an additional \$28 million to support non-government organisations delivering critical mental health, drug and alcohol services across the state. We set up fever clinics at every hospital and health service from the cape to the Gold Coast, and we are testing at an incredible rate. On Friday, for instance, Queensland did half of all tests conducted in Australia.

It is clear these efforts are working. We have just 280 active cases, we have increased capacity and we are keeping the number of daily new cases low. I would like to thank every single Queenslanders who has done the right thing and stayed home. Queenslanders have made significant sacrifices when it comes to the way they live and work. Our frontline health workers—the nurses, doctors, paramedics, scientists and pathology staff, allied health workers and everyone supporting them—have been doing an amazing job in unprecedented circumstances. They are the true heroes of the COVID-19 story. Unfortunately, the story is far from over. We all need to keep doing our part—keep our distance, stay home when we can and especially when we are sick, get tested if we have symptoms, wash our hands regularly and, most importantly, take care of each other, especially the elderly, the sick and the vulnerable.

Coronavirus, Economy

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.02 am): In a state well accustomed to dealing with tough times, Queensland is facing one of its toughest challenges. The COVID-19 coronavirus is an unprecedented global crisis affecting all of us. From grade 1-ers to grandparents, from everyday workers to global conglomerates, from Wuhan to Westminster and Whitfield in Cairns, we are all united in our efforts to stop the spread and save lives.

While our health response to the singular objective of flattening the curve has been world leading, the economic impact of widespread restrictions has been nothing short of devastating. Yesterday, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released data which confirms the size of this economic disaster. Queensland has been hit hard but not as hard as most of the other states. The ABS reported a five per cent decline in jobs in Queensland—lower than the six per cent Australia-wide and the second lowest in the nation. Last week the ABS released the monthly labour force figures and this demonstrated that the Queensland economy was strong going into this crisis.

The ABS data collected for the first two weeks of March showed that the Palaszczuk Labor government's economic plan had delivered more than 250,000 jobs since 2015, leading jobs growth nationally. Then, as we watched our largest trading partner move to contain COVID-19 by imposing restrictions on movements, work and gatherings just before Chinese New Year, we moved quickly to support our industries most affected—namely, tourism and food exports. So even before the health crisis was at our door, we announced the first major economic relief package in the nation. Then on 24 March we announced the single largest relief package by any state government to that time, including \$1.2 billion for health and more than \$3 billion to support Queensland jobs and businesses.

We also welcomed the federal government establishing the JobKeeper program. Advice from Queensland Treasury is that an estimated 166,000 Queensland businesses have expressed an interest in the JobKeeper program to date. Further, Queensland Treasury estimates that around 20,000 Queensland businesses have been directly affected by forced closures, having a combined effect on the employment of around 130,000 Queenslanders. Most of these workers are young Queenslanders who have been affected by the closure of their workplaces—shops, restaurants, theatres, bars, cafes, live music venues and galleries.

As a government, we took early and decisive steps to support the economy with a four-pronged approach: firstly, to protect traditional industries fundamental to our economy that are continuing to operate, like mining and agriculture; secondly, to preserve industries during this period of forced hibernation, like tourism and hospitality, so they can re-emerge and re-employ; thirdly, to make the necessary investments in the necessary public services to support the immediate needs of our community; and, fourthly, to plan for our economic recovery and Queensland's economic security. Our plan has seen more than \$4 billion in initiatives to protect Queenslanders' health, Queensland jobs and Queensland businesses.

Our 12-month interest-free loan facility, of up to \$250,000 per business, has in a month processed almost 1,400 approvals for loans totalling \$206 million, supporting almost 19,000 Queensland jobs. As of this morning, our program of payroll tax refunds, holidays and deferrals has seen almost 11,400 Queensland businesses receiving a payroll tax refund or a payment holiday, with more than \$311 million being put back into the accounts of Queensland businesses and back into the pockets of Queensland workers. With so many of us working from home, we have invested \$300 million into lowering power and water bills, meaning that more than two million Queensland families should see a \$200 Queensland government rebate on their next electricity bill. As we have done in every natural disaster, the Palaszczuk Labor government will stand with and support Queenslanders through this tough time, and together we will come through this to a better and brighter Queensland.

Coronavirus, Supply Chain



Hon. CR DICK (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (10.07 am): I am pleased to report to the House on the actions taken by my department to ensure the people and industries of Queensland have the products they need to face the COVID-19 pandemic. One thing is clear: even while parts of the economy are in shutdown, many Queenslanders have been making it for Queensland.

In the supply chain for essential goods, my department has been working with industry to make sure Queenslanders have the food, groceries and personal products they need. At our last sitting, we passed laws to ensure supermarkets could restock around the clock to help them deal with unprecedented demand for groceries. We also worked across government to keep supply chains flowing, including working with the Department of Transport and Main Roads to reprogram rail maintenance to keep the north coast line stacked with supermarket stock over the Easter period. This work touched every part of our state.


In the lead-up to, during and after Easter, my department worked around the clock with Metcash to source items via its network of national grocery suppliers and distributors—including Linfox, Coolfreight and Exodas—to coordinate urgent deliveries to remote Queensland communities, including

Indigenous communities. Because of our government's actions, I am pleased to report there have been no fundamental problems with the supply chains that support Queenslanders who live, as we all do, in the most decentralised state in the Commonwealth. We have also been backing our local manufacturers to fill gaps in the health supply chain, and Queensland manufacturers have risen to the challenge magnificently.

We now have several companies working hard to stand up manufacturing of the highest quality P2/N95 surgical masks, face shields, re-usable gowns, hand sanitisers and ventilators. We have supported distilleries like Bundaberg Rum, Beenleigh Rum and Granddad Jacks as well as Wilmar, and Bearded Chap, who, along with others, are now supplying hand sanitiser into Queensland Health's Central Pharmacy. We have already seen how Triple Eight Racing has pivoted to develop a ventilator and CPAP machine using skills from Supercars Championship racing. Another team of clinical and engineering experts across Australia have joined forces on the Queensland based OzVader Ventilator project.

This crisis has highlighted the fragility in Australian supply chains for personal protective equipment. We are working hard to ensure we have local manufacturing capability in Queensland so future PPE in this state will carry the proudest stamp of all, 'Made in Queensland'. Whatever crisis our state faces, the Palaszczuk Labor government is backing manufacturers, backing jobs and backing Queensland.

Schools, Education Delivery

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.10 am): Queensland's education system is experiencing the biggest challenge in its history. On Easter Monday the Palaszczuk government announced that for the first five weeks of term 2 schools and kindergartens would only be open for children of essential workers, vulnerable children and children in designated Indigenous communities. All other students would learn from home via remote learning in line with the consistent advice from the national health experts on the AHPPC, the seven key principals for schooling from the national cabinet, and the Prime Minister's statement just yesterday that smaller class sizes are required to ensure social distancing. I am proud to say that our Queensland principals, teachers, staff, students, parents and carers have prepared as best they can for these changes.

Before the first bell on Monday, our 2,900 state school cleaners did an exceptional amount of work preparing our schools. More than 100,000 additional litres of liquid soap were secured as well as an additional 200,000 bottles of hand sanitiser. On the first day of term 2 Queensland state schools recorded a physical attendance rate of 12 per cent, in line with predictions. This means the overwhelming majority of Queensland families are doing the right thing for their health and safety in spite of irresponsible opposition calls to the contrary.

I would like to sincerely thank parents and carers for their patience and cooperation. We know it has not been easy. There were a few teething problems with the learning@home website on Monday morning. Honourable members must remember that this has never been done before on this scale. Our service received a tsunami of traffic on Monday morning. More than 1.8 million hits combined with teachers uploading high-definition content at the same time meant our website experienced issues for about three hours. Most of the feedback we have received said that parents and teachers were able to find other ways to work together with print material in the morning while gaining access as required after midday. I worked with staff from the Department of Education, who worked tirelessly to resolve those issues that earlier testing could not identify. I am pleased to report that the learning@home website operated according to plan yesterday and is currently running smoothly.

There were also some issues with external platforms used by schools such as Microsoft OneNote. Yesterday I received a call from the managing director of Microsoft Australia who said they were experiencing system issues across the country. It really is no laughing matter. Those opposite are treating it as a joke. The Managing Director of Microsoft Australia, Mr Steven Worrall, rang me directly to say they were experiencing system issues across the country—let me speak slowly: across the country—and they have assured me that education in Queensland is their highest priority.

There is no doubt term 2 will be a challenge. After all, we are in the midst of an unprecedented global health pandemic. If we all stay patient and calm and use our common sense we will get through this together. We will help stop the spread of COVID-19 and stay healthy.

Coronavirus, Seniors



Hon. KJ JONES (Cooper—ALP) (Minister for Innovation and Tourism Industry Development and Minister for Cross River Rail) (10.14 am): I quote—

Hello, I'm Sally. I'm in my 70s and I have no immediate family in Queensland and I am lonely. I have no-one to do my shopping and I can't remember the last time I saw a human face.

I quote—

I'm Deidre. I'm in my 60s and I have no money to buy food until my pension payment comes through and I really need help.

I quote—

I'm John. I'm in my late 60s. I don't own a computer. I don't know how I'm going to keep connected to the outside world while I have to stay at home.

These are just a few of the stories of the thousands of seniors who have already been helped by volunteers and professionals through the Care Army. As the Prime Minister has reinforced this morning, it is the senior citizens of Australia who are making some of the largest sacrifices when it comes to self-isolation: not seeing their children or their grandchildren and doing the right thing—just like Sally, Deidre and John—by staying home. That is why the Premier called on all Queenslanders to reach out and play their part in the Care Army.

Today I am proud to advise the House that more than 27,000 Queenslanders have answered the call. Right now there are thousands of Queenslanders who are delivering food and vital medicines and checking up on senior citizens, making sure they are okay. Of course, this is in addition to the thousands of Queenslanders who are reaching out to seniors in their own communities and lives, whether it be their mother, father, aunty or next-door neighbour. We are hearing heartwarming stories of young Queenslanders who for the first time are reaching out to their elderly neighbours to make sure they have groceries and medicines—people who up until now they may have only waved at in the street.

The Minister for Seniors, Coralee O'Rourke, and I have been working closely together to co-chair the COVID-19 Seniors Taskforce. I want to thank the minister and her team for their leadership and all members for their help including the Red Cross, QCOS, the Council on the Ageing Australia, Volunteering Queensland and the Community Services Industry Alliance as well as Professor Peter Coaldrake.

No matter where we look, from the cape in the north to Coolangatta in the south, Queenslanders are working together to take care of our seniors. We want to thank all Queenslanders for getting behind the Care Army and playing their own part in supporting seniors in their lives during this difficult time. The coronavirus poses a threat to our whole community, but those who are most at risk are our seniors. Just like they cared for us, it is our time to care for them.

PAIRING AGREEMENT



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.17 am): I rise to make a brief statement regarding the pairing arrangements today. I want to thank the Manager of Opposition Business and the opposition whip for agreeing to pair 30 opposition members with 30 government members at this day's sitting. These pairing arrangements are essential to allow for a reduced number of members on the precinct and in the chamber, which is similar to what other jurisdictions have done including the Australian parliament. I would like to table a copy of the agreement for the benefit of all members and also for history's purpose. I thank the members for their willingness to be paired out.

Tabled paper: Document titled '56th Parliament Pairing Agreement' [\[625\]](#).

The opposition have indicated that, while they have 30 members paired, a number of them may attend the precinct but will not participate in any vote. The government has paired a number of backbenchers, in particular from regional Queensland, and as such they will not attend the parliament. They will stay in their regions and stay in their communities, just like we are asking all Queenslanders to do. This is a responsible course of action and I want to thank all government members who are paired who have remained in their electorate, excluding the ministers who are obviously here to answer questions from the opposition and to speak to the important COVID bills that the parliament will consider today.

COMMITTEES

Membership



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.18 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That:

1. The member for Lockyer be discharged from, and the member for Currumbin be appointed to, the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee; and
2. The member for Greenslopes be discharged from, and the member for Bundamba be appointed to, the Transport and Public Works Committee.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

MOTIONS

Amendments to Sessional Orders



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.19 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That temporary standing order 103(3) adopted on 17 March 2020 be omitted, and the following provisions inserted into the standing order:

“(3) When a division is demanded, the bells shall be rung for four minutes and the Speaker shall then call for a party vote in accordance with Standing Order 105.

(3A) Notwithstanding (3), if there has already been a division in respect of that order of the day or motion, and there is no intervening debate, the Speaker may order the bells to be rung for one minute.”

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Order of Business



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.20 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, notwithstanding anything contained in the standing and sessional orders, the order of business for the remainder of this day's sitting be as follows:

Personal Explanations

Tabling of Reports

Notice of motion for disallowance of statutory instrument

10.15am—11.15am—

Question Time

11.15am—1.00pm—

Government Business

1.00pm—2.00pm—

Lunch break

2.00pm—3.00pm—

Matters of Public Interest

3.00pm—6.00pm—

Government Business

6.00pm—7.00pm—

Dinner break

7.00pm—until adjournment moved

Government Business (there will be an adjournment debate in accordance with Sessional Orders 2(3) and 8).



Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (10.20 am): Again, we are having debate today. We know that the COVID-19 urgency bills will be introduced into the parliament and that we will give in-principle support. I thank the government for yesterday providing copies of those particular bills in draft format. However, I cannot let this opportunity go without saying how disorganised is this government with respect to sittings. Two weeks ago, the Premier announced to the media that we would be sitting by the end of last week. Then the end of the week came and the media said to the Premier, ‘Why is parliament not sitting?’ The Premier said, ‘The Leader of the House will address that tomorrow.’ The Leader of the

House did not address it the next day. Then we found out that we were sitting on the 22nd after the Speaker tabled a copy of correspondence from the Leader of the House. There has been much toing and froing with respect to the sittings. The opposition has been consistent in its approach to this issue. We agreed to the pairing arrangements from the outset. We said that we were agreeable to mass pairings. We said that we would agree to the social distancing in the House for the safety of members.

Ms Palaszczuk: You didn't do it last time.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection from the Premier. The Premier said, 'You didn't do it last time.' The Premier sits on the national cabinet. The one-person-per-four-square-metre rule did not apply that time, Premier. How are members meant to abide by a law that is not in existence? If the Premier knew that it would be on the national cabinet agenda, she had a duty to inform the members of this House that that would take place. It was not the rule. It was not the law. How can we be expected to abide by a future law that apparently only the Premier knows about? Yesterday in the press conference the Premier spoke of how irresponsible it was to have a vote in the parliament. What an inconvenience this parliament has become to the Premier! The Premier is irritated by this parliament having to sit. God forbid we get the Premier out of her office and answering questions in question time! God forbid the opposition holds the government to account! God forbid the opposition gets opportunities in this House to ask the legitimate questions about why the education minister was derelict and failed in her duties! These are the questions. We in Queensland now have a situation where the Premier can announce on Twitter the complete closure of the Queensland border and for two days not fully explain why.

These are the matters that must be addressed in parliament, yet now we have a motion that we are debating with more guillotining, time frames and restrictions. I said to the Leader of the House that, yes, the opposition will do the mass pairing. I also said to the Leader of the House that I will not restrict our members from attending parliament. It is their right; it is their job. That is what they get paid for. We have members from regional Queensland who will not attend parliament, because they feel it is not appropriate in the circumstances for their community. That is a choice the member makes, and we support the member in making that choice. However, telling a member—

Ms Grace: Oh, sit down.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. 'Sit down' the education minister squawks. I say to the education minister that I am sorry that this parliament has become an inconvenience for her as well. I am sorry—

Government members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The Manager of Opposition Business has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I am sorry that the education minister is forced to be dragged to parliament, because God knows she does not like going to the media. She hid for two days in her office—

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Pause the clock. We have a point of order.

Mrs D'ATH: I rise on a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker. I ask that the member be brought back to the motion before the House which deals with the standing and sessional orders and the program of today. Also, on a point of clarification for the member, the 1.5-metre health directive was in place in the last sitting week.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Before I take advice from the Clerk, I remind members on the opposition benches that I will hear those points of orders in silence, thank you very much. I am listening carefully. The member is providing some background to the debate. I ask the member to stay relevant to the terms of the current debate.

Mr BLEIJIE: The reason the opposition are opposing the constraint of members' ability to speak in the parliament and the motion moved is because we completely oppose the new view from the Premier and her office that this parliament has become her political plaything where she does as she pleases and disregards every other member in this place. I was talking about the education minister and the reasons we want to sit longer today. That is why we are opposing this motion. We are happy to sit tomorrow; we are happy to debate the motion. We have members who want to represent their communities and talk to the COVID bills that will be introduced. For two days the education minister hid in her office until—

Ms GRACE: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order. They are misleading comments. I take offence, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I will take some advice.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I will hear the point of order in silence.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have written on numerous occasions to the government and cc-ed the Premier's office and asked that this House set up an oversight committee, being a select committee, to deal with COVID-19. We want that debated today, but it is not in the motion.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member, you are anticipating a motion before the House. I bring you back to the debate before us.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. We want every available opportunity to address the issues the Queensland community want us to talk about. That is the big issue happening in Queensland regarding COVID-19. Ministers must be held accountable. We note that the only opportunity today is two opportunities on this motion, one being question time for an hour and the other being matters of public interest, which will follow after lunch. That is not enough. Considering—

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the arrogant interjection from the Deputy Premier. We are sitting for one day. We should be sitting—

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: You know what? I do not care what the federal government or federal parliament are doing. This is the Queensland parliament. I do not care.

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I note the mass laughs from over there. I do not agree that the federal parliament should not be sitting; I believe the federal parliament should be sitting. Do you know what? So does the Prime Minister. That is why he said the federal parliament is going back early. Federally, the Labor Party oppose the suspension of federal parliament. They opposed it but then said in every piece of correspondence, 'Why don't you do just do what federal Labor are doing? Just copy the bipartisan approach federally.' What the government failed to say is that it is not as bipartisan as it would have us believe, because federal Labor opposed the suspension of the last sitting. Did members opposite not hear the speeches from their comrades sitting in Canberra? I watched it, and they opposed it. There is not the bipartisanship that the Labor Party in Queensland would have us believe. They may laugh. The Treasurer may laugh. If I were the Queensland Treasurer, who has basically said that Queensland will not have a budget before the next election, I would not be laughing. This is no laughing matter.

Thousands of Queenslanders have lost their jobs. Thousands of Queenslanders have been denied the opportunity for their members of parliament to come in here and address the Deputy Premier's dereliction of duty with respect to the state budget and the fact that we may not be having a state budget.

Ms TRAD: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I will be writing to you on this matter. I did not say that. Those comments are offensive. I ask that they be withdrawn. They are totally misrepresentative of what I said.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: The member has found your comments offensive. I would ask that you withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. The parliament should be sitting more than one day. We have members who will miss the opportunity to speak on the COVID-19 bill.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The number of days that parliament is sitting is not the subject of this motion. This motion is simply about what business we are dealing with today.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I am inclined to agree so I would ask you to come back to relevance to this particular motion.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Leader of the House has put time constraints on government business. We are simply saying that we are happy for parliament to sit all night. I have been advised by the Leader of the House that we will likely be sitting to nine o'clock. We do not agree with that. We want to sit past nine o'clock. Can the government guarantee that every member on this precinct will have an opportunity to speak on the COVID-19 bill and the appropriation bill? It will be great if the government can guarantee that. We want to ensure that every member who is on the speaking list who wants to speak, either to the appropriation bill or to the COVID-19 bill, is afforded that opportunity because these are important

matters. Thousands of Queenslanders have lost their jobs because of the coronavirus crisis. We are simply saying that we are not going to stand by and allow the curtailment of debate and the guillotining of debate as we have seen in the last two to three sittings, which is now the form of this government.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member may have finished, but I was just going to make a point of relevance once again.

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

AYES, 17:

ALP, 17—Bailey, Brown, D'Ath, Dick, Grace, Jones, King, McMahon, Mellish, Miles, Palaszczuk, Pease, Power, Pugh, Richards, Trad, Whiting.

NOES, 11:

LNP, 8—Bates, Bleijie, Boothman, Frecklington, Janetzki, Mander, Molhoek, Powell.

KAP, 1—Dametto.

NQF, 1—Costigan.

Ind, 1—Bolton.

Pairs: Boyd, Last; Butcher, Leahy; Crawford, Langbroek; de Brenni, Bennett; Enoch, Crandon; Farmer, Krause; Fentiman, Boyce; Furner, Hart; Gilbert, Lister; Harper, McArdle; Healy, McDonald; Hinchliffe, Hunt; Howard, Mickelberg; Lauga, Minnikin; Linard, Nicholls; Lui, O'Connor; Lynham, Batt; Madden, Perrett; McCallum, Wilson; McMillan, Millar; Mullen, Purdie; B. O'Rourke, Robinson; C. O'Rourke, Gerber; Pegg, Rowan; Russo, Watts; Ryan, Crisafulli; Saunders, Simpson; Scanlon, Sorensen; Stewart, Stevens; Pitt, Weir.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Referral to Economics and Governance Committee



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.37 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That the Economics and Governance Committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on the Queensland government's response to COVID-19 in relation to the economic response only;
2. That in undertaking the inquiry, the committee should take into account the Australian government's response to COVID-19 and its impacts on the Queensland government's response;
3. That in conducting the inquiry the committee is to be conscious of any requests for witnesses or materials and ensure that any requests do not unreasonably divert resources from the immediate COVID-19 response; and
4. That the committee report to the Legislative Assembly by no later than three months after the conclusion of the public health emergency declared under the Public Health Act 2005 regarding COVID-19.



Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (10.38 am): In the spirit of bipartisanship, in the bipartisan way the government is working with the opposition, this is the first we have heard of such a substantive motion. In this new spirit of working in a bipartisan way, let us all do what the federal government does and sit down and work these things out. It is okay for the government not to want our motion to inquire into these things, without talking about the motion we have put on the *Notice Paper*, but it is okay for the government to have the economics committee hold an inquiry.

The economics committee should not look into this matter because the economics committee is dominated by government members. The government is overseeing its own response to the matter. Look at every other jurisdiction that has looked at these matters: New Zealand has set up a committee with the opposition leader as chair; the ACT has set a committee up; the federal parliament Senate has set a committee up—and, in fact, I think the federal Senate or the ACT committee is chaired by the Greens and the Shooters Party in New South Wales is deputy chair. What all these committees in all these jurisdictions have in common is that they are not chaired by the government. With all respect to our committee system, there will not be a proper inquiry when the government chairs and controls the numbers on the committee. What outcome do members think will come through the committee system in that case? The Queensland Council for Civil Liberties has called for an independent committee to investigate the government's response to COVID-19. It should be an independent process, not conducted by government members.

The government is obviously under an immense amount of pressure now because the parliament is not sitting, the Premier is refusing to be held accountable for her actions and the government has refused to copy other jurisdictions. Yet every time the Leader of the House gets up in this chamber, appears in the media or responds to my great tweets and social media, she says that we should be copying what other jurisdictions are doing. She has said in meetings and she has said publicly, 'Just follow what other jurisdictions do.' She pleads with the opposition, 'Please follow the other jurisdictions;

they're all working in a bipartisan manner.' Yes, when they have set up committees to investigate the COVID-19 response they have worked in a bipartisan manner and the one theme that comes out of that is that the government is not in control of those committee numbers or that committee process. It is an independent process and opposition and crossbench members are equally represented. That is the only way in which you will have a full and proper inquiry into the government's response to COVID-19.

This motion puts this government in control of their own response to COVID-19. The committee will essentially operate in the same way as currently when the government introduces a bill. Do we really think a government-led committee would recommend rejecting a bill before the House? That has never happened.

The government is treating the people of Queensland like children. The people of Queensland know exactly what is going on here—that is, the government are hiding from scrutiny. They are running from scrutiny. They do not want to be scrutinised. I say to the Leader of the House that bipartisanship goes both ways. It does not mean 'what government wants, government gets'. If the government genuinely wants to work in a bipartisan way, why did the Leader of the House not tell the Premier to support our proposal for a full committee to look into these matters, rather than just sending it to the economics committee? If the parliamentary committees want to go about their jobs and inquire into, for example, the economic response or the education response, that is fine. Let them do that.

An opposition member: The health response.

Mr BLEIJIE: Or the health response. However, there should be proper committee oversight of the government. As I said before, there should be proper committee oversight of these decisions because of the announcing of policy by Twitter, as the Premier did; because of the Premier not being able to explain at press conferences the rules of social gatherings and 10 people in a place, which two days later she had to change again; because of the education department's complete failure with the online system. All of those matters should be examined and inquiries should take place.

However, with all due respect to committee members, I do not have confidence that a Labor dominated committee and chair will look independently at these matters. Can one imagine the poor chair of one of those committees taking a draft report against the government—

Mrs Frecklington: To the Treasurer!

Mr BLEIJIE:—to the Deputy Premier? I take the interjection, as this motion is about the economics committee. Off the top of my head I cannot recall who the chair of that committee is. One of my members will remind me.

Mr Mander: The member for Logan.

Mr BLEIJIE: The member for Logan will definitely struggle, because he is not in the right faction. I cannot imagine the chair of the economics committee walking into the Deputy Premier's office and saying, 'Hi Deputy, here is the draft report from the parliamentary committee. It indicates the government's complete failure to properly address the economic stimulus to make sure small businesses are appropriately looked after, the closing of the borders, the policy failures, the education failures.' I cannot imagine that conversation going too well for the member for Logan. I anticipate that that conversation would be more along these lines: the member for Logan walks into the Deputy Premier's office and says, 'Is this what you want?' The Deputy Premier will then look at the draft report and say yes or no.

Mrs Frecklington: She will have drafted it.


Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection; she probably drafted it. This is serious. We need a proper independent body to look at these matters. The chair of the committee should not be from the government; he or she should be from the opposition.

What we see now is a complete justification for why I have put in writing every piece of communication that I have had with the government with respect to the sittings of parliament. It is not that I do not trust the Leader of the House. We have a very good working relationship. It has been a bit testy in the last couple of days, but we are working well. However, I do not trust the Premier and I do not trust the Deputy Premier, who are the leaders of the Labor government. I do not trust them to allow proper scrutiny and debate of legislation in this House. I do have a lot of time for the Leader of the House, but obviously she has to get the leadership team to endorse what she proposes. However, this clearly shows that the government do not want to work in a bipartisan way. It seems that the government just want to tick a box that says 'Bipartisanship'. They will approach the opposition, but when the

opposition fight back and say, 'No, we're not going to accept that; we're not going to cop that,' the government screams that we are not working in a bipartisan way. 'Bipartisan' does not mean that you get everything you want. 'Bipartisan' means you work in a cooperative way with the opposition.

The motion on the table is not bipartisan. We did not even know about it. If the government was serious about bipartisanship and was seriously looking to oversee the response to COVID-19, the Leader of the House would have stood in here this morning and said, 'You know what? The government will support the opposition's move to establish an independent select committee.' That is what she should have done. That would be working in a bipartisan way with the opposition.

There is no independence with a Labor dominated parliamentary committee, the chair of which is appointed by the Labor Party, to look at the government's response to this crisis. That is Caesar judging Caesar. That is not going to work and Queenslanders will not be able to have confidence in the inquiry. Can you imagine the Labor members of the inquiry calling the Deputy Premier to the inquiry and asking tough questions of her? That is not going to happen. The crossbench and opposition members do not have the numbers on the committees to be able to appropriately interrogate the ministers responsible. That is why this does not go far enough. An independent select committee should be set up. If the government works with us in a bipartisan way, we will support it on that one.

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.48 am): I am compelled to rise to speak about this issue. While it is very difficult to go beyond the comprehensive assessment that the Manager of Opposition Business has given, there are a couple of points that I would like to raise. It is more important than ever to have some sort of independent oversight of what are some of the most significant decisions that this parliament will ever make. As has been said countless times, we are in unprecedented times and the government is making enormous and significant decisions that need independent review and oversight. That is even more important in this state when we only have one house of parliament, when we do not have a house of review. We all know that it was the Labor government that got rid of the house of review in 1922.

Mr Dick: Hear, hear!

Mr MANDER: 'Hear, hear!' says the Minister for State Development. I will take that interjection.

Honourable members interjected.


Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members. That debate was settled 100 years ago.

Mr MANDER: It is more relevant in this state than any other jurisdiction in the country that we have some independent oversight, as is happening in nearly every other jurisdiction in this country, so that we can properly analyse the decisions that this government makes. By the Leader of the House bringing this before the House today, it says to me and those on this side of the House that this government is afraid of scrutiny. It is afraid to be challenged about some of the decisions that it has made. Man, oh, man, there are many that need to be challenged. The frustration that we have at the moment, as has been very well enunciated by the Manager of Opposition Business is that we have not had sittings of parliament to be able to scrutinise and keep this government accountable. It is, as I often say, a joke to think that this government can have an economic and governance committee independently review any legislation or anything that this government has done when it is dominated by Labor members. What the government should do in the true spirit of bipartisanship is adopt the motion for a select committee that has been recommended by this side of the House.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.


Referral to Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.51 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on the Queensland government's response to COVID-19 in relation to the health response only;
2. That in undertaking the inquiry, the committee should take into account the Australian government's health response to COVID-19 and its impacts on the Queensland government's response;
3. That in conducting the inquiry the committee is to be conscious of any requests for witnesses or materials and ensure that any requests do not unreasonably divert resources from the immediate COVID-19 response; and
4. That the committee report to the Legislative Assembly by no later than three months after the conclusion of the public health emergency declared under the Public Health Act 2005 regarding COVID-19.

Before I take my seat, I will briefly talk to this. This very much mirrors the motion just passed by the House relating to the Economics and Governance Committee. The government believes it is appropriate not only that we have the Economics and Governance Committee considering the economic response in relation to COVID-19 that has been taken by the government and also by the federal government and the impact that that is having on Queensland but also that the health committee look at the health response.

As has been said in both of these motions, we ask that the committee members be very mindful of the witnesses or materials that they may be asking for in making their inquiries. In response to the debate that I have heard, I have a lot of faith in all members on these parliamentary committees. We have put a lot of responsibility in our parliamentary committees and our parliamentary committee process. I do not want to be sending a message to the people of Queensland that our parliamentary committees are meaningless bodies within this parliament. They are not. They have an important role to play. Every single one of those members has an important role to play, no matter what side of the parliament they come from. I am sure that they will take these referrals very seriously and look into the important matters that they go to and how we are responding to COVID-19. They will be very mindful of the requests, especially in the health space, in relation to those people they may want to get information from or from where material is provided because those people are working day and night at the moment to directly respond and respond immediately to the COVID-19 pandemic. I do hope that the opposition will support this motion.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (10.54 am): We did not know about this motion in this new spirit of bipartisanship that the government is apparently working with. I have the same concerns that a committee dominated by Labor members and with a Labor chair will not deliver a report in which the Queensland public can have confidence that it has truly and independently assessed the government's response to COVID-19.

With respect to the economic debate we have just had, we ultimately supported it because any inquiry is better than no inquiry. I submit to the House and you, Mr Acting Speaker, that the best way to look at these matters is to have a full, independent select committee where the chair of the committee is a non-government member. This inquiry will look at the health minister's responses. There have been serious issues raised with respect to our hospitals—PPE, elective surgery banned one day, then gradually brought back the next day. These are matters that should be investigated by a proper body with non-government members.

I take the point that the Leader of the House raised that the committees will do the job that they are required to do, that they will take a good look at it and do a good job in terms of information gathering. What I am not confident of is that a Labor dominated committee, chaired by the Labor Party, will make recommendations or hold the government to account. The Labor dominated committee, chaired by the Labor Party, will not ask the Premier to come in as a witness and grill the Premier, as should be the case. The Labor dominated committee will not produce a report other than anything positive with respect to the government. The Labor dominated committee, as we have seen in this place, will not produce a report of what the government should have done. The Labor dominated committee will not be critical of the Premier. The Labor dominated committee will not be critical of the Treasurer or the Deputy Premier. The Labor dominated committee, with a majority, will not be critical of the Minister for Health. The parliament is to properly look at these issues, more than ever because parliament is not sitting.

From what I have seen in the last month, the Premier is hiding under the national cabinet. Everything she does, she says, 'Oh, it is a national cabinet issue. National cabinet decided that.' If everything is happening under the national cabinet, then why is the education system different in every state? If it is all happening under national cabinet and, as the Premier says, 'It is all national cabinet,' then why is New South Wales different to Queensland and South Australia is different to every other state?

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is now getting into a substantive debate. This is about the motion and a referral to the committee. He should be brought back to the motion before the House.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I will take some advice.

Ms Palaszczuk: I have a headache from listening to him.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, please return to the substance of the motion.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection that I just heard from the Premier that she has a headache from listening to me. I was intending to wrap up, but I intend now to go for my full six minutes on this substantive motion debate. If the Premier wishes for someone to grab her a Panadol in the meantime, we can accommodate that. The Premier is treating these motions and this parliament as a complete joke. It is serious. This parliament is serious. The committees are serious. It is important to have an independent body, not dominated by government members and not used as a political plaything.

Everyone in the public is calling on the government for an oversight committee to properly oversee the government's response to COVID-19. Other jurisdictions have done it—New Zealand, the ACT and New South Wales. The federal government through the Senate are having proper oversight committees. This is not an oversight committee of the government's response. This report will be drafted in government offices and it will be what the government wants. What the government wants the government gets, as we are seeing in terms of when parliament sits and so forth. I note again that motions are being moved. We have not seen a copy of this motion. My understanding is that it has not been provided. My understanding is that the last item on the current motion that we are debating was item No. 4. I move the following amendment—

5. That the inquiry undertaken be chaired by an opposition member who currently serves on the relevant committee.

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

AYES, 12:

LNP, 8—Bates, Bleijie, Boothman, Frecklington, Janetzki, Mander, Molhoek, Powell.

Grn, 1—Berkman.

KAP, 1—Dametto.

NQF, 1—Costigan.

Ind, 1—Bolton.

NOES, 17:

ALP, 17—Bailey, Brown, D'Ath, Dick, Grace, Jones, King, McMahon, Mellish, Miles, Palaszczuk, Pease, Power, Pugh, Richards, Trad, Whiting.

Pairs: Boyd, Last; Butcher, Leahy; Crawford, Langbroek; de Brenni, Bennett; Enoch, Crandon; Farmer, Krause; Fentiman, Boyce; Furner, Hart; Gilbert, Lister; Harper, McArdle; Healy, McDonald; Hinchliffe, Hunt; Howard, Mickelberg; Lauga, Minnikin; Linard, Nicholls; Lui, O'Connor; Lynham, Batt; Madden, Perrett; McCallum, Wilson; McMillan, Millar; Mullen, Purdie; B. O'Rourke, Robinson; C. O'Rourke, Gerber; Pegg, Rowan; Russo, Watts; Ryan, Crisafulli; Saunders, Simpson; Scanlon, Sorensen; Stewart, Stevens; Pitt, Weir.

Resolved in the negative.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Referral to Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.05 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on the Electoral Commission of Queensland's online publication of the preliminary and formal counts of votes cast in the 2020 quadrennial local government election held on 28 March 2020 and the Bundamba and Currumbin state by-elections held on 28 March 2020; and
2. That the committee report to the Legislative Assembly on 2 June 2020.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.


ABSENCE OF MINISTERS



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.06 am): I inform the House that the Minister for Communities and Minister for Disability Services and Seniors and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services are absent from the House for this day's sitting. The Premier will answer questions directed to either of the minister's portfolio areas on their behalf.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Allegations Against Member for Whitsunday

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—NQP) (11.06 am): I rise in the chamber this morning after some developments last week in relation to a series of allegations that were put to the Liberal National Party last year by a woman I have never met and that ultimately led to my rapid-fire demise from the LNP. I stand here in the pursuit of truth and justice. Mr Acting Speaker, before I table some documents electronically in accordance with your advice, I want to thank my supporters, my family and my loved ones for their show of faith in what have been some of my darkest hours. The woman behind all this has withdrawn her complaint. Heather McKeown withdrew that complaint on black Friday, 13 March. I would love to have been a fly on the wall at LNP headquarters.

Mr Bleijie: You sued her for defamation.

Mr COSTIGAN: I am not taking interjections, member for Kawana.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member! The explanation will be heard in silence.

Mr COSTIGAN: Four days later, through my legal team, I received a personally signed apology from Ms McKeown in which she apologised to me for the hurt and damage to myself and my family. I will table those documents electronically, as I should.

Tabled paper. Email, dated 13 March 2020, from Ms Heather McKeown, to Mr Michael O'Dwyer, Mr Bernard Ponting and the Leader of the Opposition, Mrs Deb Frecklington MP, regarding the member for Whitsunday, Mr Jason Costigan MP [\[630\]](#).

Tabled paper. Apology by Ms Heather McKeown regarding the member for Whitsunday, Mr Jason Costigan MP [\[631\]](#).

In that apology Ms McKeown referenced the remarks she posted on social media. In relation to that, she said that those comments were 'entirely unjustified'.

Today, on the back of all of that, in this place, in keeping with what I said in my electorate last Wednesday, I call on the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the members for Kawana and Chatsworth to apologise to me and my family for what they said in this chamber and outside this chamber. Furthermore, I call on those four MPs, my former colleagues in the team that I used to walk over hot coals for, to fall on their swords and resign.


I want to also touch on what the Whitsunday Regional Council did after my demise from the LNP on 1 February last year. That is when the faceless men delivered a political execution—a rapid-fire political execution. Twelve days later the Whitsunday Regional Council moved a motion effectively trying to ban me from the schools in my electorate. This was against, I understand, the advice of the acting chief executive officer of the council. Some of those councillors are no longer in local government, but some are. What happened there was utterly disgraceful as well. Today, in the people's chamber, I call on the Mayor of Whitsunday Regional Council, Andrew Willcox, and councillors Mike Brunker, John Collins and Jan Clifford to also apologise to me and my family and resign. If they do not then the Minister for Local Government should step in and sack them.

To say this has been a shocking time in my life is an understatement. I do not mind people criticising me for my policies, whether it is shooting crocodiles on our beaches, burning coal for cheaper power or forgetting about feasibility studies to build dams, but when people make up stories and attack me and my family, I draw the line. My children, my girls, have suffered the pain that I have gone through as well. One of my daughters is still in high school and for much of last year, oblivious to me, she needed counselling on the back of what happened to her daddy in Queensland. It has really knocked my two girls around. The Leader of the Opposition can talk about her daughters. She does not have a mortgage on kids and she does not have a mortgage on having daughters either.

I appreciate the indulgence of the House this morning. I live for my kids. I love representing my community in this parliament as the MP for Whitsunday and now as the leader of North Queensland First, but to see what has happened to my girls has been heartbreaking for me.


PRIVILEGE

Error in Divisions

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (11.13 am): Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to apologise to the House for a miscount in the last two votes. I have accidentally included you in those counts. I would like to amend those two votes to be 17.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I will direct that the tally for each vote be recorded appropriately.

Error in Division


 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (11.13 am): Following the lead of the honourable member, on behalf of our whip, can I also ask that the vote be changed. I cannot recall which vote it was. However, in the first vote I think we recorded seven and it should have been eight, according to the pairing agreement that I have entered into with the government. Mr Acting Speaker, I ask that you discharge your all-powerful duties to correct the vote.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: We are all learning new things here. I accept that, and the vote will be corrected accordingly. I will not take offence from the government whip. That could be a reflection on my performance as a chair.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Question time will conclude at 12.14 pm.

Coronavirus, Schools

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (11.14 am): My first question is to the Premier. Three weeks ago, at the peak of coronavirus infections, the Premier told Queenslanders that school would remain open for children. This week, with infection rates dropping, the Palaszczuk government has stopped the majority of children from going to school. Will the Premier end the inconsistency and table the medical advice she has relied on to stop our kids from going to school today?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I am very comfortable with our position on schools. In fact, not only is the matter discussed at national cabinet but also it is discussed at our cabinet, it is discussed at our Queensland Disaster Management Committee and of course the Minister for Education has liaised with me and with stakeholders in reaching our position.

Let me make it very clear: our schools in Queensland are open for those children of essential workers who need to attend school during this time. Secondly, they are open to vulnerable students. We have also encouraged parents to talk to principals if there are any issues at home where both parents may be working from home but are unable to supervise whilst their children are doing online learning.

The decision that the government took was that in mid-May, 15 May, we would make further decisions about how we could improve teacher-student face time. I am happy to say in this parliament that it would be our clear intention for year 12s to have more face time in the first instance. I think it is very important that we look at that issue which is not dissimilar to what other states are doing.

There are also different situations of community transmission across the nation. There is more community transmission in New South Wales and Victoria than there is in Queensland, yet we do have some community transmission. We need to make sure that Queenslanders—parents, teachers, members of the school community and students—are perfectly comfortable with the further approaches that we would look at taking. That is why consultation is the key here.

Mr Mander: What changed, Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: This has not only been addressed at the education ministers' meetings but it has also been discussed with Health, with the expert advice from Health, and at the national cabinet. The national cabinet agreed on a set of principles which every state and territory leader signed up to.

Mrs Frecklington: What is the Prime Minister saying about Queensland then?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will say this to the Leader of the Opposition: when I put forward Queensland's position to national cabinet there was no negativity raised about Queensland's position.

(Time expired)

Coronavirus, Schools

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My second question is also to the Premier. The principal of Marshall Road State School has ordered parents not to send their kids to school and has threatened to shut down the school if more than 40 per cent of kids show up. Will the Premier rule out shutting down our kids' schools if parents choose to send their kids to school?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have not seen that advice. I am not going to comment on advice that I have not seen.

Ms Trad: No doubt they are misrepresenting it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, probably. We live in a very different world at the moment. In a perfect world, before coronavirus, the schools operated as normal. We cannot operate as normal at this particular point in time. In fact, it was probably the Queensland government that took one of the first steps of making sure our most vulnerable members of our school community were actually taken out of the school community for their own protection, on advice from Health. Let me make it very clear to the Leader of the Opposition and to the people of Queensland that I will always listen to the expert advice. I will listen to the health advice and I will listen to the advice of the school community—

Mr Mander interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I take that interjection. The teachers have a legitimate right to express their concerns. As the Prime Minister even said, there are issues for teachers social distancing not only in the classroom but also in the lunch rooms and where they congregate. These are extraordinary circumstances—just like all of us cannot go and congregate in the cafeteria because we would breach our social distancing rules. Schools are very big communities. We have some schools with over 2,000 or 3,000 students. Let me be very clear. We are not dissimilar to other states as well, but we will be looking at mid-May to see how we can get more student-teacher contact happening in our schools.

Let me say to those opposite and to anyone who wants to rush this: do it at your own peril. All we need is an outbreak in a school and I will tell the House who those opposite will be in here blaming. They will be blaming me and they will be blaming the education minister. That is why we will take this one step at a time. Our cases and our figures are coming down, which means restrictions may be able to be eased in the future. We will get this right in the best interests of the people of this state. It is negligent of the opposition to be saying otherwise during these really critical times.

Coronavirus, Economic Response

Ms PEASE: My question is to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier please update the House on how the Palaszczuk government will steer Queensland's economic recovery through this pandemic?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Lytton for her question. As I have said a number of times in this parliament and publicly at press conferences, we are dealing with a twin crisis here in Queensland, nationally and globally. This is a health crisis but it is an economic crisis as well. From the very outset, I want to express to all those Queenslanders who have lost their jobs during this time that I know this is having a huge impact on your families. I know that there are many people out there hurting, and my government is going to do everything we can to be with you during this time. That is why we have acted extremely swiftly to make sure that we are looking after people where we can.

To that extent, this is the federal government working with the state government as well. I heard the member for Kawana criticise the national cabinet before. Can I say that the national cabinet is one of the best examples of cooperation between state and federal governments that I have ever seen in my lifetime, and I am absolutely privileged to be involved in those meetings. I have said publicly that I commend the Prime Minister on the way he is chairing it and also the expert advice that is being provided to that national cabinet by the chief health officers. I will say that I actually think the Prime Minister likes working with the members of the national cabinet as well.

As I said, we know that Queenslanders are doing it tough at the moment. I think the way we need to look at this is that for the next six months it is almost like a hibernation model where we really want the supports there for businesses and workers to make sure they come through the other side. In Queensland, we are working very closely with the private sector and of course through our own infrastructure and with the mayors. I congratulate all the new mayors who have faced their election. I know that they are willing to work for us because I have been providing them with briefings as much as possible as well about this pandemic. What we want to do very clearly is see an acceleration of works and see new partnerships. We will be working with the private sector to make sure we can accelerate key resource industries across this state as quickly as possible. Thank goodness we have a strong resources sector here in Queensland.

(Time expired)

Virgin Australia Airlines

Mr MANDER: My question without notice is to the Treasurer. The Palaszczuk government offered a \$200 million payout to Virgin—a company that is 90 per cent foreign owned, that has \$5 billion of debt, that last year made a \$349 million loss and that announced a plan to sack 750 staff and end its Tiger operations in Brisbane, all before coronavirus hit. Why does one company get offered a \$200 million grant but thousands of Queensland businesses get nothing?

Ms TRAD: Can I say that that question should be referred to the minister who is responsible for liaising with Virgin. I have recused myself from all decision-making in relation to—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members. The Treasurer is being responsive to your question.

Ms TRAD: As I was saying, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is best placed to direct his question to the minister who is responsible for liaising with Virgin. I have recused myself from those discussions and that decision-making. I am being responsive. My colleague the honourable member for Woodridge and the minister responsible for state development has been addressing all of these questions in the media. The member for Everton may have—

Mr Mander interjected.

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

Ms TRAD: As I was saying, the minister has been addressing these issues in the media. The member for Everton may not have been catching up on his daily briefing through the media, but I will draw to his attention that it is the Minister for State Development who has been liaising. However, this gives me an opportunity to talk about the incredible amount of support the Palaszczuk Labor government is giving to not only small businesses in this state but also medium and large businesses—all of which have been rocked by the coronavirus and the significant restrictions that have been placed on activity and operations within our economy.

To date, we have pushed out the door since mid-March almost half a billion dollars back into the pockets of workers and back into the accounts of businesses because we know that they are doing it tough right now. As the Premier has said, we know that there are literally tens of thousands of Queenslanders without a job today when they had a job three or four weeks ago. It is a Palaszczuk Labor government that is working in concert with the federal Morrison government to make sure that these workers are supported, that businesses can go into hibernation and that those business owners can have an income while their businesses are hibernating. Those opposite have no plan. All they have is carping, whingeing and moaning.

Coronavirus, Seniors

Mr McCALLUM: My question is to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier inform the House of the response of Queenslanders when the call went out to enrol in the Care Army and how the government is supporting residents in aged-care facilities?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Bundamba for asking me his very first question in this House. Of course, we welcome him here as the new member for Bundamba. I know that he will do a great job representing an electorate that is very close to my electorate. Once again, I say congratulations.

Of course, our Care Army is going extremely well. It is an initiative on which I asked Minister Jones and Minister O'Rourke to work very closely to ensure that our most vulnerable people in Queensland have the support. Queenslanders have done an incredible job in volunteering and putting their names forward. At last count around 27,000 people had already signed up. I know many MPs are writing to people in their respective electorates asking them if they need any help. Then we can match them with the database of volunteers. I encourage all members to do that because this should be bipartisan. We are talking about people over 65 who have one or two serious health conditions and also those over 70.

I know it is a really tough time for people at the moment. Many people are feeling that they are doing this alone, but the Care Army is there to help. The Care Army is there to go to the chemist to get prescription medication for them. It is there to go and get food supplies, but it can also be a friendly chat on the phone and just checking in and asking them how they are going. I think it is a great initiative. I am absolutely overwhelmed by the response. I say to everyone who signed up: thank you very much. We are going about our business now trying to match them with people relevant to their local regions and local councils.

I want to make some quick comments about aged care. I am very concerned in Queensland—and I said this at the press conference this morning and national cabinet considered this yesterday as well—that some nursing homes have gone into full lockdown when there is no health directive to do so. It is really important that our loved ones are getting access to their family members. In Queensland after 1 May people have to show evidence that they have had their flu shot. However, there is no evidence of widespread transmission due to family members coming in to visit their loved ones. There are some

cases in other parts of the nation where it has been transmitted from workers. Of course, we have very strict guidelines for workers. If they are sick, they should not come in. There are also other protocols that people can put into place.

People have raised with me personally that they are very concerned they cannot see their mother or their father. I am very concerned about this as well as about some evidence that some people are being kept in their room without actually being able to see—

(Time expired)

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Integrity

Mr POWELL: My question is to the Premier. Given the integrity scandal caused by Deputy Premier Trad, Minister Fentiman and senior Treasury official Matt Collins receiving free accommodation at Virgin CEO Paul Scurrah's \$7.2 million luxury ski house in Whistler, Canada, will the Premier release the probity plan and advise how Deputy Premier Trad and Minister Fentiman managed their conflict of interest with the \$200 million taxpayer funded bailout of Virgin Australia?

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe that that question had imputations and inferences in it and I ask that the member either withdraw the question or reframe it.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members. I will take some advice in silence.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members. I will take the advice in silence. There is no point of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me say very clearly: the Deputy Premier had zero involvement in relation to Virgin. I have authorised Minister Cameron Dick as the Minister for State Development to deal with all parties relevant—

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: The Premier is being responsive to the question, member for Glass House.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Minister for State Development has been liaising directly with me in relation to that matter. Furthermore, I can say that at no stage have the Deputy Premier or Minister Fentiman participated in any discussions whatsoever at any cabinet level about Virgin—full stop.

Coronavirus, Testing and Treatment

Mr POWER: Mr Acting Speaker—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members. The question will be heard in silence.

Mr POWER: My question is for the Minister for—

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Sorry to interrupt. Member for Toowoomba South, I asked for the question to be heard in silence. You are talking. I am placing you on a warning under the standing orders.

Mr POWER: My question is for the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Will the minister advise the House of the steps the Palaszczuk government has taken to ensure that Queenslanders have access to testing and treatment for COVID-19?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Logan for his question. I know he has taken a very close personal interest in the COVID-19 response and particularly the testing available in his community in Logan. I think the member for Logan was even sick early on in the outbreak and did the right thing and stayed home, washed his hands and sought some advice from the staff at Logan Hospital; I am sure they took care of him. What we have seen from the beginning of this outbreak—and it is agreed worldwide—is that testing is crucial. Without a high level of testing we cannot know what we are dealing with. We cannot know how much of an outbreak there is or how much community transmission we are experiencing.

We responded here in Queensland incredibly quickly. We had one of the first labs set up to test for coronavirus at Coopers Plains, at the Forensic and Scientific Services lab. We then expanded into the Central lab and into Townsville. Now people can get tested for COVID-19 right around the state—

in fact, thousands of people are doing so each and every day. Now more than 90,000 tests have been completed. We could not have done that if it were not for our world-class, publicly owned pathology service here in Queensland. When we think about and talk about health, we often talk about nurses, doctors and paramedics. However, behind them are our fantastic scientists who really have done an incredible job, and continue to do an incredible job, helping us in the COVID-19 outbreak.

I think everyone knows how those opposite sacked nurses, but they might not know how many scientists they sacked. Do honourable members know they cut 69 pathology staff? It is very fortunate that we have since rebuilt that pathology service because they are the very same pathology staff who are testing thousands of Queenslanders each and every day for COVID-19. While I am at it, people might not be aware that those opposite sacked 177 public health staff—177 of the very staff who are keeping Queenslanders safe from COVID-19 today—

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Mudgeeraba.

Dr MILES:—those disease detectives who are contact tracing, making sure that every single case is tracked down.

Ms Bates interjected.

Dr MILES: They do not like to hear their record—

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders.

Dr MILES: The member for Mudgeeraba does not like having their record reported in this House, but it is those on this side who have supported rebuilding our frontline services, hiring more doctors, nurses, paramedics and scientists.

(Time expired)

Schools, Remote Learning

Mr BLEIJIE: My question without notice is to the Premier. Following Labor's \$2.1 billion Health payroll debacle, Labor's SPER IT fail and Labor's e-health scandal, this week thousands of frustrated parents were unable to log on to the government's e-learning website because it crashed. Why did the Palaszczuk government not properly resource and test this vital service and speak to Microsoft before making the decision to close schools to most Queensland students?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As the member for Kawana would know, the Minister for Education addressed this. There have been issues across the nation. It is not unique to Queensland. My understanding is that it is going well today. However, these are unprecedented times. If I had been asked at the end of last year whether we would have large volumes of students learning from home, I would have said that was ridiculous. However, we are in the middle of a world health pandemic.

I know the member for Kawana obviously does not seem to have much to do during the day, but on this side of the House we are flat out. There is one thing that is driving us; that is, the health of Queenslanders and making sure that the economy gets back. This is not unique to Queensland. It is a world pandemic. When I look at what has been happening in New York, Italy, France, the United Kingdom and countries right across the world, I thank God I live in Queensland. I thank God we live in Australia, because we have world-class health facilities. We have perhaps one of the best, if not the best, chief health officers in the nation. Dr Jeannette Young, who has been monitoring SARS over the years, has been on top of this from day one, advising me and the health minister from back at the end of January that we needed to declare a public health emergency. What we have—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Manager of Opposition Business, the Premier is responding to your question. You will cease your interjections.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Those opposite were implying that it was not a national crisis, a state crisis—that we were making it up. Let me tell Queenslanders and the opposition this: we are doing a mighty job. Everyone is holding out New Zealand to be one of the best countries in the world, but our population is relevant to New Zealand. In New Zealand they have 1,445 cases. In Queensland, we are at 1,024. New Zealand has had 13 deaths and we have had six. I commend every Queenslanders for doing their part. We are part of a team here. We are flattening that curve. We are on the right track. Let us keep it up and let us keep the good work going.

Coronavirus, Jobs and Businesses

Mr KING: My question is of the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. Will the Deputy Premier please update the House on the Palaszczuk government's measures to support jobs and businesses through the devastating impact of the coronavirus?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Kurwongbah for the question. Of course, the member as well as many members on this side of the House understand how deeply affected are Queensland workers and businesses by the twin crises to health and our economy. As I reported to the House earlier today, we responded quickly when the coronavirus first broke out in China and we supported our industries that were export exposed and had an immediate decline in terms of their activity because of the shutdown in China. We followed this very quickly with a \$4 billion-plus package which later today we will debate in this House. We have been refunding to businesses critical cash flow in the way of payroll tax both in terms of rebates and holidays and in terms of deferrals. As well, we have been providing land tax relief to those landlords who have tenancies that are both retail and residential. We are working very hard to get out the door half a billion dollars of interest-free loans so that businesses have money in their accounts and workers have money in their pockets. It has been working remarkably well.

Our priority has been to protect those industries foundational to our economy to ensure that they keep operating and that those jobs continue—industries like mining and agriculture. We also need to preserve those businesses and industries we are forcing to hibernate at this time to ensure that they can reopen and re-employ Queenslanders as soon as possible. We are investing in those critical, essential services that we need to accelerate and amplify at this time if we are to provide services to Queenslanders in this time of need. We now are planning for our economic recovery. Our support package has been roundly endorsed by a whole range of industry stakeholders, including CCIQ, the Property Council, the Shopping Centre Council of Australia and the National Retailers Association.

It really does speak volumes that, in all of this economic catastrophe, those opposite have not one single question about the economy. They come in here and the shadow Treasurer does not have a question about the economy but has a question about muckraking. Those opposite should make a decision. They either act in a bipartisan way and support the government in our measures to support the economy or they are going to be whingeing and whining and carping and—

(Time expired)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Before I call the next member for their question, I inform members that I have approved an AAP photographer to take photos, and they will now be taking photos from the gallery.

Coronavirus, Schools

Mr MINNIKIN: My question is to the Premier. Together union secretary Alex Scott said—

The idea that any work is not essential is ridiculous at this point in time, but also the concept that if you are working from home you're able to supervise your children clearly does not understand the stress and difficulties people are having in relation to working from home.

Will the Premier now order Queensland schools to reopen so parents can decide whether to send their kids to school?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Chatsworth for the question. As I said earlier, all of these issues will be reviewed by 15 May. We will make an announcement then in time for the second half of the term. What I have also said very clearly—if the member for Chatsworth were listening earlier—is that if people are working from home and are unable to ensure that their children are being supervised they should contact their school principal. I made that very clear. I have said that publicly. The Minister for Education has said that publicly. That is why I think the attendance rate is around 13 per cent at the moment. Can everyone just take a break here and tell me why very few countries in the world have schools operating at full steam? Let me make it very clear. The last thing we want to see is an outbreak. Have a look at today. We are down to zero cases. The last thing I want to see is an outbreak. The suggestion by those members that we can just suddenly open up all the schools and everything is going to be back to normal is absolutely incorrect and goes against everything that we have said very clearly.

As I said, we will be continuing to talk to parents. We have been talking to teachers, school communities and principals, and we will be involving everyone and we will be managing this—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Minister for Education, you are warned.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We will be managing this in the best interests of the children, the best interests of the school community and the best interests of the general community and the general public. Let me also make it clear that, whilst there is large-scale community transmission in New South Wales and Victoria, we still have some community transmission here in Queensland. I would want to be very sure that all of that transmission is completely wiped out before we even entertain further opening up our school system. It would be unwise and negligent and the public would never forgive us if there were a large-scale outbreak because we acted in haste.

Virgin Australia Airlines

Mr MELLISH: My question is of the Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning. Will the minister update the House on how the Palaszczuk government is working to save Virgin Australia and preserve aviation competition, particularly for regional Queensland, and is the minister aware of any other approaches?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Aspley for his question and support of aviation jobs. I know there is a large number of aviation workers in his electorate as there are across the north side as there are, in fact, across Queensland. Yesterday, 10,000 Virgin Australia employees woke up to a very uncertain future indeed, because the federal Morrison government, the coalition government in Canberra, let Virgin crash out and crash into voluntary administration. We offered to help the federal government. We put \$200 million on the table towards a national bailout but we were ignored. I am not worried about being ignored by Scott Morrison. What I am worried about is Scott Morrison ignoring the thousands of Virgin workers who work in this state.

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr DICK: Up to 5,000 Queensland jobs—

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Minister resume your seat. Member for Everton you have been warned. You will leave the chamber for one hour.

Whereupon the honourable member for Everton withdrew from the chamber at 11.50 am.

Mr DICK: Up to 5,000 Queensland jobs now hang in the balance, not to mention the tens of thousands of jobs in tourism across our state. I am asked by the member for Aspley whether there is another approach. A couple of days ago we heard from the Leader of the Opposition, fresh from her visit from the shopping centre where she was in the grocery store touching every single product she could get her hands on. She came out and said, 'I'm not going to back Queensland workers. I'm going to back my very good friend Gladys Berejiklian.' The Leader of the Opposition was not backing Virgin and not backing Queensland but backing her 'very good friend Gladys Berejiklian'. Worse than that, the Leader of the Opposition dared Virgin to leave Queensland. She said, 'I want to see Virgin show us that Queensland is their No. 1.'

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The minister is blatantly misrepresenting. I take offence and I ask that he withdraw.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: The member has taken offence. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr DICK: I withdraw. The Leader of the Opposition said, 'I want to see Virgin show us that Queensland is their No. 1.' This is not a schoolyard fight. You are not looking for your bestie in the schoolyard; you are looking to support 5,000 jobs, and the Queensland Leader of the Opposition did nothing. Not to be outdone, of course, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition doubled down. Yesterday he said, 'Oh well, if Virgin doesn't survive there'll be another airline, just like when Ansett collapsed.' What planets were the Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Opposition living on when Ansett collapsed? It was a total disaster for regional Queensland. Within days Qantas moved to 90 per cent of market share across our state. It took a decade, 10 years or more, for competition to properly return to regional Queensland.

The Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition are happy to condemn Mackay, Cairns, Townsville, the Whitsundays, Central Queensland, Mount Isa and the rest to another lost decade of sky-high airfares and possibly many more to come. This is not leadership. The Leader of the Opposition is not someone who can even think of what to say at a press conference when 5,000 Queensland workers are on the scrap heap. There is only one leader and one government supporting Queensland jobs and that is our Premier and our government.

Coronavirus, Funerals

Ms BATES: My question without notice is to the Premier. Last month the government reportedly approved a special exemption for 80 people to attend a funeral in Mackay, but other grieving families have been denied exemptions, meaning only 10 people can attend, including the funeral celebrant and undertakers. Will the Premier show some compassion and consistency when allowing Queenslanders to grieve and pay their respects at funerals?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. My heart goes out to anyone who has lost a loved one during this period of time. It is absolutely devastating to think that people cannot grieve normally. Recently my electorate officer lost her partner with only a limited number of people able to go to that funeral. We are in unprecedented times. It is absolutely heartbreaking.

In relation to funerals, special exemptions are up to the Chief Health Officer. I am not in the Chief Health Officer's shoes, but they are very big shoes in terms of recognising that sometimes there are extenuating circumstances.

Mr Bleijie: Eighty people.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can you just let me speak, member for Kawana?

Dr Miles: He called a division on a procedural motion.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will take that interjection from the Minister for Health. The member for Kawana filled up this whole chamber for a division when we had social distancing. That is what the member for Kawana thinks. I think we need to be understanding of our First Nation people. In their custom it is at times hard for them to limit the number of people attending. They are limiting the number of people who are coming to those funerals. We would like to see consistency where possible. The Chief Health Officer is currently reviewing those exemptions. I can advise that since 26 March there have been 171 requests for exemptions for funerals and 145 exemptions have been granted. That would be on a case-by-case basis. I do look forward to the day when these exemptions are lifted. I thank the Chief Health Officer for balancing a very delicate issue during such a sensitive time.

Coronavirus, Tourism Industry

Mr WHITING: My question is to the Minister for Innovation and Tourism Industry Development and Minister for Cross River Rail. Will the minister please update the House on the impact of COVID-19 on Queensland's tourism sector?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question, a member who represents the beautiful Moreton Bay region. Down by the bay they are also feeling the impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism industry. I want to thank the local members from that region who have been in contact with me. We know that tourism operators were some of the very first hit by the impacts of COVID-19. We have been talking about that in this parliament since parliament resumed this year. In fact, we were the first state government of any in the country to move a package of funding to help support the tourism industry during this tough time. Unfortunately what we have seen unfold internationally is the closing of borders, the ceasing of travel and people being told to stay home to protect their health. They are absolutely the right decisions but ones that are having a detrimental effect on the tourism industry globally.

In Queensland the cost to the tourism industry is in the vicinity of \$6.5 billion and has affected around 70,000 jobs across our state. We have been arguing for some time that Queensland has been disproportionately affected when one thinks about communities such as Cairns where one in five people work in the tourism industry, the Whitsundays where it is one in three and on the Gold Coast where it is one in seven. This is hitting these communities hard and I am very proud to be part of a government that, through our economic package, is providing support directly to businesses when they need it most.

Our package complements and, as the Treasurer said this morning, is working in concert with the work that the federal government has done. These are tough times. I commend the work of the state development minister in leading his response in regard to ensuring we do not go back to the dark days of a monopoly in our skies. There are more than \$1.4 billion worth of flights by Virgin across Queensland right now. We have 13 regional airports in Queensland—more airports than any other state in Australia. The No. 1 issue that the tourism industry is raising with me right now is its concern about going back to the dark days of a monopoly in our skies and how that shuts down communities, particularly in regional Queensland. We will not ignore the concerns of those communities.

While I am on my feet I want to update the House that yesterday I had the great honour of joining with the Tourism and Events Queensland board, which met yesterday, to talk about how we as an industry can get back on our feet. We are already planning how we will take advantage of the wonderful

natural assets that Queensland has: the best beaches in the world and the most pristine rainforests in the world. I make this point to the opposition: I would much rather be coming into parliament today talking about this than talking about piled up dead bodies, which is what we are seeing around the world. I am proud of the effort of our Premier and our government in ensuring that the conversations we are having today are about schools, the tourism industry and the way that we can get back on our feet and not about dealing with dead bodies, images of which we are seeing on our televisions. In Queensland we will continue to stand up for Queenslanders, take care of their health and listen to them.

Voluntary Assisted Dying Legislation

Ms BOLTON: My question without notice is to the Premier. With the COVID crisis being well managed and the introduction of virtual parliament to get back to full sittings, will the Premier commit to introducing the recommended draft legislation for voluntary assisted dying before the October election or outline to Queensland a timetable for this to occur?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Noosa for that very important question. From the outset, I thank the health committee for the thorough report that they have tabled in the parliament. As I have stated publicly, I will be reading that report and I give a commitment to letting Queenslanders know what the government's intention is before the next sitting of parliament.

Electricity Prices

Ms PUGH: My question is of the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. Can the minister advise the House on the measures that the Palaszczuk government is taking to alleviate concerns about high power bills due to Queenslanders isolating at home?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for Mount Ommaney for her question. We understand that Queenslanders are now even more concerned about the cost of living and getting through this unprecedented coronavirus crisis. The Palaszczuk government has responded with a range of measures to alleviate concerns arising from energy bills. That includes Queensland households receiving a \$200 rebate off their electricity bills and small businesses receiving a \$500 rebate off their power bills. I am pleased to inform the House that nearly 120,000 households and more than 12,000 small businesses have already received that rebate. Because our electricity assets are publicly owned, Queenslanders will benefit with a further two \$50 asset dividend payments to be delivered over the next two years. Meanwhile the Palaszczuk government continues its record of putting downward pressure on electricity prices. Regional Queenslanders are tipped to receive another cut in their power bills. Regional power prices are set to fall for a typical household by \$75 and for a small business by \$116 a year from 1 July. This is the third consecutive year that electricity prices have fallen under the Palaszczuk government.

I remind Queenslanders who may be struggling to pay their power bills during this unprecedented crisis to talk to their retailer. Retailers have ceased disconnections for customers in financial stress, they offer flexible payment options, they are deferring debt recovery and waiving late fees and interest charges. It must be pointed out that those measures were put in place very quickly indeed across regional Queensland by our publicly owned retailer, Ergon. That is a publicly owned energy asset doing the right thing by all Queensland families. Public ownership of our assets has given Queenslanders the energy trifecta: the lowest energy prices on the eastern seaboard, a reliable supply and a planned path to a renewable future. Furthermore, they are doing their all to assist Queenslanders during this pandemic. Those are the very same assets that the LNP would sell in a heartbeat if they were given the chance.

Payroll Tax, JobKeeper Payments

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Premier. According to the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, the Palaszczuk government will see jobs go if it charges payroll tax on JobKeeper payments. Will the Premier rule out gouging payroll tax from JobKeeper payments for workers by excluding JobKeeper payments from all payroll tax calculations for Queensland businesses?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Maroochydore. We are looking at that matter.

Ms Jones: ScoMo is charging income tax on it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I take the interjection from the minister that the Turnbull government is applying income tax.

Ms Trad: The Morrison government.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am sorry: the Morrison government.

Ms Trad: I know, it's hard to keep up.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Morrison government is applying income tax. We will give it due consideration. The Treasurer sits on a committee with all the other treasurers across the nation. I am sure that they will discuss that issue.

Coronavirus, School Students

Ms RICHARDS: My question is of the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the minister please outline how the government is helping disadvantaged students during the COVID-19 crisis?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question. I know she is a great advocate for her schools. I have visited her schools and met with her principals on many occasions, and I know she is doing a fantastic job.

As always, the Palaszczuk government will continue to do everything possible to make sure that no child is disadvantaged during this worldwide pandemic. I reiterate what the Premier said before: 191 countries around the world have totally closed their schools, Italy being one of them, because they need to protect the health and safety of not only the students but also the wider community. If a school gets a positive COVID-19 case, it will be shut down immediately. We do not want to disadvantage any essential worker who could not then send their child to school because their school had been closed.

Those opposite have been talking about the health advice. The AHPPC advice on reducing COVID-19 in schools has been on the web for six days. Rather than trawling through the curriculum and picking out little bits and pieces like an Orwellian *1984* Big Brother, I suggest that those opposite look at the health advice and stop their irresponsible calls regarding schools. The advice in the list clearly sets out social distancing requirements in schools. We are following the health advice. Parents are doing the right thing by listening to the health advice. Today 13 per cent of children are in attendance at schools. The vast majority of parents are accepting the health advice and are rating the health and safety of their children and the community more importantly than do those opposite, who have confused this at every step of the way.

In relation to disadvantaged children, we have been working to make sure that each of those children has a device in their hands and that they have SIM cards to use. I have been stunned by the innovation of some schools. For example, yesterday the principal of Bymount East State School near Roma, Craig Briggs, sent USBs to the kids via a drone. We are leaving no stone unturned. We are making sure that all disadvantaged children are looked after during these pandemic times. We are working with Channel 7, Channel 9 and other commercial stations on some great digital formats. We are making sure that children have access to the best print material in the country. Every state is using our Queensland material. I am proud of what we have done. We will keep children safe. It is the irresponsibility of those opposite that will put it in—

(Time expired)

Coronavirus, Economic Response

Mr CRISAFULLI: My question is to the Premier. With Queensland business conditions at record low levels before coronavirus hit, the Palaszczuk government closed its \$500 million Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority concessional loan program to new applicants, assessing applications on lodgement date and not on merit. Does the Premier agree that this proves the \$27 million previously provided to the tourism industry is inadequate and will the Premier now order an increase in grant funding to struggling small businesses?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. That is why we have put out a \$4 billion package. The member is more than welcome to debate that, to discuss it and to talk about it in detail. We know that nationally economic conditions are going to deteriorate. We have been given that advice. We recognise that. We know that the unemployment rate is going to increase and not decrease. We know that we are in an unprecedented economic crisis, which is why we acted so quickly. We announced an over \$20 billion package before any other state went there.

We then announced an over \$4 billion package, making sure that we are looking at businesses, making sure that we are helping people get through this pandemic. I urge the member to listen to the Treasurer today when she goes through in detail the appropriation bill about the money that we need to kick-start our economy after what we have seen with the impact of the health crisis. I say to the member for Broadwater that—

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am trying to answer your question, if you want to listen.

Mr Crisafulli: Ooh!

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am trying to answer your question and you are interjecting. You either want to listen or you do not want to listen. As the minister for tourism said, we know that our tourism industry will suffer a savage blow this year and probably next year, because I cannot see international flights resuming any time in the near future. As we have said publicly, it could be a year; it could be more. Until there is a vaccine, no-one has immunity. Let us be very clear on that. No-one in this room has immunity.

Mr Crisafulli: Relevance?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No-one in the public has immunity. The relevance is that we are in unprecedented, uncharted times, and it is this government that is acting swiftly on the pandemic that we are experiencing and we will continue to do so.

Coronavirus, Small Business

Mrs McMAHON: My question is of the Minister for Employment and Small Business and the Minister for Training and Skills Development. Will the minister update the House about what the Palaszczuk government is doing to support Queensland small businesses and if there are any alternative approaches?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for Macalister for her question. The support she have given her local businesses during this time has been phenomenal, particularly in the Beenleigh area, which I used to be proud to represent but she has taken that up incredibly well and is doing a great job supporting those local businesses and chambers. We are absolutely committed to supporting our local small businesses during COVID-19. Our small businesses are doing it tough. We are seeing many small businesses having to change the way they do business, to make sure their products are online and to switch to takeaway and delivery. We are getting some incredible feedback from our businesses about the economic stimulus that was announced by the Premier and the Deputy Premier, including our low-interest loans and the payroll tax relief—the two months of payroll tax refund, the three-month holiday and a deferral. This means that most businesses will now not be paying payroll tax this year. Instead they are getting it back which is really helping their businesses with much needed cash flow.

Already we have refunded \$300 million in payroll tax relief. We have waived government rent for those small businesses who rent a government building. As we have heard from the Minister for Energy, small and medium businesses are getting a refund of \$500 on their electricity bill.

We are seeing industry leaders welcome our initiatives. Amanda Rohan from the CCIQ said that the two months of payroll tax refunds is great news and will give many businesses a lifeline to keep their staff on.

We know that our free mentoring sessions and financial counselling are getting great results. The feedback that we have had from right across Queensland has been incredibly positive. We have had over 5,000 small businesses contact our small business helpline for tailored support.

To be fair, though, there has been some support shown from the opposition for our small businesses. We have already heard from the Minister for State Development today about the member for Nanango's trip to a local supermarket to try to support small businesses. Despite our supermarkets having clear signs up everywhere, urging Queenslanders to only touch the products they intend to buy, the member for Nanango went around an entire shopping centre picking up products, talking about how wonderful the products are and then placing them back on the shelves. Not only is this reckless but also it shows a total lack of leadership. It might seem like a small thing, but if the Leader of the Opposition cannot even follow simple health advice, she surely cannot lead this state in a time of crisis. Embarrassing!

(Time expired)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: The time for question time has expired.

APPROPRIATION (COVID-19) BILL

Message from Governor



Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.15 pm): I present a message from His Excellency the Governor.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: The message from His Excellency the Governor recommends the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

APPROPRIATION (COVID-19) BILL 2020

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 authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for departments for the financial years starting 1 July 2019 and 1 July 2020

GOVERNOR

Date: 22 April 2020

Tabled paper: Message, 22 April 2020, from His Excellency the Governor, recommending the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020 [626].

Introduction

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.15 pm): I present a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for departments for the financial years starting 1 July 2019 and 1 July 2020. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Economics and Governance Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020 [627].

Tabled paper: Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020, explanatory notes [628].

Tabled paper: Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights [629].

COVID-19 poses the single largest threat to the global economy since the Great Depression. Almost 2.1 million people around the world have contracted COVID-19. The virus has claimed more than 170,000 lives to date. The tragic consequences of failing to address COVID-19 are nowhere more evident than in the United States where more than three-quarters of a million citizens have contracted the virus and more than 40,000 citizens have died. In the past four weeks, more than 22 million Americans have filed for unemployment benefits, a figure nine times higher than in the worst month of the global financial crisis. The US unemployment rate is forecast to exceed 30 per cent.

Here in Australia, as an island continent, we have the luxury of being able to observe different government responses playing out across the world. We have seen clearly that government inaction and indifference costs lives and costs jobs. Australians deserve better. Queenslanders deserve better. That is why in Queensland we have been neither inactive, nor indifferent.

Yesterday the Reserve Bank Governor painted the stark reality that is facing the national economy. The RBA Governor predicted that Australia's national output is likely to fall by around 10 per cent over the first half of 2020. Most of this decline is predicted to occur in the June quarter. On the unemployment front, he further predicted that total hours worked in Australia are likely to decline by around 20 per cent over the first half this year and he has warned that the unemployment rate is likely to be around 10 per cent by June. Finally, the governor predicted that the inflation rate could be negative in the June quarter for the first time since the 1960s. This is likely to occur as a result of the oil shock that is occurring globally and because of some key government interventions in the economy. However, underlying inflation is expected to remain positive. I have spoken to the Reserve Bank Governor about the response to COVID-19. His advice to Queensland and to all governments was that we should act quickly and use the resources of the state and our balance sheet to protect jobs and keep the economy on life support.

The COVID-19 crisis has provided a glimpse of how governments can act to protect their citizens, preserve their industries, invest in productive public services and plan for an economic recovery that sustains us all. That is exactly what this government is doing through our response to COVID-19. Firstly, we are protecting the traditional industries fundamental to our economy that are continuing to operate, like mining and agriculture. Secondly, we are preserving industries that have been hardest hit during this period of forced hibernation, like tourism, hospitality and the arts, so they can re-emerge and re-employ once the crisis is over. Thirdly, we are making the necessary investments in necessary public services like health and community outreach to support the immediate needs of our community, and we are planning now for our economic recovery and Queensland's future economic security.

Yesterday, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released data which confirms the size of this economic disaster. It is true to say that Queensland has been hit hard, but not as hard as most of the other states. The ABS reported a five per cent decline in jobs in Queensland—lower than the six per cent decline Australia-wide and the second lowest in the nation.

Last week, the ABS released the monthly labour force figures and this demonstrated that the Queensland economy was strong going into this crisis. The ABS data collected in the first two weeks of March showed the Palaszczuk Labor government's economic plan had delivered more than 250,000 jobs, or a quarter of a million jobs, since 2015, leading jobs growth nationally. Part of the reason the jobs data coming out of the ABS has been more positive for Queensland than for other states is that the Palaszczuk Labor government has always had a relentless focus on jobs and we acted quickly and decisively.

We were the first state in Australia to declare COVID-19 a public health emergency. The Palaszczuk government was the first Australian state government to launch an economic relief package in response to COVID-19 in mid-February. Seeing the warning signs in our tourism, agriculture and fishing and education sectors, the Palaszczuk government announced \$27 million in emergency support, including waiving fisheries and liquor licensing fees, deferring tourism lease payments and rebates on marina and jetty fees.

Less than a month later, as the economic fallout from the virus spread, our government launched a \$500 million Jobs Support Loans program for Queensland businesses through QRIDA. The facility is providing loans of up to \$250,000 with 12 months interest free to encourage Queensland businesses to retain staff. As of today, the Jobs Support Loans program has helped 1,390 businesses to support nearly 19,000 jobs in our economy. Those are not just numbers on a page. Every one of those jobs represents a person with a family who is employed and spending money in their local community. Every single job counts.

On 24 March, the Palaszczuk Labor government announced the single largest relief package by any state government up to that time. The relief package includes \$4 billion in measures to support the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders and to safeguard Queensland jobs, households and businesses, including: health investment of \$1.2 billion for the expansion of fever clinics, emergency department capacity and acute care services; a \$1 billion industry support package to assist large businesses that employ Queenslanders and make a significant contribution to our economy to scale up and service the community when economic activity improves; payroll tax relief of up to \$950 million to ensure no eligible COVID-19 affected Queensland business will pay payroll tax in 2020; a half a billion dollar workers assistance package to assist workers who lose their job or income with retraining, job matching and other help to transition into jobs in the industries vital to get our state through this crisis; a \$300 million household assistance package to provide Queensland households with a \$200 rebate on their electricity bills to help out with the cost of additional power and water use while working and schooling at home; and electricity bill relief of up to \$500 for businesses and sole traders.

Since announcing the watershed \$4 billion relief package, our government has also announced up to \$400 million in land tax relief for property owners who agreed to provide rent relief for tenants affected by COVID-19. The Palaszczuk government is providing up to \$400 million in land tax relief, including a 25 per cent refund this financial year and a three-month deferral of land tax next financial year. In return, landowners must provide rent relief to their tenants that is at least commensurate with the land tax relief they receive.

Landowners are also eligible for relief if their property cannot be leased because of the pandemic and they need their own relief to help meet financial obligations. As of this morning, 852 property owners had received relief worth \$9.17 million. To be eligible for relief, commercial landlords must comply with a set of leasing principles endorsed by the national cabinet, which are: negotiating in good faith with their tenants; not evicting their tenants for financial distress; not increasing the rent, except for turnover leases; not penalising a tenant for closing or reducing hours; not charging interest on unpaid or deferred rent; and not making a claim on a bank guarantee or security deposit for non-payment.

In addition to these principles, the Prime Minister has announced a mandatory code for SME commercial leases. The Queensland government is consulting with stakeholders on the development of systems and implementation of the code. Commercial tenants and landlord groups have strongly supported Queensland's approach. Chris Mountford from the Property Council of Australia said—

Today's announcements are a demonstration that the State Government is stepping up and supporting tenants and landlords as they work this through.

The Queensland Government is rightly encouraging outcomes that ensure the economic impact is shared fairly among tenants, landlords, financiers, and the Government.

We also applaud the pragmatic and fair approach the Queensland Government has taken in relation to the prerequisites for land tax relief. This will provide tenants and landlords with the right incentives to keep working together.

Angus Nardi from the Shopping Centre Council of Australia said—

We commend the Queensland Government on this package, and it is welcome news for shopping centres and retailers. It's is a strong and positive step by the Queensland Government which is aligned with the principles set out in the Code of Conduct ...

The Queensland Government's announcement ... sends a strong signal that retailers can sit down with their landlords to discuss rent relief and business continuity with confidence ...

This is an excellent and practical example of how Governments, shopping centre owners and retailers can work together to help all parties manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our government is also providing protections and rental assistance grants to residential tenants who are suffering hardship as a result of the crisis. I am pleased to say that our economic intervention is supporting Queenslanders' health and their jobs. As of this morning, our program of payroll tax refunds, holidays and deferrals has seen almost 11,400 Queensland businesses receiving a payroll tax refund or payment holiday, with more \$311 million being put back into the accounts of Queensland businesses and back into the pockets of Queensland workers.

In response to our payroll tax initiative and our broader support package, Amanda Rohan from the CCIQ said—

... receiving an immediate relief through refund of 2 months payroll tax is great news and will give many businesses a lifeline to allow them to make some plans and try to retain their staff, which they very much want to do.

...

The industry support for large employers is welcomed to cushion those businesses in keeping their staff in jobs, and provide the opportunity to recover quickly, when that time comes.

The stimulus support for job seekers who are displaced when businesses have closed, is welcomed so that people can access work and stay employed.

The scale of the COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented and our economic response must scale up in parallel. To enable this support today, we are debating the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. The bill seeks the parliament's approval for additional appropriation of \$3.181 billion in 2019-20 and additional interim supply of \$1.615 billion for 2020-21. This bill will enable the elements of the government's health and economic response that I have spoken about. I note in presenting this bill that our government could simply seek to obtain parliamentary support for these measures as unforeseen expenditure at the end of the financial year. However, given the size of the amounts involved and our government's commitment to openness and transparency, I am presenting this appropriation bill before the House today for debate.

The additional appropriation for 2019-20 is being allocated to Queensland Treasury to establish a Treasurer's advance—a mechanism available in the Financial Accountability Act 2009. It is the requirement of the Financial Accountability Act that the final allocation of funding from the Treasurer's advance must be provided by the Treasurer. There will be full transparency of money paid out of the Treasurer's advance, which will be reported with Treasury's annual financial statements. These annual statements are audited by the Auditor-General and then included in Queensland Treasury's annual report which is tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Relevant departments will be allocated funding from the Treasurer's advance subject to strict criteria being met.

The bill also seeks an additional \$1.615 billion for 2020-21, which will be treated as interim supply and allocated to departments as part of their normal interim supply process undertaken every year. Departmental allocations of interim supply will be made clear, with any unallocated interim supply directed to the Treasurer's advance. Funding will then be provided to the relevant department subject to strict criteria being met.

This bill does not authorise expenditure for the ordinary activities of government. I can assure the House that supply for those activities is secure until 31 December this year. What this bill does is enable the additional appropriations that are required for the health and economic response to COVID-19 that the government has already articulated and announced publicly.

Today I am calling on the opposition and the crossbench to offer their bipartisan support for this legislation and the measures that we have outlined. It is time for all of Queensland to unite against COVID-19. So far we have heard a lot of criticism from the LNP but not a lot of support. There has been

a lot of carping but not a lot of constructive engagement. That has been disappointing because the government has been working with stakeholders right across our community and economy to get the response right.

This is a time when we all need to come together. There is too much at stake to play politics at a time like this. Oppositions around the country, federally and in other jurisdictions, whether they be Liberal or Labor, are working constructively with governments to deal with COVID-19. I would call on the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to put aside politics, to put aside their own political grandstanding, to support this bill and to support the government's plan and actions to respond to coronavirus.

Queenslanders can see that our strong response to the health crisis has so far prevented the widespread devastation and death visited upon other countries. We must maintain our resolve to stop the spread of the virus. The more immediate and decisive our health response, is the faster and stronger our economic recovery will be. We must resolve that the economy that emerges on the other side of this crisis allows all Queenslanders to recover and to thrive.

At a time of unprecedented uncertainty, this bill provides the government with the certainty to ensure that funding is available to support Queenslanders—their jobs, their businesses and their industries—through the COVID-19 crisis. The bill ensures that we can protect our most vulnerable Queenslanders through this difficult time. It preserves our industries, positions us to invest in public services and plans for a recovery from COVID-19 that will benefit all Queenslanders.

These are indeed extraordinary and challenging times, but we can take comfort from the fact that Queensland has always risen to and overcome challenges, whatever shape or form they have taken. We have survived wars, depressions and recessions. We have overcome punishing droughts, floods, cyclones and raging bushfires. Queenslanders are tough, and we will also overcome this challenge. I guarantee that the Palaszczuk Labor government will continue with our relentless focus on the health and jobs of Queenslanders right throughout this crisis and beyond.

First Reading

Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.32 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 Economics and Governance Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Economics and Governance Committee.

Declared Urgent; Allocation of Time Limit Order



Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.33 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That, under the provisions of standing order 137, the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill be declared an urgent bill and not stand referred to a committee;
2. That a maximum of three hours apply to enable all stages of the bill to be completed at this day's sitting; and
3. If all stages have not been completed by the time specified, Mr Acting Speaker shall put all remaining questions necessary to pass the bill, including clauses and schedules en bloc and any amendments to be moved by the minister in charge of the bill, without further amendment or debate.



Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (12.34 pm): We will be opposing the urgency motion. We do not oppose the fact that it is urgent because we agree, and that is what we are here for—to debate the COVID response legislation. However, we oppose the time constraint put on it. Three hours is not enough. As I said, the opposition is happy to sit tonight, we are happy to sit tomorrow and we are happy to sit all week to fully address these issues and to give members the appropriate opportunity to speak on the bills.

With respect to the three-hour time limit on this debate, again that is the first I have heard that we will be putting time limits on these debates. I would have thought we would introduce the appropriation bill and debate the appropriation bill. We are still waiting for the COVID response bill to be introduced into the parliament. Guillotining the debate essentially to three hours does not give sufficient time. Again, it shows the arrogance of the government and the arrogance of the Deputy Premier to try to rush what she wants to do through the House without the appropriate scrutiny of the legislators. We are all here to have appropriate debates on legislation such as this.

I do not discount the urgency to pass this bill and to get payments to people, but these are appropriate debates to be having. As the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Nanango, will put shortly, there are shortcomings in these government policies and there are better ways to do things. We know that the LNP would be better placed to respond to the economic challenges of this crisis. I do not oppose the urgency of this, but I do oppose the three-hour time limit put on this debate.

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

AYES, 17:

ALP, 17—Bailey, Brown, D'Ath, Dick, Grace, Jones, King, McMahon, Mellish, Miles, Palaszczuk, Pease, Power, Pugh, Richards, Trad, Whiting.

NOES, 9:

LNP, 7—Bates, Bleijie, Boothman, Frecklington, Janetzki, Molhoek, Powell.

KAP, 1—Dametto.

NQF, 1—Costigan.

Pairs: Boyd, Last; Butcher, Leahy; Crawford, Langbroek; de Brenni, Bennett; Enoch, Crandon; Farmer, Krause; Fentiman, Boyce; Furner, Hart; Gilbert, Lister; Harper, McArdle; Healy, McDonald; Hinchliffe, Hunt; Howard, Mickelberg; Lauga, Minnikin; Linard, Nicholls; Lui, O'Connor; Lynham, Batt; Madden, Perrett; McCallum, Wilson; McMillan, Millar; Mullen, Purdie; B. O'Rourke, Robinson; C. O'Rourke, Gerber; Pegg, Rowan; Russo, Watts; Ryan, Crisafulli; Saunders, Simpson; Scanlon, Sorensen; Stewart, Stevens; Pitt, Weir.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Acting Speaker, on a point of clarification, an LNP member is still out of the chamber, so they should not have been counted for the opposition in that vote. I understand eight opposition members were counted.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I will seek some clarification. My understanding is that it is a party vote. As we have said in the preamble, if members are on the precinct or in the chamber then their votes are counted.

MOTION

Order of Business



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (12.41 pm): I move—

That all government business orders of the day be postponed to enable the House to consider the bills introduced earlier today and declared urgent.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION (COVID-19) BILL

Resumed.

Second Reading



Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.43 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.



Mrs FRECKLINGTON (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.43 pm): I rise to speak on the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill. A global pandemic is sweeping across our world and, thankfully, because of the enormous sacrifices made by Queenslanders, the human toll of this pandemic has been

minimised in Queensland. The number of cases and deaths has been far less than in many other countries and we are all working together to ensure that continues, but the economic consequences of this pandemic will not be minimal. They will be huge.

The shock to our economy has been greater than the global financial crisis and the Wall Street crash. Almost overnight, our economy has slumped due to plummeting confidence and is constrained by restrictions that at a time were necessary to slow and stop the virus. In the true Queensland never-say-die spirit, tens of thousands of businesses have found ways to keep going in the face of this crisis. I want to pay tribute to every Queenslander who is working hard to keep our economy alive. As the Prime Minister has said, every worker is essential in this economy.

I also want to recognise the efforts of business owners and managers who have done all they can possible to keep businesses afloat and Queenslanders in work. This crisis has shown that Queenslanders will always put their shoulders to the wheel. These are tough times but Queenslanders are tougher. Sadly, today, we have seen more than 120,000 Queenslanders have lost their job due to coronavirus. Every one of these jobs belonged to someone who was part of a household that is now doing it tough because of this deadly and destructive virus. I want unemployed workers to know that the LNP is with them: you are not alone and you are not forgotten.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Treasurer Josh Frydenberg have done the heavy lifting with the JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments. The careful financial management of the coalition has given the federal government the capacity to respond. The state Labor government needs to step up and provide more economic support. Some of the measures the LNP have called for have been adopted by the Labor government. However, there is much more work to do to get Queensland working again. The state government is seeking to appropriate almost \$5 billion with this bill, and the LNP will not oppose this measure, with an additional \$3.1 billion this financial year and an additional \$1.6 billion next financial year. Extra spending is necessary to cope with this crisis, but the House is yet to be fully informed about the full hit to Queensland's bottom line. It is not clear how much of this funding can be reprioritised from other government activities that are unable to be undertaken due to coronavirus and how much will ultimately need to be borrowed.

There are significant concerns that over the past five years the Palaszczuk government is still yet to release a credible fiscal and economic plan. The debt continues to climb, despite reductions in infrastructure investment. The categorical refusal to release a budget next week shows the government is flying blind through the greatest fiscal and economic crisis of our time. Because of Labor, our economy was struggling long before the coronavirus outbreak began. This is not just my view or the view of the state opposition; that is the overwhelming view of a majority of Queensland businesses.

All of the statistics underline the economic failure of the Palaszczuk Labor government. Since the Treasurer took up her post in November 2017, Queensland has had the worst unemployment rate in the nation on average. This government's average unemployment rate of 6.1 per cent is far higher than that of Victoria or New South Wales—two states that we used to compete against in jobs and growth. We have the nation's worst record on youth unemployment and long-term unemployment. Queensland also has the nation's lowest business confidence. The December CCIQ Pulse survey revealed Queensland is suffering the lowest business sentiment conditions on record and the lowest profitability levels since December 2010. Remember, this was all before the coronavirus hit Queensland.

As well as the worst unemployment rate and the lowest economic confidence, Queensland has the highest rate of business failures in our nation. More than 10,000 businesses have gone bankrupt during the second term of the Palaszczuk Labor government. No other state in Australia has experienced that level of bankruptcies. Construction in Queensland is 46 per cent below the level it reached under the last LNP government. Business investment is 38 per cent less than it was under the LNP. This is a terrible economic and fiscal legacy for Queensland left by the Palaszczuk Labor government.

Queensland's precarious economic state could have prompted the Palaszczuk Labor government to respond quickly to the coronavirus, but instead the exact opposite has happened. While other states announced support packages for businesses, the Palaszczuk Labor government simply sat on their hands. While businesses were crying out for help—in fact, screaming out for help—this government stayed silent. The Palaszczuk Labor government were the last state government in this country to announce a major stimulus package. The federal Morrison government announced two rounds of stimulus packages before the Treasurer of Queensland even announced one. When it finally did arrive, Labor's relief package did not deliver enough. While the package did contain some measures that the LNP had been calling for, it left out many policies that we still believe must be introduced.

The LNP saw the impending economic crisis well before the Labor government with policies like: lifting the payroll tax threshold from \$1.3 million to \$6.5 million for at least nine months, providing instant relief for 15,000 Queensland businesses—a measure strongly supported by small businesses but only partially adopted by the Palaszczuk government after weeks of inaction; providing small businesses with emergency grants of up to \$10,000 like every other state, but the Palaszczuk Labor government has again failed to do this; providing emergency grants to households who are forced to self-isolate to keep some money coming into the household during this time of distress; providing land tax relief for landholders to ensure they are not the only ones bearing the burden—again, a measure only partially adopted by the Palaszczuk government; introducing price ceilings for electricity and water charges for households and businesses so they do not have to pay even higher bills during this crisis; and paying state government suppliers faster, a policy that was first announced by the LNP and then partially—again, only partially—copied by Labor.

Now is the time for the government to lead by example and help government suppliers with those cash flows. It is something that is relatively easy for the government to implement and it would bring about a great deal of support for Queensland businesses. I plead with the Minister for Small Business and the Treasurer, who are both sitting in the chamber, to listen to the pleas of those small businesses.

Other policies include: fast-tracking \$500 million of local road projects across Queensland to keep people working to guarantee a pipeline of work for the whole construction supply chain to go some way to address the multibillion dollar maintenance backlog that blew out pre coronavirus under the Labor government. Despite Labor's failure to fully back these LNP measures and many others, the LNP will not oppose the bill. However, we will continue to hold Labor to account. Democratic scrutiny is more important now than ever.

Although the Palaszczuk Labor government was the last government in Australia to announce a stimulus package, interestingly, it was the first government in Australia to cancel its budget. The Treasurer and the Premier did not waste a moment when it came to cancelling the budget—slow to start on a stimulus package but the first to avoid scrutiny. At this stage Queensland will be the only state in the nation not to deliver a budget in 2020. Every state government and the federal government have all publicly declared that they will deliver a budget this year. We all know the reason why Queensland is opting out this year. Both the Premier and the Treasurer do not want Queenslanders to see the books before the state election. They do not want to talk about the billions of dollars being squandered and the waste of revenue, the lack of a fiscal buffer for a rainy day or the consequence of the reckless raids on superannuation, long service leave and cash reserves. All of these actions have left Queensland fiscally vulnerable, even before the coronavirus.

Labor does not want Queenslanders to know what the Palaszczuk government failures are costing them. We have already seen the Palaszczuk Labor government rip up our democratic conventions to prevent parliament from doing its job and not support proposals for appropriate oversight of the government's response. Now they are ripping up financial conventions to protect themselves as well.

Again, whilst the LNP will not be opposing the appropriation bill, it again highlights that Queenslanders need strong, effective, principled economic leadership. The lack of financial security due to Labor's poor fiscal management has been laid bare for all to see. What Queenslanders can see is a government that puts itself before its people each and every time. When the worst of this crisis is over Queenslanders must ask themselves some hard questions, and the most important question is: how long can Queensland afford to carry the Palaszczuk Labor government? Labor has cost us too much already. Queensland needs a new government, a government that will get Queensland working again. The LNP is the only side of politics that will get Queensland working again.

Interruption.

PRIVILEGE

Comments by Leader of the Opposition




Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.55 pm): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. Mr Acting Speaker, I have said repeatedly in the public domain that it is this government's intention and my intention to bring down a budget this year or a full set of financial accounts. There is a misrepresentation by the Leader of the Opposition. I will be writing to you formally about it and seeking your advice regarding a referral to the Ethics Committee.

APPROPRIATION (COVID-19) BILL

Second Reading

Resumed.

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (12.56 pm): Following on from the contribution in this debate from the Leader of the Opposition I would like to remind the House that Queensland was the first state to make emergency declarations in relation to COVID-19. In fact, we were one of the first states to come out with our initial stimulus package of \$27 million for industry. We heard nothing from the opposition about support for industry at that time. We had a \$27 million package out the door before any other jurisdiction, followed up by a half a billion dollar announcement on low-interest loans, followed up by a \$4 billion economic stimulus delivered by the Premier and the Deputy Premier.

I thought it was important for the House to be reminded that Queensland has been leading the country in response to the health crisis and the economic crisis. In these unprecedented times we have to be ready to take unprecedented steps to protect Queenslanders, protect Queensland's small businesses and protect Queensland jobs, and that is exactly what we are doing.

This Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation to be presented in this House. It will ensure the government can fund the extraordinary measures we have introduced to soften the significant impact of COVID-19. In short, this bill enables us to implement the critical lifelines for those of our fellow Queenslanders who have lost their income and their job. The scale of the response needs to be appropriate to the scale of the problem.

The Palaszczuk government has responded with unprecedented relief measures to support businesses, workers and families. A key part of the \$4 billion economic stimulus was the \$500 million worker assistance package to connect Queenslanders to jobs and, most importantly, training. Projects under this package will target initiatives to create and support employment opportunities and remove barriers to employment. I am pleased to say the first phase of this, the \$10 million Jobs Finder Queensland portal, has been up and running for a week and has already attracted almost 3,000 registrations, and a majority of those registrations are Queenslanders who have lost their job within the last month. This initiative helps connect jobseekers to the jobs that industry needs right now.


Dominique Lamb from the National Retail Association has said that this initiative is critical to getting people who have lost their job back into the workforce, spending money in the economy and helping to save jobs elsewhere in Queensland. The benefits of this initiative do not stop at those we help. It also helps their local neighbourhoods and communities. Our priority is moving those who have lost their jobs into jobs that we know are in demand, particularly in health care, agriculture, food production, transport, cleaning and resources. Critically, this Jobs Finder portal also provides links to new free, online training for Queenslanders who have been impacted by this crisis. Jobseekers and small businesses can upskill and reskill through free courses and short courses to make sure they are ready to fill the jobs we need now and in recovery.

Ninety-nine per cent of registered jobseekers have indicated that they want to retrain and rejoin the workforce. Our free online training courses consist of short, targeted skill sets—courses for those who want to learn new skills in a matter of weeks and be employed in the industries where we need workers.

Debate, on motion of Ms Fentiman, adjourned.

ACTING SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Procedures for Division

 **Mr ACTING SPEAKER:** Honourable members, we are all having to adapt to new procedures. On occasions we must apply longstanding precedent to new innovations. Whilst members on the precinct are able to be counted in a party vote, I rule that a party vote cannot include members who have been asked to withdraw under standing orders 252 and 253. Therefore, as the member for Everton was one of the opposition members who had not been paired, his vote should not have been included in the last vote and the record will be adjusted accordingly.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.01 pm.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Coronavirus



Mrs FRECKLINGTON (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.01 pm): The world will never forget the year 2020. So far, the coronavirus pandemic has claimed more than 177,000 lives around the world. Our generation has never faced a threat like this. To deal with this disease, we have changed our lives in ways we never could have imagined. Communities have virtually been closed down, our factories, workplaces and offices are shut, so are pubs, clubs and restaurants. Hundreds of thousands of children have been made to stay at home, and our elderly have been forced to live apart and in many cases alone from their loved ones. Every Queensland family has made huge sacrifices to get us through this crisis. Those sacrifices have not been wasted, because Queensland is beating the coronavirus. I applaud the work of everyone who has helped achieve this result, and I mean everyone. Whether you are a doctor, a nurse, a delivery driver, a policeman or a parent staying at home to teach your children, everyone has made a difference. I especially thank our health experts and our Prime Minister for their leadership. Prime Minister Scott Morrison has led from the front through this crisis. He has been clear, decisive and strong. Queensland has united under Scott Morrison's leadership.

The spirit of ordinary Queenslanders has helped us to stop the spread of the coronavirus in its tracks, but the crisis is far from over. The threat to human life may have been brought under control. My heart goes out to the families who have lost loved ones. But the threat to our economy is greater than ever. So far, all we have tried to do is to mitigate the economic impact of the coronavirus, and the recovery has not even begun. It will be a very long road back, because the Queensland economy is so weak but it was weak long before the coronavirus.

Under the Palaszczuk Labor government, Queensland got used to having the worst unemployment rate in the nation, the highest number of business failures and the lowest business confidence. We in Queensland already were behind the rest of Australia in this fight. I acknowledge that the state Palaszczuk government has adopted many of the economic measures that the LNP has called for, but many of the positive policies we support have been rejected and the Palaszczuk Labor Government has made some serious mistakes. Our small businesses need a helping hand from the state government like never before, so why is Queensland the only state in the country that does not provide direct grants to our small businesses? The LNP welcomes payroll tax relief but most struggling small businesses do not pay payroll tax to begin with. It is pretty simple. Business leaders have also told the LNP that the limited assistance programs Labor has rolled out are confusing and very hard to access. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. Labor must start listening to those small businesses if we are to get through this.

The Palaszczuk Labor government also needs to start listening when it comes to kickstarting businesses in this state. The NRL and the State of Origin are just one example of the Palaszczuk Labor government not working with businesses. The NRL did not want to start playing last weekend. They only wanted to start a discussion with the government about a conditional restart in six to eight weeks. People with experience in the real world know that businesses cannot just restart after being shut down for six to 12 months. They need hope and the ambition to restart sooner and they need a government to support and share that hope and ambition. That is why the Premier's captain call on the NRL and on the State of Origin was simply out of touch. The state government now needs to be working with businesses to decide what that restart looks like. Tens of thousands of Queensland jobs depend on getting that right.

The one thing we would like to do right now to support our economy is to keep Paradise Dam. It makes no sense to spend \$100 million on lowering the Paradise Dam wall when independent experts say it can be fixed for just \$25 million. Water security and job security are on the line in Bundaberg and in the Burnett and Wide Bay region. Labor needs to work with experts like Dr Paul Rizzo to save Paradise Dam. I promise the people of the Wide Bay that the LNP will work with Dr Rizzo and anyone else who will help save their livelihoods.

The coronavirus crisis is also taking a great toll on our kids. Our young people are largely immune from COVID-19 but their education is being affected. Most parents are seriously concerned by the disruption of our education system. The parents are also confused. They do not understand why schools remain closed to most children when they have seen a significant reduction in coronavirus cases. Let us remember that the medical advice in Queensland has always been that our schools should remain open.

The LNP's position is clear in that we believe that every parent should be able to send their child to school if they want to. If people wish to keep their children at home, they should be allowed to. There is a real danger that our schoolchildren will fall behind. Many parents are simply unable to work from

home while also homeschooling their children. It is not just a question of time; it is also a question of the technology available to those parents and those children sitting at home. I am dumbfounded that I have to explain to the Labor government this simple fact—not every schoolchild in Queensland has access to a device. Not every schoolchild in Queensland has grown up in the sorts of families that we are accustomed to. These children do not have devices at home. Children in some areas of my electorate do not even have access to the internet. How does the Palaszczuk Labor government expect them to learn from home?

Even if those children have access to technology and devices, we know that the Palaszczuk Labor government and IT do not mix. The government's website failure has proven that once again, just like it did on day 1 of the homeschooling experiment.

The Premier told us that the education minister was going to come out and talk to parents and the rest of Queensland about that IT meltdown, but the minister spent the day hiding from the press. There was no explanation from her. She sent out departmental bureaucrats to explain. What an example for our education minister to set for our children. The example that the leaders of this state should be setting is that when a mistake is made we should own up to it and apologise. For our school students to learn from the education minister in this state that it is okay to go home and hide, rather than explaining your mistake and apologising for it, is an absolute shame. It is an insult to the parents and it is an insult to the children.

I urge the Premier to make school available to every child. Let us give our teachers the certainty that they are screaming out for. Let us give the principals the resources that they are asking for. It is vitally important that we make sure that we lead on the road to recovery in the state of Queensland. I thank each and every Queensland for doing their bit, I thank each and every teacher, just like the Prime Minister has done, and I thank the state's chief health officer who has told us that there is no medical advice to say that our schools should remain closed.

Coronavirus



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.11 pm): It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak in the Queensland parliament today. Just to reflect on how far we have come in such a short period of time, when we all celebrated Christmas and New Year's Eve I do not think any one of us would have expected to be where we are today, facing not only a state, not only a national, but an international pandemic—something that every country in the world is grappling with. Sadly, some of those countries have not managed the situation well at all. When one sees mass graves being dug and timber boxes being put in the ground, thousands of people dying in First World countries such as the US, the United Kingdom, Spain and Italy and we see numbers of cases going up in Singapore, Korea and Japan it is so real and so disturbing. The reality is that in Queensland we are doing so well. It is not by luck that we have got to this point, it is by hard work and professionalism; it is by leading from the front and making decisions quickly.

Queensland was the first to put in place the public health emergency order. On 29 January, the same day the first case was confirmed, we put that order in place on the advice of the Chief Health Officer. We did not say that it was an over-exaggeration or a beat-up. We saw what was coming. The Chief Health Officer has been planning for this every day that she has been in that role. She has been planning for 'what happens if' and looking at examples of what has happened around the world with other coronaviruses. We have world-leading professionals who know how to deal with communicable diseases and they were able to get their contact tracing units up and running immediately.

That day, 29 January, our contact tracing started. We led the way in this country. Other states have turned to Queensland to ask to use our training modules for contact tracing. We have kept that contact tracing up. We have heard from the Prime Minister that it is critical: contact tracing is No. 1. We must identify people who are positive and must trace every person they have been in contact with and put those people into quarantine. That is how you control this virus and that is what Queensland is doing. Queensland has a government that has listened to every piece of health advice and has acted on that advice, as we did with the local government election—we will hear from the member for Sandgate in relation to that—and as we have done for everything we are doing. I acknowledge the leadership of the Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk. I could not be more proud to be part of this Palaszczuk government that has listened and acted decisively and led the way in Australia and internationally.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about leading on the road to recovery. We need to be looking forward to the recovery of Queensland, but in doing so we need to be very careful. The message is that we have done very well up until today, but things can turn and things can turn very quickly if we seek

to change the levers too soon and not act on advice. If we do not keep this under control—if we do not control our borders, if we do not keep up the contact tracing, if we do not have people in quarantine and we are not managing what is happening here in Queensland—we can still end up where those other countries are. Every single decision counts. The Premier represents us proudly on the national cabinet. The national cabinet is very important, with all premiers and the Prime Minister in the room together, acting on the advice of chief health officers right across the country, making decisions in the best interests of all Australians. That consistent message across the country, that support, that recognition, that genuine discussion in that room, is critical and I acknowledge all of the leaders involved and ask all Queenslanders to please stick with us and continue to support the advice.

Local Government Elections; State By-Elections; Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance



Mr MANDER (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.16 pm): Since the last time we met here in parliament there have been local government elections and two by-elections. I put on record our congratulations to Laura Gerber, the new member for Currumbin, who had an outstanding victory in incredibly adverse conditions: a Labor Party that outspent us five to one and a personal campaign against our candidate that was one of the lowest that I have seen in recent times. Despite that, Laura Gerber, the new member for Currumbin, showed poise and demonstrated how cool, calm and collected she is as she focused on the issues that mattered to the people of the Gold Coast, which were the M1, crime and jobs. Laura Gerber will be the member for Currumbin for some time if she continues to show that commitment.

That is unlike the blow-in who was elected in Bundamba, the blow-in who came from Melbourne, who would know Carlton, Flemington and South Yarra far better than he would know Raceview and the suburbs of Bundamba. His GPS will be working overtime. He is someone who has been in that electorate for a couple of months. He needs to know that you cannot follow the AFL if you represent the seat of Bundamba. He needs to know who Allan Langer is and who the Walters brothers are because if he does not know that he will not last long in the working class seat of Bundamba.

I also congratulate Adrian Schinner on what was an outstanding victory in the Brisbane City Council election. It was a great strategy from the Labor Party to put in Pat Condren, a person who got a lower primary vote than Rod Harding! That is how great the brainiacs on the other side of the House are.

I want to congratulate a couple of councillors with whom I have a personal connection. I congratulate Tracy Davis, the new member for McDowall and a former member of this House. I congratulate Sandy Landers, the new member for Bracken Ridge. Sandy has taken over the role of Amanda Cooper, the future state member for Aspley. I pay tribute to the former deputy mayor and division 9 councillor of the Moreton Bay Regional Council, Mike Charlton, who has given 28 years of sterling service. I also pay tribute to his replacement, Cath Tonks. She is also a friend of mine and will do a great job.

Before I finish I must mention how this government wastes money without even thinking. I refer to a decision of the Palaszczuk government to look at contributing \$200 million to a company that is 90 per cent foreign owned. That company has a \$5 billion debt. It lost \$350 million last year. It laid off 750 Queensland workers. The government would have given money to such an organisation. The multibillionaires who own the company are not silly enough to invest in it, but the Palaszczuk government is silly enough to do that. If the government had given over that \$200 million, today it would be gone. It would be lost. Queensland taxpayers would have lost that money overnight.

In her speech the opposition leader mentioned that in this state over 430,000 small businesses are not getting one cent from this government. They do not qualify for a payroll tax exemption because they do not pay payroll tax. People are contacting our electorate offices desperately searching for help. Rather than giving \$200 million to a company whose financial record in recent years is dubious at best, that money should be given to Queensland small businesses.

We do not want Virgin to fall over. We have great sympathy for the workers of Virgin. I am confident that in the future those workers and the planes will be flying. We will have to wait and see whether it is under a Virgin banner or another banner as the administrators sort out the mess. Let us not forget that Virgin emerged when Ansett collapsed. There is a market for a second airline in this state. We need it not only in this state but also in this country. Our tourism industry needs it as well. However, we should not give good money after bad—money that will go down the drain under the current administration of Virgin airlines.

Coronavirus, Police and Corrective Services



Hon. MT RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (2.21 pm): In tough times our police will always step up to support and serve the community. In these unprecedented times in the face of a global pandemic, they are stepping up and serving our community again. They are enforcing the directions of the Chief Health Officer and protecting Queenslanders from the spread of COVID-19. Everything that the government and the police are doing has one simple but very important objective, which is to protect and save human life. That is why police are patrolling our borders, our beaches, remote communities, our domestic and regional airports and the 33,000 kilometres of the state's road network from Cooktown to Coolangatta and everywhere in between. They are on the front line in these unprecedented times. This government appreciates the challenges that they face in communicating clear messages during this public health emergency.

I commend our police for their efforts to educate the community about the Chief Health Officer's directives. Police are not only communicating and showing compassion where necessary but also ensuring compliance. To date, police have issued a total of 1,258 notices for breaches of the Chief Health Officer's directives. Police have also conducted 4,327 quarantine compliance checks. They have intercepted over 100,000 vehicles at state borders and they have turned around more than 1,700 of those vehicles at the border. I have been assured that careful contingency planning and the extra police delivered under our government have ensured that our police can continue to do what they do best, which is to keep the community safe.

Through this global pandemic we are seeing the human face of the Queensland Police Service. It has always been there, but in this pandemic we have seen a spotlight shone on the human interactions of the officers of our world-class Police Service. We have seen police officers pull up and mow the lawn of an elderly gentleman. We have seen police officers replace groceries stolen from an elderly woman. We have seen police officers change a tyre for an elderly woman who had to cross the border to make a medical appointment. Those are selfless and unsung simple acts of kindness. Police do those things all the time, but at times like this we notice their humanity even more. Police are the steady hand in our community, ever reliable for our safety. They are relentless in their determination to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to keep Queenslanders safe.

Our Queensland Corrective Services custodial officers and community corrections officers are also relentless in their efforts to keep the community safe. The welfare and safety of QCS staff and prisoners is of paramount importance. As Commissioner Peter Martin has said, the QCS has ensured that months ago rigorous preparation began for the impact of COVID-19. Correctional centres across the state have taken the appropriate steps to prevent the virus from entering our prisons. No visitors are allowed. Staff are checked for their temperatures at the beginning of every shift. Significant other precautions are also being taken, including the preventive isolation of prisoners entering the correctional system. The ultimate goal is to keep staff and prisoners safe.

One of the awful consequences of this pandemic has been the personal impact on people's lives. People have lost their jobs. I ask those who are looking for work to consider a job with Queensland Corrective Services. Currently Queensland Corrective Services is looking to offer more than 400 full-time jobs. Those jobs come with a range of career opportunities, right across the state. Our recruitment campaign encourages Queenslanders to take a look inside, to see if they have what it takes to help keep our communities safe. Advertised jobs include the nearly 100 new positions at the Capricornia Correctional Centre, which is undergoing a major expansion. With the transition of the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre in Brisbane to public operation from 1 July, more than 150 jobs in the centre need to be filled. Our Emergency Services, our police and our QCS staff are doing everything that they can to keep Queenslanders safe.

State By-Elections; Coronavirus, Schools



Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (2.26 pm): I start by congratulating the newly elected member for Currumbin, Laura Gerber. It is an honour to have you in this chamber. I have no doubt that going forward, from now till the next election, your contribution will be outstanding. You will be an outstanding member for the electorate. We know that you will give strong representation.

If we look at the results in Currumbin and those in Bundamba, there are a few reflections that one should make. In Currumbin, Laura received more of the primary vote than Labor received in the Labor heartland of Bundamba. I repeat: in Currumbin, Laura received more primary votes than Labor received in its heartland of Bundamba. I see the minister for main roads laughing and shaking his head. What he will not appreciate and what they do not want to talk about is the nearly 12 per cent swing

against the Palaszczuk government in Labor's heartland. That is despite the fact that the member for Bundamba did not even campaign against the Labor government. Imagine if Jo Miller had campaigned against the Labor government in Bundamba! However, even without that, Labor still suffered a 12 per cent swing against it. If that is replicated across the state in a few months, Labor will be wiped out at the next election. More importantly, more Greens voters preferenced One Nation ahead of the Labor Party in Bundamba. Let us look at the Brisbane City Council election.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I understand that the Manager of Opposition Business may have been reflecting on the member for Bundamba, who is unable to respond in the chamber at this time. I ask that he be cautioned in relation to his comments.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members! I will take advice in silence.

Mr BLEIJIE: I understand why the Labor Party in Queensland would not want to talk about the results in Bundamba because they were smashed when their own voters turned against them. When you have more Green voters preferencing One Nation in Bundamba, you have real problems in Queensland. Congratulations to Laura on your victory. With all the odds against you and all the unfounded campaign attacks against you, you still achieved a better vote in Currumbin than they did in Bundamba. Congratulations.

What an absolute bungling minister is the Minister for Education. She goes from bungle to bungle. She has completely bungled the process of schools going back. We have been told that there are schools now directing parents not to send their kids to school despite what national cabinet said, despite what the Prime Minister said and despite what the education minister and the Premier said. The Premier now says that if parents have issues, they have to sort it out with the schools. That is an impossible task and one that our principals and teachers should not have to mediate. It should be up to the government to make the decision. Parents who are working from home are being told by the Education Minister's office, 'You cannot send your kids to school; you have to supervise them at home.' Seriously! Have Labor members in this chamber ever tried to work from home, supervise children and homeschool children? It cannot be done adequately for the child's education. We are saying to the state government that if a parent cannot supervise their children at home, it should be their choice as to whether they send their kids to school.

Where is the medical advice to say schools should not be open? Why was it that three weeks before the Easter break schools were safe and you were able to send the kids to school? Nothing has changed in the health advice. With the pandemic on the decline now and with zero new cases of coronavirus infection overnight, why then are we even further restricting children from going to school? In South Australia, they are going back to school next week. The Premier of South Australia is encouraging people to send their kids to school because they are safe places.

I have been told that even now there are schools that do not have soap and do not have sanitiser. That is not acceptable. The Minister for State Development continually stands up and says that supply is not an issue, it is distribution. He says there is plenty of hand sanitiser. When you go to the local chemist, you are hard-pressed to find hand sanitiser. You are still hard-pressed to find toiletries in shopping centres in my electorate. If it was a distribution issue and not a supply issue, what has gone wrong? There is certainly a supply issue. I want the minister to come in here and guarantee that every school in Queensland has adequate hand sanitiser and soap for our teachers. They should have a safe workplace, just like every other Queenslanders who is still at work, who is an essential worker, deserves a safe workplace.

(Time expired)

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Before I call the next speaker, with regards to your point of order, Leader of the House, if the member was in the chamber, he would be well entitled to stand and take personal offence or raise a point of order in relation to any statements that were made by any other member. It does not interfere with his privileges in terms of his first speech or count as his first speech.

Local Government Elections



Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (2.33 pm): The quadrennial local government elections of 2020 were historic, and I do not use that word lightly. The month leading up to the 28 March official election day

was like nothing I have seen in my lifetime. We watched as governments and health authorities across the globe scrambled to understand the virus that was changing the world as we knew it. Election campaigning picked up at pace. Then, as circumstances dictated, the situation changed dramatically. The elections went ahead and I would like to say welcome and congratulations to our 77 mayors and more than 500 councillors, new and old hands alike.

Every decision made by the Electoral Commission of Queensland was done in consultation with our Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young. Her advice was based on a solid foundation of science, not hysteria and not a need for headlines. This government stayed the course with Dr Young and the elections went ahead. More than 1.2 million people cast their votes at pre-polls—historic. More than 560,000 registered for postal votes—historic. Almost 37,000 voted by phone—again, historic. On election day almost 760,000 people went to a polling booth to cast a ballot. All up, about 77 per cent of all electors participated in the 2020 elections, comparing well to the 83 per cent in 2016.

The decision to go ahead with the elections was not taken lightly. An important factor the government considered was that the elections ensured continuity of government and were therefore an essential service to Queenslanders. Dr Young advised the ECQ that the elections were safe to proceed and highlighted the importance of having councils in place to lead the community response to COVID-19. Throughout the election period, this government continually monitored the advice of health experts. The ECQ put in place recommended health measures, especially monitoring of social distancing. It worked. The curve continues to flatten. There has been no corresponding peak in COVID-19 cases as many out in the community and beyond predicted.

With informed advice, the right decision was made to continue with the elections. Now that all councils have been declared, we can get on with the business of government together. Our mayors and councillors now have issues to deal with that they could not have anticipated just a few months ago. One of those issues is staff and the continued employment of their workforce during this pandemic. In the past few weeks, thousands of Queenslanders have lost their jobs, have been furloughed or had their incomes greatly reduced. I know councils across the state are deeply concerned about how to keep their workforce in place and keep their financial sustainability in place. I wish to acknowledge the co-operation between key stakeholders, including the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Local Government Managers Australia Queensland, the Australian Services Union and the Australian Workers' Union on this task.

Today I can also announce some changes to local government funding programs to ease administrative burdens and keep job-creating projects on track. These programs include the Palaszczuk government's signature Works for Queensland program, the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program and the Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program. Reporting requirements on projects yet to be completed will be relaxed from monthly to a minimum of quarterly. Councils have also told us that some information requirements are an administrative burden that can significantly delay grant payments being processed. We have listened and we have acted. Relaxing these rules temporarily, at this stage until 30 September, will support councils' cash flow and get funding into their hands more quickly.

The times we are in are certainly unprecedented. It has become, as I have said in other places, a bit of an overused word, but there is no better one. It is unprecedented and the way in which this parliament is responding is indeed unprecedented. It is vitally important that we come together. It is vitally important that democracy in local government comes together and has a chance to move forward. That is why I am so pleased to see that the regulatory changes that we have put in place to allow councils across the state to meet in different ways and in different forms while meeting their obligations for accountability and transparency have been met and are responded to. I want to congratulate all of those 77 councils across Queensland for the way in which they have responded to these extraordinary circumstances.

Coronavirus, Small Business



Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (2.38 pm): Queensland Labor have offered \$200 million to help bail out Virgin airlines, but have shut the door on small business loans. This is hurtful to so many mum-and-dad business people who had indicated they wanted to access the Queensland government's COVID loans package, but it closed without warning. Queensland already had one of the poorest relief packages for small business in the nation. Now we have the hypocrisy of this government that wants to bail out a multinationally backed company such as Virgin airlines but not provide help to our small businesses when they need it in this way.

I acknowledge my colleague the member for Burdekin, the shadow minister for North Queensland, Dale Last, who would also add his voice to this issue if he could be here, but due to the travel difficulties at this time he cannot be. He says that thousands of small businesses throughout North Queensland have been left in limbo as a consequence of the Queensland government's only support package for small businesses closing early due to insufficient funding. He is out there fighting the fight for our North Queensland and regional businesses in this regard.

It is hypocrisy on the part of this state government when New South Wales is able to provide grants of \$10,000 to small business but this state government has no such grant program for small businesses in Queensland. They have lost the State of Origin fight and dropped the ball. New South Wales and many other states are doing far better with regard to urgently needed emergency relief funding packages. There is also a need for fee relief such as registration fee relief for many businesses. I have called on the transport minister and the government to step up in this regard. So many businesses need this help.

I want to mention regional airports. I know that many regional airports are hurting because the state government has still not announced what it is going to do in that regard. They are businesses that support a lot of small businesses within them. They are critical not only today but also when it comes to the survival and rebuilding of our regional economies throughout Queensland. The Sunshine Coast airport has lost about 92 per cent of its income. This would be reflected at many other airports throughout Queensland. These airports still need to maintain compliant airstrips for emergency and general aviation. We need them now, let alone when the rebuild occurs after the COVID-19 impacts are lessened.

It is time this state government realised that it needs to support all businesses, and particularly our small businesses, in Queensland with real relief. It used so many of these mum-and-dad investors and small businesses as cash cows when the economy was going better. Even before COVID-19 hit Queensland had the worst rating in Australia when it comes to small business confidence.


The retail sector was already struggling before COVID-19 hit. So many sectors were already doing it tough yet this state Labor government gouged more than \$3 billion in additional taxes out of the pockets of Queenslanders. That was a contributing factor. Businesses in Queensland already had lead in their saddlebags, not gold, and yet this government treated them like cash cows.

At this time help should be provided to these businesses and our regional economies so that they can rebuild and people can continue to have the dignity of work and the opportunity of building a future through these businesses and their local communities. This Labor government has left the state in the worst situation it could be in—about \$90 billion worth of debt and a very poor structure around and respect for supporting small businesses. It has been so slow in responding to the needs of people who are desperate for action.

We will see legislation come before the House shortly which still does not address the issue of commercial leases. Where is it? How useless is this state Labor government when it comes to standing up and doing something other than press releases and media conferences? This is a government that does not want to turn up to parliament. It is scared of scrutiny. It is scared of being asked the tough questions. We must fight for our future, for all jobs and for small businesses so that Queenslanders have a chance at recovery.

(Time expired)

Robba, Mr Z

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts) (2.43 pm): It is with great sadness that I share with the House the passing of marine park ranger Zachery Robba, aged 23, who on the evening of 6 April was tragically killed in a shark attack near North West Island, east of Gladstone. The incident occurred after Zach had finished a long day's work on the island and was recuperating with colleagues, who returned to their support vessel. Despite a brave fight and the remarkable care and comfort of Zach's ranger colleagues and paramedics, Zach eventually succumbed to his injuries, after being transferred to Gladstone Hospital. I wish to pass on my deepest condolences to Zach's family and parents, Sheree and Peter, who laid their son to rest yesterday after losing him in such tragic circumstances and at such a young age.

Zach died pursuing his dream of being a park ranger. Like so many rangers in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Zach had a passion for being in the outdoors and working to protect our beautiful natural environment and wildlife. Zach's drive and enthusiasm to be a ranger saw him

volunteer and hold a number of positions in Moreton Bay before commencing as a marine parks ranger on the Great Barrier Reef. Working on the reef is a lifelong ambition for many in the conservation sector. That it was achieved so quickly in Zach's short career is a testament to his spirit and personal drive.

The QPWS is like a family. I know that many of Zach's colleagues were also his mates and are grieving. My thoughts are with them also at this time. I also want to express my deep gratitude to Zach's parents. In their own time of unimaginable grief, they have selflessly reached out and provided reassurance to Zach's colleagues by visiting them in Gladstone, Fort Lytton and Manly. In particular, Sheree and Peter travelled to Gladstone to meet Zach's fellow rangers who were on the vessel that returned to port following the tragic event. In doing so, they provided immeasurable comfort to the rangers who gave their utmost to try and save Zach's life. Such action speaks powerfully to the values that they so clearly instilled in Zach. I know the member for Lytton has been in contact with the family and has shared the condolences of the government with them during this difficult time.

The QPWS is filled with incredibly brave and remarkable people. In fact, even now there are rangers conducting planned burns on protected areas, preparing for the dangers of the next fire season. In places like the Cooloola Recreation Area, this week rangers are reducing fuel loads and protecting our communities. During the recent summer bushfires, QPWS staff stepped into harm's way to assist emergency services in battling blazes right across this state. Their bravery has been commended by those who saw it.

Rangers are a unique kind of public servant. Their role calls them to undertake a wide range of activities, some of them in the most remote and isolated parts of Queensland. The men and women at Carnarvon Gorge in Central Queensland, for example, work to protect the unique cultural and environmental values of the area, without any luxuries nearby. Rangers selflessly take up these posts out of a genuine care for our lands and waters, and day after day they go about their work quietly without seeking praise or recognition. In my time as minister I have had the privilege of travelling throughout Queensland and meeting these hardworking rangers. I am continually amazed by the dedication and professionalism of each and every one of them. The work they do is invaluable to our environmental conservation efforts.

Rangers are brave, diligent and passionate about the environment. Zach Robba was all of these things and more. It is moments like this, when we lose one of our own, which reinforce the strong bond and support which exists throughout the QPWS. I want to pay tribute to all the managers and mates in QPWS who have supported the Robba family and each other through this most difficult of times. Zach's service to the QPWS will not be forgotten. Our thoughts and thanks will always be with the Robba family, whose loss has been so great.

Coronavirus, Health Response



Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.48 pm): I want to start by thanking our incredible nurses, paramedics, midwives, doctors and all the staff who have been working tirelessly in both our public and private hospitals to keep us safe, save lives and safeguard our health. As we have seen in media reports today, zero cases overnight on two of the last three days is a testament to the job that Queenslanders have done in suppressing the spread. You are all health heroes and Queensland appreciates everything you do.

As a nurse of almost 40 years and someone who is from a strong nursing family background, I will always stand up for our health staff and ensure that they have the support they need to save lives and, importantly, to prioritise patient care. That is why I have put the call out for staff working at the Gold Coast University Hospital and indeed across Queensland hospitals to have free car parking or at least a reduction in the massive car parking cost throughout this global health pandemic. I think it is the very least the government can do to recognise the contribution of our health heroes. It has been disappointing to say the least that the health minister has not even replied to my correspondence on this issue.

The rapid containment of the coronavirus disease is down to two main factors: the efforts of Queensland in adhering to social distancing measures and other suppression measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus and our amazing hospital and health staff who have gone above and beyond and done us all proud. Now is not the time to be complacent, but we must start looking at what needs to be done to restart parts of our health system while being ever vigilant in ensuring there is no spike in the coronavirus case numbers. As the Prime Minister said yesterday—

... we are still very much in the middle of combating this terrible virus, as we're seeing all around the world. But here in Australia, we're doing better than most, better than many, and we need to keep doing that. And so we thank Australians for the great support and the efforts that they're putting in as we go through these very difficult times.

The LNP strongly backs the call of national cabinet yesterday to restart elective surgeries in our private hospitals and we understand that will be gradual. The plan is working and we all need to work together. No-one wants to see the scenes like those in the US at the moment where people are protesting in the streets to end restrictions.

In relation to elective surgeries, as a nurse I know that, while we cannot be complacent, now is the time we should be restarting surgeries to focus on better patient care. Labor's surgery waiting list had already significantly blown out prior to the coronavirus. Queenslanders on these waiting lists are suffering and if there is capacity in our private hospitals we need to open them back up.

As of February this year, there were almost 56,000 Queenslanders waiting for surgery, but we expect that to be a lot higher now given the extra capacity that was needed to respond to coronavirus. There is no point having empty hospital beds in private hospitals when Queenslanders are waiting for surgery. The LNP has long advocated for a partnership with the private sector to improve patient care, and we need that now more than ever. Private hospitals were there to help support the public system during this crisis, and there is no reason why this partnership needs to end now.

The cost per minute of surgery in private hospitals is about half that compared with public hospitals, so the system is more efficient as well. Some regional areas have had zero or very few cases of coronavirus for a number of days, so a scaled up response should be considered to help Queenslanders get the health care they need. Any surgery restart needs to be done in consultation with clinical specialists and private hospital operators, but I would urge the Palaszczuk Labor government to move quickly.

We also need to make sure sufficient personal protective equipment is available to protect all clinical staff and patients for any surgery scale-up. Non-emergency elective surgeries and vitally important cancer screenings should come back online as quickly as possible. In relation to PPE, which has been a very topical issue and for good reason, what we need to see is appropriate local stock levels ready and available in each HHS, not at a central warehouse or distribution centre, of which I understand there are two. We also need clarification about what PPE is being made locally and whether there are enough N95 masks or just standard plastic gowns and standard surgical masks. We need to see more transparency when it comes to locally available PPE levels at relevant hospitals.

I, too, would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate Laura Gerber, the new LNP member for Currumbin. I had the pleasure of interacting with Laura on a daily basis during the campaign. She was a terrific candidate and she will make an amazing member of parliament. Once again, the Gold Coast rejected Labor and the Trad-Palaszczuk Labor government.

Coronavirus, Domestic and Family Violence



Hon. DE FARMER (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (2.53 pm): As we know, Queenslanders are doing a magnificent job rising to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are not out of the woods yet, but we continue to welcome the good news that we have been receiving in recent days.

However, we also know that there are some in our community who, through no fault of their own, are enduring much more pain than others. It is pain that we feel will continue long after the pandemic response has achieved its goals. It is the pain being felt right now by the victims of domestic and family violence—mostly women and defenceless children.

As a result of economic pressures and social isolation created by essential COVID-19 social restrictions, we are starting to see a new wave of victims cast onto the front line of the sadly familiar battle. These are Queenslanders in effective lockdown at home being intimidated by their abusers on a disturbing new level. Under existing COVID-19 restrictions, we know that many more people are trying to access domestic and family violence help. For example, internet search engines have reported increases in inquiry traffic for domestic and family violence services of up to 75 per cent. Our concern is that the surge in inquiries is being driven from households where domestic violence perpetrators are controlling or monitoring external contact.

Continuing to tackle the scourge of domestic and family violence in a pandemic emergency is a huge task but one that has been taken on enthusiastically by the Palaszczuk government. We have and must continue to respond to the advice of the hardworking people working on the front line of domestic and family violence services across Queensland. I want to assure them and all Queenslanders that we are listening and responding to this evolving situation.

The Palaszczuk government has taken swift action to provide additional financial support to domestic and family violence service providers through a multimillion dollar funding boost announced by the Premier two weeks ago. This funding will ensure the state service providers can continue to provide vital services in response to new demand. Women who need to escape escalating violence should not be afraid to reach out for help. Services may be operating in slightly different ways, but they remain open and available to give support and advice.

Our objective, as always, is to keep Queensland women and children safe. The funding package is an immediate response to address the most pressing areas of need and to assist domestic, family and sexual violence services change how they engage with those needing help. All Queenslanders should know that there is support available for victims of domestic and family violence.

With families under more pressure than ever, we need to make sure that the services are there and ready to respond if needed. We are boosting support for essential government funded services to give them additional capacity so victims have someone they can turn to and somewhere to go. We need new tools to push back against this new wave of domestic and family violence. I am hearing nothing but good things about how service providers are innovating, particularly in delivering services to regional and remote communities.

To keep this momentum going, our next step is to bring together those service providers, domestic and family violence experts, sector stakeholders and policymakers for a Queensland-wide virtual summit on 6 May. This summit is being complemented by satellite consultations and information sharing with stakeholders from a range of groups including the LGBTIQ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Our clear focus is on how we can continue to deliver essential services and support in an evolving COVID-19 environment. Our clear goal is to ensure all Queenslanders have access to the support they need when they need it.


Amid social isolation, this is a new world for organisations that have traditionally built trust with victims through highly personalised interaction and support. The Palaszczuk government places the highest value on the advice of specialist service providers and stakeholders. The lives and wellbeing of Queenslanders depend on us maintaining responsive vital services—COVID-19 or not. I look forward to working with and hearing from all those involved who will collectively provide innovative, dynamic and practical ideas and strategies that can be used to assist victims who need our support now more than ever.

APPROPRIATION (COVID-19) BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 760, on motion of Ms Trad—

That the bill be now read a second time.


 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (2.58 pm), continuing: I was saying before the break that our free online training courses, short targeted courses and skill sets are available now for Queenslanders without having to enrol in a full qualification. Two days ago a total of 2,311 enrolments were registered, with over 5,000 expressions of interest to undertake skill sets. Queensland's small businesses employ almost one million Queenslanders. We know that they are now especially vulnerable to the financial impact caused by COVID-19. We understand the severity of this threat, which is why we were the first—the first—jurisdiction in Australia to announce a recovery package. This bill supports that package.

In terms of economic impact, the novel coronavirus is a disaster like any cyclone, bushfire or flood, but of course with a much wider spread and prolonged repercussions. As with any disaster, we are responding with financial assistance and statewide support, and the scale of our support fits the scale of this disaster.

The Palaszczuk government has engaged with industry since the start of this crisis, and our several packages respond directly to their pleas. We are making sure that we are doing everything we can to support Queensland businesses with payroll tax, rent relief and a \$500 million loans facility. As at the beginning of the week the loans scheme supported almost 17,000 jobs through nearly 1,200 approved loans. We are providing free financial resilience webinars and online mentoring-for-growth sessions to connect small business operators directly to experienced business mentors. These sessions are providing operators with the opportunities they need to change their business strategies and ensure they maintain much needed cash flow.

Some of the feedback from the small businesses that have engaged in these sessions has been wonderful. On 8 April there was a session in Townsville and one of our businesses provided this feedback. They said, 'I was feeling very deflated about my business, but after speaking with you last Thursday I feel excited about the future. It was great to have someone who can see the business from outside with fresh eyes. Thank you.' We are getting this feedback right across Queensland. More than 5,400 small businesses have contacted my department's small business hotline to find ways to help mitigate the impact of this crisis. We are helping small businesses transition and move online, change their business models and develop new products. I am determined to ensure that those businesses that are moving online to takeaway or home delivery mode do not have their already slim profits eroded by delivery fees. As our packages and support services are rolled out we will continue to review and respond to Queensland's small businesses and displaced workers.

The impact of COVID-19 is not just being felt in some distant, little-known place; it is being felt by our neighbours, friends and families. It is at our doorstep and we are seeing and feeling its impacts. The Palaszczuk government is taking unprecedented steps because we are in unprecedented times. It is absolutely essential that, no matter what happens, we keep our small businesses open, keep people in jobs and make sure we come out of this crisis stronger and more resilient. I support this bill.

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.02 pm): I rise to speak on the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. Previous speakers have already mentioned that Queensland has never before in its history faced such a health and economic challenge—definitely not in the last 100 years. Nobody would have thought, even as little as two months ago, that we would have the restrictions that we do at the moment; that families would be going through the heartache of losing loved ones; and that hundreds and hundreds of people would fall ill and become very, very sick—not to mention the economic impacts. We have seen our tourism, hospitality and international education sectors decimated. We have seen older people probably feeling lonelier than they ever have before. There is not one part of Queensland society that has not been impacted by the effects of this pandemic so it is important that the response to this, both on the health front and the economic front, is one that is considered, well thought out and effective.

From the beginning the opposition has offered bipartisan support when it comes to protecting the health of Queenslanders. We are thrilled, as the government is, with the progress that has been made in containing the COVID-19 virus. Every day that we hear of very few or, even better, no infections is another great day and another day closer to the end of the impact of the pandemic. We are lock, stock and barrel with the government with regard to the public health initiatives that have been taken—directed by the federal government—but we acknowledge the work that has been done in Queensland as well. There is no doubting our bipartisan support for that.

We also offer bipartisan support for the principle that governments provide economic support and economic stimulus. It is important that government plays a role when so many businesses have been impacted so significantly. It is important that stimulus is provided to keep people in jobs and business confidence up so that when the pandemic eventually finishes we can recover as quickly as possible. We offer bipartisan support for that principle.

In the Westminster system of government you have the government and you have the opposition, and it is our role as Her Majesty's opposition to keep the government accountable, to analyse its decisions and to make sure that taxpayers' money is being used wisely. It is okay for the Treasurer to come in here all self-righteous, demanding bipartisan support for her economic stimulus. That is fine in principle, but there are many, many details about which questions need to be asked and thoughts need to be challenged, and we will be doing that. We will be doing that boldly because it is our responsibility to the taxpayers of Queensland—particularly in my role as the shadow Treasurer—to make sure that the money that is being spent is directed to the right areas and is having the impact it should have.

When it comes to offering support for the stimulus package, there is no better model than the federal government. What the federal government has done has been nothing short of remarkable. In fact, I think it has taken the breath away from the federal opposition and the state Labor government. I do not think they expected the federal government would respond so generously, so quickly and so significantly. I think everybody acknowledges the JobKeeper package in particular and the other initiatives that have been announced. I think it is up to about \$200 billion worth of stimulus. I am so very happy that we have somebody like Josh Frydenberg as head of the nation's finances. What a great model he is for treasurers across the country. What a hardworking and intelligent man he is. I want to congratulate the Prime Minister and the Treasurer for their management not just of the health crisis but also of the economic crisis.

When it comes to keeping the government accountable there have been many things that have happened that cause us to ask questions and challenge strategy. The Queensland Labor government was the last state government to announce any major stimulus package. The federal government announced two rounds of stimulus before Labor here delivered one. Business was looking for confidence and support from the Palaszczuk government, and the silence was absolutely deafening. South Australia announced a \$350 million relief package on 11 March, and it took nearly two whole weeks until 24 March until the state Labor government here announced a support package for Queensland. As other states braced their economies for the pandemic fallout, the Premier was promoting boxing matches in Townsville. Their priorities were all wrong.

Not only was it late, particularly compared to other jurisdictions, but there are areas in the package that are deficient. The opposition leader and others have already mentioned some of these things in speeches today, and I think it is important to look at these things.

Payroll tax relief is good and there has been some of that given and some refunds. We acknowledge that that policy is a good one and we support that but, when we have payroll tax deferrals at a time when businesses are not operating, in lots of ways that is a cruel hoax because that money has to be paid at some stage in the future. That is an enormous amount of stress and angst put on businesses when they know that at some stage—whether it is six, nine or 12 months down the track—they have to pay the money that is owing. We can say the same thing with some of the land tax relief that was given as well. Again, we acknowledge that part of that package is good and proper. However, when there are deferrals and when businesses are on their knees and not earning revenue or income, it is very difficult for them to think about the prospect of having to pay back a debt in the future.

Another deficiency which has been brought up—and I know it will be brought up again particularly by the shadow minister for small business—is that there has basically been no relief for small business whatsoever. The Palaszczuk Labor government is the only state government not to offer a small business support grant program. I know that I am not speaking alone when I say that I have been inundated in my office from small businesses which seem to be the businesses that have missed out on all of this. They are not at the big end of town. They are people who do not work for major operators or big business. These are people who have gone out on their own and risked a lot of their life savings, and they feel like they are missing out. There are 438,000 small businesses in this state, yet the Treasurer was in here earlier proudly boasting how they have supported 11,000 businesses out of 438,000. That is a big gap in anybody's language.

I have mentioned this twice today and I am going to mention it again. What is incredibly galling for small businesses when they are looking for small grants of \$10,000 or \$20,000 is that the Palaszczuk government would commit \$200 million to a foreign owned company that is owned by multibillionaires in the Middle East and China and other multimillionaires in the UK. All of these investors have themselves realised that they are not going to risk money in the firm they own, yet the Palaszczuk government has the gall to say that they will give \$200 million of taxpayers' money to keep Virgin afloat.

We want Virgin to remain afloat. We want Virgin to be flying in the sky again but we now have to let the administrators work out how that might happen. Let me repeat what I said in an earlier speech: if that \$200 million that was so proudly announced by the Minister for State Development had been given when his announcement was made, taxpayers would have lost the lot within 48 hours. Within 48 hours they would have lost the lot. That says a lot about the political and economic judgement of the Palaszczuk government so proudly headed up in this particular case by the Minister for State Development. That is galling to small businesses who would love to have a small loan to help them through this time.

The LNP was very quick to respond when we could see that it was necessary. We mentioned payroll tax relief but not deferral—I repeat: relief. We talked about freezing motor vehicle registration, putting a ceiling price on bulk water and electricity, fast-tracking \$500 million of road projects to get the economy going and delivering faster state government payments to small business suppliers to improve their cash flow and prevent job cuts. Of course, as I was just mentioning, we also believe that emergency small business grants of up to \$10,000 to match the other states should have been provided for small businesses. The Leader of the Opposition came out very, very quickly with that definitive plan to help kickstart the economy.

As we look at this appropriation bill, there are some questions to be asked about it. It is only a couple of pages but these pages are incredibly significant. The Treasurer has asked basically for an extra \$4.8 billion for the rest of this financial year and the next financial year to pay for some of the promises she has made. It would seem that it is an appropriation for \$4.8 billion or thereabouts, but

only around \$4 billion has been announced so we have questions about that gap and why there is a gap. We hope the Treasurer will be able to answer that in her reply speech or when we are in the consideration in detail stage.

We do have an incredible challenge going forward. Most of the state's revenue streams have been impacted in some form or another—whether it has been in land tax, payroll tax or transfer duty. All of those things are going to be impacted quite significantly. What I can say at this stage—and how ironic is this—is thank goodness for coal royalties. Thank goodness that we have resource royalties. Isn't it ironic that a Treasurer who has bagged that industry for the last five years is now going to benefit from it? It is a revenue stream that has been consistent and will provide some sort of rearguard support in our struggling economy. We do have that question about the amount that is being asked to be appropriated. We would like to see more detail about that because this will of course increase Queensland's debt. There is no state more vulnerable economically to absorb the impact of the coronavirus than Queensland.

Queenslanders will not forget this. Over the last number of years under the Treasurer's watch, we have had either the highest or the second highest unemployment rate in the country. We have had the highest number of long-term unemployed—that is, those who have been unemployed for more than a year. I am not talking about per capita but the highest number. We have frequently had the highest number of bankruptcies, and I think that still applies for the last 12 months—again, not per capita but in the country. We have had the lowest business confidence. Businesses have said that the Queensland Labor government is the government they trust the least amongst all of the states. We have had this debt that was projected to be \$92 billion at the end of the forward estimates but now of course we do not know what that will be.

As the opposition leader and one or two others have mentioned today, the Treasurer's statements about future budgets have been interesting. It was pretty clear to me when I had a briefing from the Treasurer that she said there would not be a budget delivered this year, but she seems to be taking great umbrage at that statement. This morning we read in the *Australian*—and I do not know if it was a quote or just a report—that we might be having a mini-budget, and then in the same article it said that financial statements are going to be provided. If the Treasurer is taking great offence at this, I say to the Treasurer, through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that she can put that to bed right here and now when she responds at the end of the debate and tell us when a budget that would have a full estimates process will be delivered.


At the moment, this bill is the budget. It is a three-page statement which is basically a blank cheque for an extra \$4.8 billion. I say to the Treasurer that if she has been offended about what we on this side of the House have said about what we perceive to be the comments she has made about a future budget she can put that to bed immediately and tell us when that budget will be delivered and when there will be an appropriate estimates process. This is more important than in any other state when we have an election on 31 October.

The people of Queensland have the right to know how this money will be spent, what the debt level will be, what the credit rating will be and what effect this will have on the defined benefit superannuation scheme for our hardworking public servants. All those questions and projections need to be provided so that the people of Queensland can make a decision on 31 October. The decision will be this: who do they trust with regard to getting us out of this financial mess, a financial mess that has been put upon us by the coronavirus. However, we were coming off a very bad base in the beginning; we were behind the eight ball in the beginning in terms of not being able to take such a shock to our economy. The people of Queensland will have to make a decision on which party, which side of politics, they trust to provide the recovery that is required economically in this state. I know who I will back because the people of Queensland will remember the economic mismanagement and incompetence of this state Labor government.

We support this bill because it is necessary to provide the stimulus and the support. However, we have a lot of questions about the detail. I remember the Treasurer saying that it was going to be apportioned to every department. We need to know which departments and which programs. The people of Queensland deserve to know that as well.

As it stands at the moment, until the Treasurer comes out, makes a statement and lets us know when the budget will be brought down and when there will be an estimates process so it can be examined properly, as far as I am concerned this is their budget, a three-page bill which appropriates an extra \$4.8 billion. I can tell honourable members that we in the LNP and the people of Queensland do not trust this Treasurer or this Treasurer's ability to handle that amount of money, which basically at

the moment is a blank cheque. We will not let this go without scrutiny, without keeping this government accountable. As I said, the Treasurer can put it all to bed this afternoon in her closing speech by giving us those details.

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (3.22 pm): In this sort of circumstance I would normally say that I rise with pleasure to contribute to the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. However, in the circumstances we are in it is hard to say that we are taking much pleasure from the acts we perform in this place. The Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020 provides supplementary appropriation for the 2019-20 budget and further supply for the 2020-21 budget. The word 'unprecedented' has been getting a bit of a work-out recently, but we truly are in unprecedented times. There are now more than 2.5 million cases of coronavirus, or COVID-19, worldwide, and sadly, more than 177,000 deaths have been recorded. We all know that this is unlike anything we have seen in our lifetime.

So many times in the past few weeks we have watched this pandemic unfold across the globe and I have been thankful that I live in Queensland, Australia. I know there are so many other people affected such as the people I speak to throughout my local community and also people I have been in touch with across the state, across the nation and indeed across the globe—I include a very good friend of mine who I grew up with in Chermside in Queensland who now lives in Sweden. The actions of self-isolation for himself and his family that he has taken in contrast to the decisions that governments have made in that country and in contrast to the results that that has wrought on that community are astounding.

To that end, because of the Palaszczuk government's swift action to declare a public health emergency in January and our brilliantly prepared medical front line led by our Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young, Queensland has had one of the best responses in the world to this crisis. Admirably, Queenslanders themselves have responded and helped achieve that very world-leading, world-class response. This is not hyperbole; this is fact. The foresight, agility and medical experience that is the holy trinity that has put Queensland at the front of the pack as we battle this pandemic needs to continue to be part of how we respond.

The Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill builds on that response by providing a further \$3.18 billion for the 2019-20 financial year and a further \$1.61 billion for the next financial year 2020-21 on top of the \$21.35 billion already authorised by the Appropriation Act 2019. This funding will help provide the additional \$4 billion in measures to support Queenslanders' health, our jobs and our businesses that were announced by the Palaszczuk government on 24 March. When it was announced, the Premier said it was the biggest single relief package assembled by any state or territory. It includes: a \$300 million household relief package to give Queensland households \$200 off their utility bills, building on the \$50 asset dividend already announced; another \$2.5 billion to protect Queensland jobs and businesses, including a two-month payroll tax refund for small and medium businesses and large businesses specifically affected by COVID-19; a three-month payroll tax holiday and a further six-month payroll tax deferral for any Queensland small and medium businesses; \$500 million to help workers who have lost their job or income to find jobs in industries vital to getting us through this crisis such as health care, agriculture, food production, transport and cleaning and a range of others that we will work on.

As part of that package we are also seeing the waiving of liquor licensing fees for venues that have had to close their doors. We are providing rent relief for businesses that rent premises from the state government. On that note I want to make particular mention of businesses in my local community that have made representations to me in relation to that, including Rewind Mid-Century, the lessee of a property owned by the Department of Transport and Main Roads at Shorncliffe. We are also giving sole traders and medium and small businesses a \$500 rebate on their power bill for this year. I know that will provide some relief to some local landowners and business owners in the Sandgate town itself and in Bracken Ridge to whom I have been speaking about these issues.

The package also includes \$1.2 billion to boost our frontline health response, including the expansion of fever clinics, emergency department capacity, acute care services and regional aeromedical services for our remote communities. On that point I want to make note of the opportunity that I had to visit the fever clinic established at the Brighton Health Campus in my electorate. For those honourable members who have not seen one of these fever clinics and the way in which they are dealing with the testing regime and the process for people presenting, I can say that it is truly like something out of a movie. It is something that people are not prepared for until they see it. This funding is to support measures like that. This \$4 billion announcement for jobs, businesses and health is on top of the earlier measures including \$500 million in concessional loans in our initial coronavirus assistance package announced in February.

In the time available to me I also want to make some references to my local government portfolio. As local government minister, I have been working closely during the past few weeks with the Local Government Association of Queensland and with Queensland Treasury Corporation in developing and working towards identifying what the needs might be for an appropriate support package for Queensland's 77 local governments. No part of the state will remain untouched by the pandemic response because no part is untouched by the pandemic. We hope and we trust some parts of the state will not be touched by the virus itself, but no part of the state will be untouched by the economic impact.

Significantly, that includes our 44,000 strong local government workforce. We need to make sure that these diverse communities, which have been affected in different ways by COVID-19, have the assistance from the Queensland government that is fit for purpose. That is why we are working alongside the LGAQ and the QTC to ascertain each individual council's need. I have been briefing mayors, who are all now declared elected, over the last couple of hours on a telephone conference alongside the LGAQ leadership.

It is disappointing that the Prime Minister announced that local governments would not be eligible for the Commonwealth government's JobKeeper program, a very brave and impressive initiative which I must acknowledge, but it is a shame that so many people in the community, particularly local governments, were not included in that package. This means that the nation's state and territory governments alone will have to support local government, a level of government so important to the delivery of services and outcomes right across our country, particularly here in Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government has a proven record on delivering job-creating infrastructure projects that support local governments and support employment by local governments, including the hugely popular \$600 million Works for Queensland program. It has never been more right than now that those communities across Queensland deal with the health, economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and for us to continue to work with local governments to make sure that their communities are safe, informed and supported through the response and recovery phases of the COVID-19 crisis. This is a crisis that is having significant economic and social impacts on communities and businesses—and indeed councils—who often run some of the key businesses in communities of rural and regional Queensland and have an important role in supporting their communities in responding.


The government is monitoring these impacts which are evolving rapidly and working in collaboration with the Local Government Association of Queensland and other stakeholders to identify how to best support councils throughout the pandemic and as their communities recover. For many of Queensland's remote and regional communities, the COVID-19 pandemic comes at a time when they have already been dealing with the impacts of sustained drought or recovering from recent bushfires or floods. To that end, I have approved amendments to the Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure program and the 2019-21 Works for Queensland program guidelines, allowing a number of eligible local governments to access their allocations for COVID-19 response programs and activities. This includes a relaxation of reporting and information requirements that will speed up the grants approval process to get funding into their hands more quickly. The ultimate aim is to preserve councils' workforces to maintain morale and keep the continuity of employment that is integral to our communities. At this stage, these changes will stay in place until 30 September.

This is an initial response. There needs to be a broader and more comprehensive package in response that we will bring forward at a later stage. Our response is not just about new packages and investing in ways to support Queenslanders. Importantly—and responding to the concerns around what is represented in this appropriation—it is also about reallocating existing grants and funding to ensure they are channelled into the areas of need. That is a demonstration of a good, sensible, prudent response and not just a spend-a-thon. It is not about a competition of who can spend the most; it is how we can make sure that those resources are targeted at the right things at the right time. This has been effectively and efficiently done in my portfolio area of multicultural affairs where we have also been supporting workers in the not-for-profit community sector to retain their jobs through this crisis. We have provided a dedicated \$900,000 connections package for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who are among the most vulnerable in our state. They are people facing extraordinary challenge, at this time without a certain status in terms of their visas.

It is very important that we step into the role to support those communities and the community organisations that support them. Funding will go to trusted community based partners whose role is critical to ensure that appropriate help is available at a local level. This package includes \$238,000 in initiatives and \$617,000 to top up existing programs. This includes scaling up the I Speak Your Language telephone support program delivered by the Multicultural Communities Council, Gold Coast,

a very fine and decent organisation that does great work. We will help it do that work across a larger footprint of the state. It is also funding for the community connector role within Australian Red Cross for Community Queensland and for the Community Action for a Multicultural Society Program. Again, this is one of our well-regarded and significant programs that has contributed across the state.

While this appropriation bill acknowledges the need for significant financial support for jobs, businesses and health, this government's response to the effects of the pandemic in Queensland has been so much more. It has embraced so much more, because we know we all are in this together. It is vitally important that we continue to act responsively and collaboratively to respond to the challenge that COVID-19 represents. The appropriation bill provides the funding, security and support to ensure that these programs are delivered sensibly and appropriately and, as I say, in a timely way. To that end, I commend the appropriation to the House and wish everyone the best ability to stay safe.

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (3.35 pm): As someone said, we all are in the same boat but not everybody is facing the same weather. Some are facing a cyclone, others a terrible storm, and yet others still do not know what the full impact is of what they are facing. We are in extraordinary times with the pandemic COVID-19 which has hit the world, our nation and each of our communities. We do want to see our great state rebuilt. We do want to see as many small businesses and families who live their lives throughout so many wonderful communities in Queensland have a bright future that not only can they envision but have the hope to know they can survive through today. For those who still are going very much through the toughness of facing the survival of challenges under the COVID-19 restrictions—the loss of their businesses, their jobs and the impact of not being able to see loved ones dear to them—it may seem that light is yet to come.

It is vital that as leaders in our community we are able to step up and meet the needs as much as we can of those who come to us. I am sure across the chamber we all hear many of the same stories. Every day we will still find yet another aspect of how it has impacted people's lives. As I said, we might be in the same boat but some are weathering very different storms or cyclones in how it is impacting them individually.

I commend the federal government for the economic stimulus packages that it launched, recognising that there was an urgent need not only to help so many individual workers and businesses but also to really underpin our economy. The national cabinet that brought together the state premiers was an outstanding initiative, also recognising how important it is that not only do we have a national response but also that we have state, local and community responses.

As I said, we all are in the same boat but not every area is the same. If anything, this highlights even more why we need to champion the importance of decentralisation, the importance of resilience and capacity not only in terms of the manufacturing industry but also in recognising that communities need services in that area without having to travel a long way. At this time we see, particularly with health throughout the rural and regional areas, the potential devastation if COVID-19 was in their midst where there are no intensive care beds.

At times like this we realise even more so the importance not just of talking about decentralisation but backing it up with real fair dinkum services which recognise that, if people live throughout the state not just through choice but through the economic necessity of running this state and delivering the jobs and prosperity, we must start looking at this differently to back it up with real services that back and support those regional economies and communities.

This \$4.8 billion appropriation bill before the parliament is quite extraordinary. We recognise there have been significant impacts on Queensland's bottom line and there is a need to inject economic assistance into many parts of our economy. As our shadow Treasurer has said, where is the detail in the bill? Just because we are standing here together championing our state and our communities does not mean that we should not bring the scrutiny that is necessary when we are being asked to pass an appropriation bill for \$4.8 billion. While we support the assistance measures, there needs to be scrutiny as to where it is allocated. It needs to be rolled out as quickly as possible where it is needed but also rolled out in a way that is appropriate and gets the best bang for our buck.

Early in the piece the state LNP, under our leader Deb Frecklington and our deputy leader Tim Mander, outlined what we believed were important measures to support the Queensland economy, to help not only in the survival period but potentially beyond that into the rebuild period, because both are connected. We must help people survive in those times when the light is too far ahead for them to see, but there is also a need to ensure that plans are consistent to enable the rebuild.

Earlier I mentioned regional airports. Today there are airlines in this state saying that they will not pay or will potentially defer to October their landing fees that are months overdue. That threatens the very viability of some of those regional airports and, in turn, the underpinning of emergency services

and ongoing transport connections. I would ask the government to ensure that there is timely recognition and support for our regional airports—not only the Sunshine Coast airport, but airports throughout Queensland—because it is vital to their survival and their rebuild and recovery.

This bill allocates \$4.8 billion in a few flimsy pages with not a lot of detail. There are some programs that have been announced, but there is a black hole in regard to a very big appropriation bill before this parliament. We must have more sittings of parliament to provide scrutiny and to help address those very different weather conditions that so many parts of our communities are facing. It is concerning that the raid on the Public Service superannuation that this Labor government undertook was done at a time when it thought there was plenty of money. As we know, the Labor Party is not very good at managing money; it is somebody else's money and that is the Labor way. It always hopes that it can tax and cover the black holes that it creates. We have a concern about the financial status of the books of Queensland, not just in regard to superannuation but so many other areas. We have a right to know and to undertake scrutiny. The Queensland government has a responsibility to meet its financial commitments in the same way that it expects businesses and families to meet theirs.

I have addressed some aspects of our concerns about the lack of small business packages that are meaningful and provide emergency relief in a timely way. We have addressed the fact that the loans program the government announced closed without any notice and has left a lot of people in limbo, in particular throughout rural and regional Queensland. We have addressed the fact that there is a need for real fee relief in a number of areas that the government has still not announced. I have had feedback from people in the devastated tourism industry who have tour buses. They will be able to recover further down the track, but with 10 buses and 10 registrations they are certainly going to be pulling them off the road and deregistering them, which has a knock-on effect when it comes to getting them back on the road again, if they can.


There is an opportunity for many displaced workers to transition to other industries that still have growth, opportunities and a need. The training that is required needs to happen now, it needs to be flexible and it also needs to be delivered by both TAFE and the private sector. We champion the need for a strong and highly skilled TAFE sector delivering great services. We also champion the need for a strong private training sector. We will not rebuild the economy without both. There are literally hundreds of apprentices and trainees who have lost their jobs and apprenticeships and who are now in limbo. I commend the federal government for its package to provide assistance. The state government needs to do more. Money has already been allocated for those training and apprenticeship packages. The state government should be providing more assistance today to keep those apprentices in work with those businesses that still want to work but simply cannot afford to. We want to see those young people finish their apprenticeships.

A strong TAFE and a strong private training sector is vitally important in rebuilding the economy in Queensland. There is a need to look at the way that the pipeline of payments is made to those training providers. We need as many of those workers who may not be able to return to some industries for quite some time to have viable pathways now, not further down the track—not months down the track but now. It can be done. It must be done. It is a matter of urgency to provide that flexibility. For example, with a certificate III guarantee the payment to the provider is at the end when the person who is doing the training has competency, which makes sense in a different economy, but it is very hard when you cannot get a placement as part of that package or they are not able to actually complete the practical aspect of their training. I would urge the government to pay people in a more timely way. I recognise there have been moves in the private training sector to do that and to also look at paying some aspects of those courses earlier, particularly where there is theory involved. There is an urgent and desperate need for more people, in particular in aged, personal and disability care. There have been people who were already in training who are now in limbo and unable to get a placement because of the lockdown in some of those facilities. Students cannot complete that final aspect of that vital training at a time when we need these workers most. The government needs to step up and do more. That does not necessarily mean more money, it just means it needs to be applied effectively in a more timely way with flexibility.

Let us champion good training. It has to happen now and it has to be flexible. We need to bring the public and the private sector together with industry to deliver industry-led and focused training where the jobs are. For those who have been part way through their training there needs to be the opportunity now to be flexible and to help those businesses support their apprentices and trainees so that they can complete their training and return into the workforce in their own right in the future.

Let us see some detail around this \$4.8 billion appropriation. Let us have the scrutiny of a proper parliamentary sitting program rather than the smoke and mirrors of the Premier. We do not know if we are sitting next week. It is not based on health advice, it is more on media advice which says, 'Goodness

me, don't come into parliament. They might ask you some tough questions like "How are you going to spend the \$4.8 billion?" We need the ability to ask questions on behalf of all Queenslanders so that they can survive whatever storm they are facing and that there is a real future for them in the recovery of Queensland—a state that we all love, that we are proud of and we value. We want to see as many people as possible come through to the other side.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (3.48 pm): The people of Logan work every day to keep their families safe. They see that as their job. I see myself as working every day to keep safe the health and the jobs of the people of the Logan electorate. Never has my job in this House been more relevant or more valid than at this time when both of those things are under threat. I note that sometimes the federal government gives bills fancy names that create emotion. If the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020 that I stand up for had a subtitle it would be 'keeping Logan families safe and keeping Logan families working', because that is what this bill is about. As the chair of the Economics and Governance Committee, it is my job to examine bills before the House that keep Logan safe, that protect the health of its people and that fight for their jobs. Extra appropriation is vital to keep the people of Logan safe and healthy, and to fight for the jobs of Logan. This bill authorises the Treasurer to transparently fund the departments so that they can provide the special response that we need to keep Logan and Queensland safe.

Firstly and soberly, we should recognise what we do not need special funds for. I emphasise that it is important to recognise what we do not have to fund. In this first wave, we do not have to fund the digging of mass graves or the transportation of thousands of bodies to lonely funerals that family cannot attend. We do not have to fund those things because we funded things that are vital to our public services to test, to trace, to isolate and to get the cooperation of the community. We will not be building field hospitals as they have done in Italy. We will not have to send refrigerator trucks to the backs of hospitals as they are doing in New York. Because we have not had to fund those things, we can continue to fund our health network and support and plan for economic recovery.

Disingenuous speeches—and I say that charitably—have been made by opposition members. They say that this is a single line item without detail. From the announcements that have gone forward, we know and Queenslanders absolutely know of the \$4 billion package announced by the Treasurer on 4 March. That package includes \$1.2 billion to expand the fever clinics. Similar to the member for Sandgate, I have seen the Logan fever clinic in action. It was like something out of a movie or a war zone. Day after day we have seen the number of cases dropping. The package has funded an expansion of emergency department capacity and acute care services. Something that has not yet been recognised is the regional aeromedical services for remote communities, supporting people who could be affected in the future.

The package provides \$300 million for cost-of-living relief for households, which the minister for energy spoke about this morning, providing a \$200 credit for 2.1 million households to offset the cost of utilities. Those are important measures that give families in Logan and families throughout Queensland the confidence that the economy will improve and that they should continue to invest in and be part of an active community.


The package contains \$2.5 million for measures including payroll tax relief. We know that those opposite hated the Treasurer's payroll tax relief measures in the last budget. They really bit deeply. They seem to hate that the Treasurer is again giving very generous payroll tax relief. We know that they could not achieve that, but this Treasurer has delivered for small and medium sized businesses—indeed, in this crisis she is delivering for all businesses across Queensland. There is relief for businesses renting government premises, a worker displacement program to help unemployed people get jobs—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr POWER: They do not like what is being said, because they will not back Queensland in this time of crisis. I have spoken about the electricity bill rebates. There is also the liquor licence fee waiver. I know how tough licenced businesses are doing it. There is assistance to support large businesses to scale up when economic activity improves. The package also includes funding towards the \$500 million job support loan facility and for land tax relief. There is the \$27 million coronavirus aid package that was announced on 18 February and rental support for residential tenants facing hardship. Additional funding of \$3.8 billion will be sought in 2019-20. This is a large quantum, but we know how vital it is. As I said, the bill's subtitle is 'keeping Queenslanders safe and fighting for Queensland jobs'.

We know that whatever our response, whether by testing, tracing and isolating or by investing in preparations, the stronger our public health response and the stronger our community response the quicker we will reduce the number of cases. It is that equation that means that we will have a strong

economic recovery; a recovery that will be as strong as it can be. In this place we should have one purpose: to have a strong public health response and a strong community response where we ask everyone to ensure their own personal safety and that of their families. In that way we will reduce the number of cases even more, meaning that we can have an even stronger economic recovery. I endorse this bill because it makes Logan healthier, it makes Logan stronger and it leads the way to the recovery of Logan jobs.

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (3.55 pm): I rise to speak to the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. I acknowledge the contributions of many members in this place, especially those of the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister for small business. I want to speak about some of the things that are happening on the Gold Coast. Small business is really at the heart of business in my region of the Gold Coast and I know that Queensland is often spoken about as the engine room of small business in Australia. We have heard the contributions of some of those opposite, who maintain that they are doing a lot for small business. However, that really flies in the face of the evidence that I will present here this afternoon.

I have been making calls to my constituents, including elderly Gold Coasters, people who are concerned about the landlord and tenant issue and people in business who are concerned about some of the support systems provided by the federal government and the lack of such systems from the state government. It has been brought home to me how many people throughout Queensland are stoically trying to get through this current situation. We have not heard from them. There are hundreds of thousands of them. They represent a lot of hardworking Queenslanders who are wondering how they are going to make it through. When we look at the practical application of the things provided by the state Labor government and this Treasurer, it is a bit thin on the ground. At the moment we have not seen the specific crisis that we are going to have to deal with when it comes to getting people back to work. Of course, the health issue continues and no-one is advocating that we relax the restrictions too early. However, as the opposition, under the leadership of Deb Frecklington, has been saying from the start, this it is not just a health issue; it is also an economic issue.

I refer to the Treasurer's first reading speech in which she spruiked the loans that QRIDA oversees. The government's own website states that there have been 9,000 applications for those loans, but it turns out that any applications made after 1 April will not be processed until May. In other words, loan applications made before 1 April will be processed during April, but applications made after 1 April will be processed during May. There were 9,000 applications for a \$500 million loan scheme and so far 1,390 businesses have been given loans. Of course, the program is completely oversubscribed. So far, of \$500 million, \$206.4 million worth of loans have been approved. As the shadow minister for business said, it is very disappointing that if you did not apply until after 1 April you will not make it, because the loan will not be considered until May.

The Treasurer talked about businesses being in hibernation, that is, businesses where people have to fill out business activity statements. I would be surprised if many members opposite have run a small business and have filled out business activity statements. I would bet not very many at all. It is the epitome of running a small business when you have to fill out the quarterly business activity statement to factor in GST. I would bet that neither the Treasurer nor the minister for small business has ever filled out a business activity statement. We heard from the Treasurer that 11,000 businesses have supposedly benefited from both the payroll tax exemptions and the QRIDA loans that I have spoken about. I think in Queensland there are 438,000 businesses. If 11,000 of those businesses are getting a benefit, then 427,000 are not getting a benefit, and that is in the small business sense.

Even the Minister for Small Business who is spruiking about how much contact she has had from small businesses around the state said about 5,400 businesses have contacted them and they are teaching them how to operate in the 21st century and online. Who knows what the Small Business Minister is talking about? Most small businesses cannot work in some magical way when they have no income. They just cannot work when they are not allowed to operate. Out of 5,400 businesses that have supposedly contacted the Minister for Small Business and her department, we have over 425,000 or 430,000 that are just somehow out there trying to manage with what they have. They might be managing with JobSeeker or JobKeeper legislation, but if you are the principal in a firm where your staff members are taken care of, that does not help you with the utilities, the rent and the legal costs that you might be incurring. That is the problem for a lot of businesses on the Gold Coast where we have medium to small sized businesses that may have their staff members being catered for by JobKeeper legislation, but we know that many of them are decimated at the moment. I see that as I drive around and walk around my own electorate, visiting businesses, visiting strip shopping centres and seeing the

professional and corporate services which are empty at the moment. Where my office is at the Isle of Capri there has been what I would call devastation at the moment. People who work in those businesses are somehow hoping that there will be a miracle provided for them. I do not believe there are going to be miracles provided for them.


The other problem that I have with the QRIDA loans from the government is that it differs completely to what every other jurisdiction in Australia has provided. That is, they are loans; they are not a grant. I have a table here, which I will table in just a moment, of the small business support grants from every other state of Australia. In New South Wales—a grant of up to \$10,000 for 1 to 19 employees with a turnover of greater than \$75,000 and they can use it for utilities, overheads, legal costs and financial advice; in Victoria—a \$500 million support fund with grants of up to \$10,000; in South Australia—a grant of up to \$10,000 under a \$650 million jobs rescue package and they can use the funds to support activities related to the operation of the business; in Western Australia—\$114 million; and in Tasmania—\$2,500 under a \$40 million small business grants program for employers who employ less than 25 people. That applies if they have had a loss of revenue of greater than 30 per cent between 31 January 2020 and 31 March 2020. I table that. It shows an amazing contrast.

Tabled paper: Table, undated, titled 'Small Business Support Grant' [632].

The reason that this state government has not been able to provide those small business grants is because of the state of the budget before we went into this situation. That is what Queenslanders obviously realise. It is very disappointing that here in Queensland we are getting loans offered instead of grants. There is significant concern amongst people I have been speaking to in my electorate. I will speak about this more in the other bill which is about landlords and tenants in regards to the distribution of \$500 a week for people who cannot afford their rents—significant issues. It is so obvious that Labor does not understand the Gold Coast specifically when I talk about my electorate and the electorates that surround it. There is no better example of that than when we saw the farce with border closures that we heard referred to in question time and business earlier today. Those sorts of announcements show that the Labor Party does not understand the Gold Coast.

I want to make it very clear that Gold Coasters are people, in a city that is really just over 60 years old, who are not reliant on government. Generally speaking, it is a city where we have always made our own luck. We do not rely on government. We do not have massive public service departments. We are made up of people who have made their own way through their hard work and enterprise. They have come to a new-world city where they want their kids to be brought up in a safe environment, but they also expect government to at least take care of them and not ignore them in a situation we are currently seeing in an unprecedented way. It is my concern that we have had little respect or acknowledgement given by this Labor government to people in my electorate and the other 10 electorates on the Gold Coast.

It is my concern that much of this budgetary money will be given away, especially if it comes to the Treasurer in a discretionary form, where we can bail out an airline, but we cannot help over 425,000 small businesses in this state. I am concerned this is going to be money put on the tick, never to be repaid or having to be repaid by my children and grandchildren and everyone else's grandchildren and children in this place.

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (4.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the COVID-19 appropriation bill that we have before us. Before I start, I want to touch on some of the comments from the shadow Treasurer who spoke earlier before, applauding the federal government for their \$200 billion, I think it was, support for the Australian economy, and applauding New South Wales for \$10,000 grants to local businesses. I would like to formally welcome the shadow Treasurer to the ranks of Keynesian economics supporters across Australia. It reminds me of that time in 1908 when Andrew Fisher said, 'We are all Socialists now.' Apparently, we are all Keynesian economics supporters now.

Ms Trad: From the federal government, right down to councils.

Mr WHITING: Yes, all of them. They are all joining the ranks, yes. I give the shadow Treasurer this advice: you cannot sing the praises of Keynesian economics if you want to let the market devour Virgin Airlines. As the Minister for State Development has said, the LNP, with this, are throwing 5,000 Queensland Virgin workers onto the scrap heap with their lack of support for them. As he pointed out, they would have been happy to spend \$100 million preparing Queensland assets for sale to foreign owners, but at the same time they will rail against the foreign owners of this particular airline. My advice is if you want to become a Keynesian economics supporter, please strive for some consistency.

What is very clear is that this bill will support the ordinary working Queenslanders who are feeling the impact of the COVID-19 emergency, that is the people in Queensland who have lost their jobs, have lost their income or are at risk of losing their tenancies.

We are delivering a \$400 billion COVID-19 funding package. As part of that package, the Palaszczuk government is committing an additional \$1.2 billion to the health budget to expand capacity in our public hospitals and to utilise and access that capacity in our private hospitals. Another part of that package is pumping \$2.5 billion into protecting Queensland jobs and Queensland businesses. As the member for Logan said before, this is making the jobs, the hospitals and the schools in all our communities safe.

As the Treasurer said earlier today, we have already put nearly half a billion dollars into the accounts of Queenslanders and Queensland small businesses. I commend her on the tremendous work that she and all of her cabinet colleagues have done in getting this money into the pockets of Queenslanders. That means our package is already saving the livelihoods of many Queenslanders. I will mention a few of the features of this package. I will mention how these measures are alleviating the stress and strain that many extraordinary working Queenslanders are now feeling.

For those Queenslanders who have lost their jobs during the COVID-19 emergency, we have the \$500 million worker assistance package. Through that, they can now access free online training in TAFE courses. They can access a new online portal that will match them to Queensland jobs. A key focus of this portal will be matching them with the new jobs that are being created as part of the areas of critical service delivery. Some of those industries we are talking about with job opportunities include agriculture, call centres, food production, logistics and manufacturing.

We also heard today that 1,390 Queensland businesses have now received concessional loans, interest free for a year, as part of this package. Those loans have supported up to 19,000 jobs. That adds up to over 20,000 Queensland families who have received a lifeline through this program. We know that every Queensland household will have \$200 taken off their electricity bill thanks to this package. Queensland's sole traders and small and medium businesses will receive a \$500 rebate on their electricity bills this year. This is very welcome indeed.

Another feature I want to point out is that 465 Queensland community kindergartens have also received a lifeline. These are kindies overseen by committees of volunteers and parents—parents who do working bees to maintain their kindies. I speak of kindies like the Burpengary C&K where my four-year-old, Arabella, is being educated. This lifeline has come about through a \$70 million support package to keep community kindergartens going. It helps them stay open in term 2. It helps provide their programs free of charge to families during this period. It means 22,000 young Queenslanders can enjoy a free kindergarten program and even take up learning at home. Importantly, 2,754 early childhood teachers and educators in Queensland will continue to be employed.

For those Queenslanders struggling with mental health, alcohol or other drug problems during the COVID-19 emergency, the Palaszczuk Labor government has a \$28 million fund for groups or non-government organisations that are providing health care for vulnerable Queenslanders. Those who are amongst the most vulnerable Queenslanders are also being taken care of as part of this \$4 billion package.

In conclusion, I point out once again that Queensland is leading the way in combatting this virus. We heard from the Minister for Small Business this morning that we led the way. We were first out of the blocks with our \$27 million package. Queensland activated the State Health Emergency Coordination Centre on 29 January, barely three weeks after the first patients were diagnosed in Wuhan. We were the first Australian state to move. I commend the Minister for Health for the tremendous job he has done. He acted very quickly and purchased an additional 110 ventilators and \$25 million worth of medicines, gloves and masks. We showed we knew what was coming. We prepared early and in a solid and comprehensive way.

I think this bill shows why more than ever this state needs a Labor government. We have shown that only Labor will look after the jobs, the schools and the hospitals that mean so much to extraordinary working Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.



Mr CRISAFULLI (Broadwater—LNP) (4.12 pm): I also rise to make a contribution in the debate on the appropriation bill, which we will be supporting. First and foremost, before I discuss what I believe are the key elements of this bill, I have to place on record that this is indeed a health crisis. Everything

we do must be viewed through the prism that this has already cost six Queenslanders their lives. Over 1,024 people have had to go through and endure the hardship of being diagnosed. Even those who have recovered have had some form of sacrifice—missing things for their loved ones and going through the emotional roller-coaster—as has every Queenslander in every way: Everyone who has missed a birthday of a loved one; Everyone who has not been able to go to their workplace in the manner they would like to; People who have not been able to show up at a funeral and say goodbye to their loved ones—loved ones who are incredibly close to them.

I have remained as positive as I can during this process because that is what Queenslanders want from us. The idea behind a national cabinet is that it is exactly for that reason. There are things I will raise today that I believe can be improved and that I would like to see the government adopt. I believe that we probably could have embarked on a stimulus package more swiftly. I believe that there were some flaws in the \$27 million rescue package which predominantly went to tourism entities. At the time, I believed businesses needed more assistance than just marketing, but in a crisis like this I acknowledge that we have to respond as best we can.

I acknowledge, as the member for Surfers Paradise and the Leader of the Opposition did, that we remain the only state that has not embarked on a small business grant program. The grant programs we have seen of up to \$10,000 could give businesses confidence as they look over their shoulder, with the wolf at the door, and be what they need to tide them over. I acknowledge, though, that the government has decided to look at a loan structure in the form of QRIDA. The comments I will make will be focused on that.

I believe—and the last 48 hours have convinced me of this—that the mechanics for this loan program are broken and need to be improved. Businesses are discovering how very broken it is. Let me explain why. Within the last fortnight applicants for this fund were told that they had until 25 September to lodge their applications. Within the last week we have a situation where we have two classes of applicants. If people lodged their application before a set date they would be assessed prior to 1 April. If they lodged after that date it would be into May if funds were still available. Just this week we have been told there will be no more applications for this fund.

That is just not right. There is no criteria in the universe that says first in, first served. This is about helping them stay afloat. It is about helping people keep staff on. It is about keeping the lights on at a terrible time. If the government believe that those who were in first are most worthy, then they must expand the fund because otherwise they will create different classes of applicants not based on the quality of the application.

I will give members two real-life examples. The first is a small tourism operator in North Queensland who had a staff member work for a week just to make sure they got this application right. The staff member was dealing with having to stand down people who were new to the organisation. They could not provide hours and could not provide certainty. The staff member was homeschooling a child, all the while trying to provide the best application to give the company she works for the best chance of staying alive. They engaged accountants. They had to do directors' tax returns. They have not yet received their bill from the accountant but they believe it will be about \$3,000. At a time when this business has lost about 80 per cent of its revenue, let me tell members what \$3,000 would feel like to them right now.

The second real-life example was raised with me today by the member for Bonney. It involves a constituent of his. His business is down 100 per cent—nothing. He said he was going to do it properly because the application he was going to lodge was going to show just how desperate things were for him. It was also going to show that his business was credible and viable, and if he could get through this time at the other end he had a raft of contracts waiting to go. He could not lodge his application, and his crime was to want to do an application properly to leave no stone unturned.


Accountants across this state have told their clients, 'Don't rush this. Dot your i's and cross your t's,' because that is the way applications normally work. Those who have done that have been penalised. That is not a fair application process. Whilst I would rather have seen a grants system, I accept the government has made a decision to embark on a loan process, but it is a cruel hoax if people cannot access the loans and cannot be judged fairly.

Here are the three options for the government: option 1—do nothing, allow the first wave to get the money and stand beside some people who will be worthy recipients and say, 'Here it is'; option 2—allow those people who have made an application or who are in the process of making an application

to vie for the remaining funds on a needs basis and who is the most qualified to get the best benefit; option 3—expand the quantum of the scheme and allow more time and more people to benefit from it. Option 2 is preferable. Option 2 is acceptable. Option 1 is unconscionable. To not be willing to give ground when the government will have a tsunami of criticism coming their way, as we saw with the proposed tenancy reforms—and we will discuss those later. There will be an avalanche of anger coming their way and for good reason because it has been ham-fisted. Nowhere else is there a situation where you set up a system, you tell people they have until deep into September, and then you keep pulling things back. That is a cruel hoax.

I am going to make a quick comment regarding my two shadow portfolios—tourism and the environment. Tourism has been hit harder than just about anything else. We know that the industry was already doing it tough in Queensland. There are those who seek to use figures in a way that, quite frankly, are not fair. Queensland has been losing market share and we have been losing it for some time. We have a resilient industry and they will reinvent themselves, but it will look a lot different and they will need all the help they can get. That is why right now they need the opportunity to apply for an expanded scheme the likes of which I have spoken about. Perhaps the environmental sector could help lead in getting some people back to work quickly. There are many good environmental projects that we could embark on swiftly to put people to work and create a legacy of good public open spaces and better natural reserves that we can all benefit from.

There will be much public debate in the months ahead about lifting the restrictions—when and how and whether different regions should ease restrictions before others. This bill will assist in keeping the economy on life support while we support lives. For that reason I support it. Parliament must continue to meet because we must debate a way out of this crisis. Long after we emerge from these troubling times we need a better way. We need to ensure that this state leads the economic recovery of this nation and that this nation leads the economic recovery of the globe. Our priority, first and foremost, is to assist everyone here right now in their hour of need and in the years to come to be the parliament that gets Queensland working again.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (4.23 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. As is well known, the health emergency has been one of the greatest challenges that I have seen in my lifetime. To this point, it has been managed well in Queensland because we acted early and we acted swiftly on health authority advice. Where we are at the moment is that we have had two days of zero positive infections identified in 24 hours in the last three days. Let us hope that there are many more of them. That does not mean that this challenge is anything other than what it has been since it was identified.

Despite the fact that we are doing much better on the health front than we feared early on, to be quite frank, there was a real concern about what it meant and what it might mean for the lives of Queenslanders. Queenslanders and Australians have lost their lives, but there have been a lot less than we expected. My heart certainly goes out to all those who have been affected and to all those who are fighting the virus. It is a terrible thing. What comes with the health challenge is also the economic challenge. That is what this bill is about.

We acted early—as early as late January—in Queensland. To give you an idea, we acted six weeks before the United States. They now have 40,000 deaths and growing. Some of their infection rates are starting to slow, which is obviously welcome. What we have seen in other countries has been horrific. So far it has been limited in our state and in our country, but we have to keep at it. We have to keep taking the health advice and we have to deal with the economic consequences that come with that.

We have a long way to go, but I am confident that we can continue to meet the challenges, as we have been doing over the last couple of months, with very strong leadership in Queensland from the Premier, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health. I look forward to continuing to work with them on those challenges to protect Queenslanders and also to work our way through uncharted territory in terms of the economy.

This bill is necessary to ensure that the Palaszczuk government's \$4 billion COVID-19 relief package is approved and ready to go. The bill enables the government to fund the critical health services that Queenslanders rely on. That includes provision for \$300 million in cost-of-living relief, including the \$200 credit for all 2.1 million households in Queensland to offset the cost of water and electricity; and the \$2.5 billion commitment for measures including payroll tax relief, relief for businesses renting from government premise, and a worker displacement program to help unemployed people get jobs in sectors that are facing shortages. We saw an initial \$27.25 million package to assist local government, business and industry with resilience and recovery.

While we have brought forward this package to fund critical health services and support families, workers and business, we are also focused on other critical services like the delivery of road and transport infrastructure. That is absolutely critical to our economy. It has never been more important that we continue to deliver the Palaszczuk government's record \$23 billion road and transport investment program because that investment continues to mean jobs. That means much needed incomes for Queenslanders and jobs for Queenslanders at a time when every job is essential for our economic wellbeing. Our record program of investment supports over 21,500 jobs across the life of the program here in our state.

Even though these are tough times, everyone is taking precautions and staying at home, and I would like to thank Queenslanders for their incredible cooperation. A lot of people have made a lot of sacrifices and have made commitments to look out for vulnerable people in their community. I think all members would know of many examples of people doing those sorts of things. It is the best in people that has been coming out. I would like to thank all those Queenslanders who have done exactly that and continue to do that and make the sacrifices needed to save the lives of other people, particularly our vulnerable members of the community.

The reduced traffic we are seeing on our roads as a result has meant that we have been able to do more work on our road and transport sites than we otherwise would have. With less traffic and disruption, we are seeing road-building crews accelerating their progress to take advantage of the low volumes. Our investment can be seen at work right now on projects right across Queensland, particularly in regional Queensland. In North Queensland, we have the \$514 million Bruce Highway port and river flood plain project upgrade at Giru, 40 kilometres south of Townsville, supporting 544 jobs. We also have the Townsville Ring Road stage 5 to come in the next 12 months.

We have the Mackay Ring Road—a \$500 million investment in joint funding, with 1,500 workers inducted on that site. Over 80 per cent of them are local to that region. After that, we flow on to the Walkerston Bypass and then the Mackay Port Access Road—a pipeline of jobs and road infrastructure for regional Queensland around Mackay.

We have the \$120 million Rockhampton northern access upgrade, supporting 260 jobs. The Rockhampton Ring Road is coming as well, with preparation well and truly underway. Also in Central Queensland we have the duplication of the Capricorn Highway to Gracemere, supporting 187 jobs. I have been out on that site. It is a fantastic project. On the Sunshine Coast we have the \$812 million upgrade of the Bruce Highway from Caloundra Road to Sunshine Motorway—I am sure you are very interested in that one yourself, Mr Acting Speaker—supporting 680 jobs. That is an investment by this government in conjunction with the Commonwealth—

Mr Powell: Eighty per cent from the federal government.

Mr BAILEY:—in a way that was never done under the previous government. I hear an interjection from the member for Glass House, who did nothing for transport infrastructure in the Glass House electorate and Sunshine Coast region when he was in government. He was a cabinet minister: he had clout. What did he do for the local community? He did not deliver anything in terms of transport infrastructure whatsoever. It is very hard to work out what he does with his time.

In the western suburbs of Brisbane the \$400 million Ipswich Motorway upgrade from Rocklea to Darra supports 471 jobs. All Ipswich got from the LNP was an attempt to sell off their assets. I welcome the new member for Bundamba, who was very involved in the not-for-sale campaign. He will be a great addition to this parliament. I look forward to working with the new member for Bundamba on his first day.

On the M1 we have seen the completion of \$195 million worth of upgrades at the Gateway merge. We will not ignore the M1 like the previous Newman government did. There was not a single new dollar spent on the M1 under the previous government—not one dollar. On the Gold Coast we are very close to finishing the \$197 million upgrade from Mudgeeraba to Varsity Lakes, which supported 257 jobs. In the electorate of Mount Ommaney the Sumners Road interchange, an \$80 million investment, is supporting 105 jobs. That project was cut by the previous government. It was funded and ready to roll under the Bligh government and it was cut by the Newman government. It was left to Labor to deliver.

These major construction projects are happening now, keeping Queenslanders in work. While the relief measures provided by this bill are very important, it is also important that we keep as many people in work as possible. The best form of economic relief is in fact jobs for these communities.

Ms Trad: One hundred per cent.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Deputy Premier. We invest in road and transport infrastructure. We do not cut like those opposite: we invest in Queenslanders. We recently awarded the first contract on the \$1 billion M1 Varsity Lakes to Tugun project—the next M1 upgrade—supporting 850 jobs on the Gold Coast thanks to this Labor government. We have announced the start of early works for the \$709 million Gold Coast Light Rail to Burleigh, supporting 760 jobs. Once again, every stage of the light rail was driven by the Queensland Labor Party. Without us there would be no light rail on the Gold Coast. We had the foresight to build it. We did not call it an affliction, like the member for Mermaid Beach. We did not say it would cause traffic chaos, like the member for Surfers Paradise. We understand what good investment means for congestion on the Gold Coast.

On the Sunshine Coast early works will start this year on the \$662 million six-laning of the Bruce Highway from Caboolture to Steve Irwin Way, supporting 664 jobs. There is even more transport infrastructure on the way to the Sunshine Coast under this Palaszczuk Labor government. We will not ignore the Sunshine Coast like the LNP do whenever they get elected. In Cairns there is progress on the \$164 million Smithfield bypass, supporting 115 jobs, and on the \$104 million Cairns Southern Access Corridor stage 4, Kate Street to Aumuller Street, there are 113 jobs for Far North Queenslanders.

Critical to our progress on these and future projects is our very close working relationship with the civil contracting industry and all industry participants, whether they be the industry supply chain, contractors or the unions. The COVID-19 health emergency and its impact on supply chains and project delivery demands that government and industry work closely together, and that is what we are doing to identify and address emerging issues affecting the delivery of our transport and roads investment program. That is why I convened a regular round table with the civil contracting industry to ensure that any issues would be ventilated early and at the highest level so we can work together through this crisis.

While our industry partners have also had to put in place physical distancing and other hygiene measures on job sites, to their credit this has not slowed down the delivery of road and transport infrastructure in Queensland. TMR has now established a working group with industry partners to work through the issues raised. The delivery of our roads and transport investment program is critical to the underpinning of economic prosperity in our state, and project delivery maintenance must continue safely and effectively. We are doing everything possible to ensure the civil contracting industry is supported throughout this pandemic and into the recovery phase.

We are looking at all options to respond to the coronavirus emergency, including working with our colleagues at the federal and local level, to maximise jobs through joint investment. A lot of work is going on behind the scenes to plan what this might look like. We are looking at things like increased investment in maintenance, accelerated delivery, increased and accelerated investment, more efficient ways to deliver our program and many other options.


I want to emphasise that nothing is off the table when it comes to our government's resolve to help Queensland recover from the health crisis as quickly as possible. Queensland is already in a pro-infrastructure and pro-jobs position due to our government's increased investment in roads and transport infrastructure. In four out of five budgets there have been record spends by this government. Thanks to our deal with the federal government in November last year in relation to the inland rail project, that deal alone saw an agreement reached on over \$1.6 billion in infrastructure investment with well over \$600 million of federal funds being accelerated for projects in Queensland. When this health crisis hit, Queensland was well-placed and our government acted early and decisively. This \$4 billion relief package is evidence of that.

Let's not hear lectures from those opposite; let's look at their record. The last time the LNP had their hands on the economy economic growth fell to 0.7 per cent—it had a zero in front of it—unemployment surged to 7.1 per cent—that is a seven—14,000 people were sacked and electricity prices went up 43 per cent. All of this in only three years! It was quite an extraordinary achievement. It is no wonder they lost after only one term. I will not accept lectures from the LNP on economic competence because the economic illiteracy on that side is vast. You only need to look at their position when it comes to the airline industry.

The Australian market is a natural duopoly. We have a small number of people across a vast distance. We are a small market by world standards. If you do not support a competitive market you are supporting a monopoly and you are supporting higher airfares, particularly in regional Queensland. Our state is the most affected of any other state when it comes to regional airlines. We are the most spread out, the most decentralised and we have the most destinations. If you do not back Virgin to

survive as a going entity you are supporting higher airfares right across Queensland. You are supporting less competition in the freight sector, which means higher prices for everything in the supermarket because there is less competition. Just like you did back in the Newman government, you are selling thousands of jobs and Queenslanders down the drain. Virgin employees deserve support, and this government is backing them all the way. They have the total support of the Palaszczuk government. We will continue to work hard. The Premier, Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development and I are all working for the best possible outcome for our economy and for Virgin workers.

I commend the Deputy Premier and Treasurer and Premier for their work. We will continue to work through this health crisis. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (4.38 pm): It is a huge relief to everyone that the spread of coronavirus has so far been minimised in Queensland and across the country. I will support this bill, but there are some things I would like to add. Today we are debating how we respond to the huge economic crisis we are now facing, with 120,000-odd Queenslanders out of work. We should be having a broader debate as a society about what kind of economy we want to have once the worst of the danger passes. What parts of the old way do we want to switch back on and what parts should we be leaving behind? It is an important question, because the old ways were simply not working for everyday Queenslanders.

It was not working for the thousands of workers pushed into casual jobs and underemployment, the thousands of people waiting for elective surgery or those households who even before the crisis were struggling to pay their mortgages and their rent. On the other hand, the old way worked pretty well for property developers, banks and big mining companies. Corporate profits were pushing record levels, but regular Queenslanders were not getting their fair share for schools, hospitals and the jobs of the future. As we rebuild we need to make sure Queensland works for everyone, not just those big corporations. That will mean hanging on to the really important things that we have achieved during this crisis—like the promise of free child care for all and unemployment and student benefits that actually are enough to make ends meet and pay the bills each week. It will also mean fighting even harder for things that would make life better for regular people, like housing for all, jobs for all and publicly owned essential services so we can all live a good life.

There are a few specific areas where I believe the state government must do more in its response to the crisis caused by COVID-19. The first is looking after casual workers who have been left behind by the federal LNP and its JobKeeper program. Estimates coming out of Curtin University suggest around 950,000 casual workers will be ineligible for JobKeeper because they have worked at their job fewer than 12 months. Anyone who has ever worked in hospitality or retail will tell you that is just how it goes. Workers in those industries are so insecure and the work so variable that it makes absolutely no sense to lock those people out.

The same applies to migrant workers. It is an absolute shame on this country that we have invited millions of migrant workers here who have contributed to our economy and paid their taxes but then failed to offer them any income support in this crisis. I am calling on the state government to follow the lead of the Northern Territory government in filling the gaps in the federal JobKeeper scheme, supporting casuals and visa holders and other workers left behind by JobKeeper. There are thousands of casual and visa workers, young and old, in my electorate and thousands of international students as well. International students support many west side jobs in universities, especially as federal LNP cuts to universities have left universities ever more reliant on income from overseas. These students contribute a huge amount to our community as scholars, as workers and as our neighbours. Just imagine this. You are stuck in another country. You cannot get home. You cannot leave your house. You have lost your job. You do not have access to Medicare or Centrelink and the Prime Minister is literally on the television telling you to go home.

The response from our community on the west side has been absolutely inspiring. During the COVID-19 crisis, I have seen locals go above and beyond to help their neighbours with food, donations and solidarity. Local charities are scrambling to adapt to the new restrictions and are slowly restarting direct food assistance, but even still the failure of government to lead has meant that it has fallen to my office to put together food parcels for international students on the west side who simply have no other options. These international students contribute so much to our community, and I am urging the state government not to abandon them at this time.

Despite all the stimulus proposed and funded under this bill, the government has persisted with its unbelievably short-sighted public service pay freeze. After inflation, a wage freeze is a real cut for public servants—some of whom are on the front line in fighting this pandemic. Nurses, teachers,


cleaners and government call centre workers are the heroes in this fight against COVID-19. A public service pay freeze is a slap in the face and it is straight out of the LNP playbook. We are in a once-in-a-generation jobs and economic crisis, and giving workers a pay cut now will cut spending and only make unemployment worse.

We have heard no suggestion that politicians in this place should take a pay cut. No-one is arguing hard for that, yet these scheduled pay increments—hard won and now long overdue—were largely aimed at some of the lowest paid public servants. We should pay for this crisis by making sure mining companies and big corporations pay their fair share, not by punishing frontline public servants. I will give just one example. Over the last five years alone, mining and gas corporations have exported over \$270 billion worth of coal, gas and minerals from Queensland and paid only eight per cent in royalties. Last but not least, cutting wages for public servants in Queensland is just outdated LNP ideology. Campbell Newman himself was the greatest cheerleader for this pay freeze, and it is such a shame to see Labor buckle under pressure from right-wing scare campaigns from the *Courier-Mail* and washed-up LNP ex-premiers.

I also want to note my support for the proposal for an independent oversight committee to scrutinise the government's response to the pandemic. Over the last few weeks, I have been focused more than full-time on helping west side locals cope with the changes and challenges we are all facing. In between those efforts, our small office has been trying to keep up with the government's response across a huge range of areas. The Chief Health Officer has been remarkably forthcoming with information, and I do want to take this opportunity to directly thank Dr Young for all of her efforts and her communications with my office. However, the same has not been true for all of government in all instances, and I will give some concrete examples.

Here are a few questions I have been trying to have answered over the last few weeks without any success. In many cases, I have put these questions in writing to the ministers or departments responsible but have not heard a thing. How much public money are we spending on renting private hospital beds? Where is the data on police fines and arrests for breaches of the new social distancing laws? Is the government delivering testing for COVID-19 in Queensland prisons in line with health advice? Exactly how many workers and which categories of workers are affected by the frontline public service pay freeze? The inquiries that were initiated just this morning and will now be undertaken by existing parliamentary committees are certainly better than nothing. However, putting aside the government control of these committees, I am unconvinced that their remit will be broad enough to address all the questions Queenslanders will want answered at the end of this crisis.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my support for the bill. I am sure I join with all Queenslanders in a collective sigh of relief that the response to COVID-19 has thus far been as effective as we have seen, but we have a long road ahead. I ask the government to make sure we take the side of everyday Queenslanders as we emerge out the other side and to make sure we achieve the best possible future for those people out of these tough times.

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (4.45 pm): I rise to speak to the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. COVID-19 is causing unprecedented economic challenges all over the world. Queensland has had to respond to this insidious and potentially deadly disease and we have responded just like Queenslanders do. We have stood up—stood up to protect the health of Queenslanders and stood up for our Queensland economy. Together we have done this and together we will survive this because together we are stronger. The Palaszczuk Labor government was the first government to call a health emergency. We were the first government to provide financial support and we have continued with our support of individuals, businesses and industry.

I would like to firstly take an opportunity to thank our frontline workers—our health workers, paramedics and other health workers, and our police officers, teachers, cleaners, food services, local business owners and industry. Thank you for all that you are doing each and every day. I acknowledge the great work of those people in protecting, educating, serving and growing Queenslanders.

I am proud that the Palaszczuk government has responded so quickly to support businesses and families across Queensland, with over 20,000 businesses with an estimated 130,000 workers impacted directly by the pandemic. The Palaszczuk government has responded to manage the economic fallout of the pandemic by announcing a \$4 billion economic relief package. This package does the right thing for all Queenslanders, with \$300 million in cost-of-living relief for households, including a \$200 credit for all 2.1 million households to offset the cost of water and electricity. A \$400 million land tax relief for rental property owners, ensured to be passed on to tenants, will assist those tenants who have been impacted by COVID-19. As of this morning, 852 landowners have received relief worth \$9.17 million.

We are delivering a further \$2.5 billion in measures, including payroll tax relief. As of this morning our program of payroll tax refunds, holidays and deferrals has seen almost 11,400 Queensland businesses receiving a payroll tax refund or payment holiday, with more than \$311 million being put back into the accounts of Queensland businesses and back into the pockets of Queensland workers. We are providing relief for businesses renting government owned properties and electricity rebates for all Queensland small and medium sized businesses that consume less than 100,000 kilowatt hours of power. We have a liquor licensing fee waiver, assistance to support large businesses to scale up when economic activity improves and \$27.25 million to assist local governments, businesses and industry with resilience and recovery strategies.

We have a \$24.7 million housing and homelessness plan to deliver accommodation for vulnerable Queenslanders who may need to self-isolate, for homelessness providers and for enhancements to the Home Assist Secure program. We have a \$500 million loan facility with loans of up to \$250,000 available to encourage businesses to keep Queenslanders in work, and these loans are interest free for the first 12 months. As of today, the Jobs Support Loan program has helped 1,390 businesses to support nearly 19,000 jobs in our economy. These initiatives have been so well received across my electorate. I have heard firsthand what the Palaszczuk government's economic response means to locals.

Tom Tindall, founder and owner of Orientique Australia, a local fashion business, told me how impressed he was with the Queensland government's support for businesses. He said he felt that the Queensland government has his back. Tom told me that he had worked hard to build his business, and he also spoke so very highly of his team. He also spoke incredibly highly of the government.

I met Tom while I was out walking one morning. He was in quarantine on his verandah. He called out to me across the fence—he is a neighbour of mine—to tell me how proud he was to be a Queenslander and how proud he was to know that the Queensland Palaszczuk government had his back. He also told me that he has the best team in the world and that they are the best at what they do. He told me that from an income point of view he feels that his business is protected and that brings more relief than we could ever imagine. 'When we come back,' he said, 'they are going to have so much energy and commitment to get things back to normal and we will come back bigger, better and stronger. I encourage anyone in the House who is looking for some new female clothing to check out Orientique; they have a beautiful range of clothes.

These comments from Tom are true across my entire electorate. Employers are wanting to protect their staff. Locals are all working hard to follow the guidelines to ensure that Queensland recovers. This bill provides a lifeline to support those in our state who have been impacted to ensure that our economy recovers. May I say again that our government has responded to support all Queenslanders, because that is what good governments do. We have stood up to protect the health of Queenslanders and we have stood up for the Queensland economy. Together we are stronger and together we will survive this. I commend the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill to the House. Stay well, Queenslanders, and stay safe.



Mr WATTS (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.51 pm): I rise to offer my contribution to the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. Before I begin I would first like to thank the people of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs for all of their efforts throughout this crisis—and we have had some truly sensational results in containing any outbreaks on the Darling Downs—particularly to the health workers and the other frontline staff. I would also very much like to thank the police across the state as they have had their role stretched. Whether it be making sure people are doing the right thing or whether it be policing our borders, we know that the police and QCS staff are under increased pressure as we go through this crisis.

I turn now to the bill. Firstly, I want to say that before the introduction of this bill the Queensland economy was in pretty bad shape. That means that when a crisis comes—and we have had some good times here in Australia—we need to be in good shape. Unfortunately, the Queensland economy was not in good shape. We know that that makes it much more difficult for the Queensland economy to bounce back. Whether it is our unemployment relative to the other states, our youth unemployment, which was at some 14 per cent in January, the nature of the debt that is colossal and an intergenerational theft, or the public servants' superannuation being raided over the last few years, all of these things make us more vulnerable to a crisis, and the blame for all of these things needs to be laid firmly at the feet of the Labor government.

First and foremost, we have to ask ourselves: what shape were we in and where does that leave us now in terms of making a competitive response? This bill is looking at allocating some \$4.8 billion to try to ensure that we have some adequate response. I certainly support there being a response to this

crisis. However, I want to look at what should be going on not just with this bill but with the process of this parliament. Fortunately for us, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association put out a guide, a *CPA toolkit for Commonwealth parliaments*, which I will table at the end of my speech, telling us the sorts of things that we should be doing to ensure we are in good shape as we go through this crisis. It lists one of them as keeping parliament operational, something that has not happened here in Queensland and has meant that we have had very little knowledge of this bill prior to it coming into this House. It states—

In order for Parliament to remain operational, it must ensure that it acts just as efficiently in scrutinising all legislation and holding the Executive to account under all circumstances.

That is interesting because that is not necessarily what has been going on here in Queensland. It is nice to be back in the parliament discussing this bill. It would have been nice to have had a look at the bill a little earlier so we could understand all of the implications and perhaps get a little bit of detail about where the \$4.8 billion is due to be spent. Another part of that same document talks about bipartisanship. It is interesting as it gives an example. It states—

In Pakistan, a Parliamentary Committee comprising party representatives from across the political divide has been formed to deliberate and make recommendations to the government, on how to manage COVID-19.

That is an interesting concept. I think it would be particularly useful to ensure we have proper scrutiny of the executive as we go through this process. It goes on—

Likewise in South Africa, there has been a show of unity across all 14 political parties within the national Parliament in response to the spread of the virus across the country.

It is interesting that Pakistan and South Africa have managed to put some scrutiny over proposed government legislation, yet here with our parliament, Premier Palaszczuk's plaything, we find ourselves with very little scrutiny. We find ourselves with a guillotine hanging over our heads on these very important bills we are debating today. As honourable members know, I am not a big fan of the guillotine. I believe that the best legislation will come from the best scrutiny.

It is also interesting that the same document talks about not losing focus on other things. We need to ensure that as we go through this crisis we do not forget we still have to run the entire state. One of those things that we hope focus does not get drawn away from, particularly as our Police Service gets stressed and is put under budgetary pressure, is the crisis we have been experiencing in youth crime around the state. I hope that parts of this budget will be allocated to the Police Service. Again, I cannot thank our police officers across the state enough for the job they are doing. With tight allocations of PPE and difficult sets of circumstances, they are doing a fantastic job; However, we still have a youth crisis. We know that people are still out there stealing cars. We know that the police still have to manage and do their other jobs.

I hope that a good percentage of this budget is allocated to the Police Service so that the appropriate overtime and other expenditure can ensure we are kept safe throughout this period not only from the virus but also from other things that we know are going on in our state. We know that crime has been skyrocketing under Labor, and I will give some examples. Robbery under Labor has gone up 107 per cent, unlawful use of a motor car has gone up 85 percent, assault has gone up 36 per cent and unlawful entry has gone up 35 per cent. It is important in this budget—

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask you to rule on relevance. This is not about crime statistics; it is actually appropriations.

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): If you do not mind, I will deal with the point of order, thank you. The member did indicate that the funding question was a question for him in relation to law and order issues. He is referring to statistics to support his argument. I do remind the member—the Deputy Premier is partly correct—you need to be more succinct in how you link the two together because you are wandering quite a bit.

Mr WATTS: Virgin has been offered \$200 million by this government. Obviously, if people have a friend's ski lodge to use they have the phone number of people to contact about a \$200 million payment. Interestingly enough, four per cent of this appropriation bill, which is a little bit above what the police budget receives from the state budget—

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Regardless of the fact that I was not mentioned in that comment, it was directed my way. I take personal offence and I ask the member to withdraw it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did not hear the member referring to you, Deputy Premier. I understand the ruling is that it must be a reference to the individual person involved, not a general statement. I will take advice from the Clerk on the point. I have taken advice from the Clerk, Deputy Premier. There was no direct reference to you; there is no point of order.

Mr DICK: I rise on a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member was entirely out of order, contrary to the standing orders on relevance, talking about someone in the government who may have had the phone number of the CEO of Virgin.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Please resume your seat, Minister.

Mr DICK: It is not relevant.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I asked you to resume your seat and then you spoke over me. Is that a reflection on the chair?

Mr DICK: I apologise if you see it as a reflection on the chair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr WATTS: The relevance is that out of this \$4.8 billion, \$200 million has been committed to this airline. The relevance is that, in the portfolio for which I am responsible, four per cent of this \$4.8 billion is \$192 million. Roughly speaking, if we follow the reduced proportion that the Labor government allocates to the police in the Queensland budget, that \$192 million should go into police resourcing to ensure it copes with this crisis. The relevance is that I want to ensure that the police budget is not scrimped and scraped so that a foreign owned organisation gets \$200 million over our frontline police officers who are out there dealing with this crisis day to day without enough PPE gear or some of the protections they need.

I know the government has made great strides in terms of trying to get that organised for them. That is only appropriate. If we are to ask police officers to speak to people out of their car windows at the state border, they should be well protected from this virus. That is why \$192 million should be the minimum amount allocated to the police out of this appropriation. That amount is a little over the normal amount it is allocated from the Queensland budget. I am concerned that the police will miss out on some of the resourcing needed from this program, because other entities have better access and the ability to access that money.

I am also concerned about where this money will come from, because I have spoken in this place about the budget and about how as debt climbs it is intergenerational theft. We are taking money from our children. They will have to pay tax to pay for the things we have spent money on. The simple fact is that with COVID-19 we are in extraordinary times. This is not an inappropriate time for such an event to occur, but we should not have allocated \$92 billion before that that we should not have had. Those children who now access free kindergarten will pay tax for their lifetimes to try and gain control of this government's forward spending.

We need to ensure that in particular the QCS—under pressure in our prison system and also in terms of looking after prisoners released into very difficult sets of circumstances—receives the funding it needs to practise social distancing and to manage our prison systems in a highly stressed situation. We do not want to see any more incidents where we lose control of our prisons, albeit for a brief moment of time. In addition, in this regard we know that next financial year there will be a changeover from private to public operations. Again, it will be very important to ensure a safe and smooth transition so that the funding is available for the QCS.

Earlier, the Treasurer said that we will put forward a budget in Queensland. I look forward to the estimates process where we look not only at this bill but also at what else is put forward to ensure we can scrutinise where every taxpayer dollar is spent. We need to ensure that this money goes to the appropriate services, be they our health frontline workers or Police Service PPE. The Police Service will need a good chunk of this money to remain operational and effective in terms of dealing with the crime wave in Queensland that occurred under the Labor Party before this crisis and in terms of managing all the stress of the Police Service and additional demands.


We already know that the rate of domestic violence climbed about eight per cent and that it takes police a long time to complete the paperwork on each and every callout. I urge the Treasurer to ensure that the Police Service is not short-changed from this allocation, that it has the resources it needs not only to deal with the COVID situation but to get on top of the unexpected and unwanted issues that come from this situation such as the growth in domestic violence. We need to ensure that our prison service also has the capacity to manage prisons in a safe and responsible way through this process.

I said that I will table a document from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. In doing so, I want to ensure that going forward this parliament is not seen as a plaything of the government, that this parliament does its job in holding the executive to account. The simple fact is that the parliament's job is to scrutinise what the executive does on behalf of the people of Queensland. I will table that document at the end of my speech. The simple fact is that if this parliament is not sitting, how can it scrutinise the executive? If it cannot scrutinise the executive, we are far from the best practice of operational parliaments across the Commonwealth, something not endorsed by anybody. It is very important that, in terms of a Treasury bill, such as this one, which is fundamental to dealing with the crisis, we allocate the resources needed to be able to deal with this crisis. This is fundamentally important, but it should be scrutinised. It cannot be scrutinised because we have this general sort of 'number' to do a few things and we might allocate a bit of money to a mate somewhere if we can.

I want to ensure that money gets allocated where it is needed, that some people do not have better access to the executive than others. I want to ensure that this crisis is well managed and financially responsibly managed, because the people of Queensland can ill afford to waste money with an executive not being held to account, avoiding scrutiny and avoiding explaining itself to the people of Queensland, be it through the media or through this parliament. It is very important that everything the executive does through this crisis is well scrutinised, particularly when it comes to spending money, because going into this crisis we were in the weakest and worst position economically of just about every state and territory in Australia. This is not a time to not scrutinise the executive. This is a time to ensure the executive is held well and truly to account. Shutting down this parliament and guillotining this bill is not the way to do it. The guillotine should not apply to this bill. Every member should be allowed to speak, and I condemn the government for that.

Tabled paper: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association report, undated, titled 'COVID-19 Delivering Parliamentary Democracy: CPA Toolkit for Commonwealth Parliaments' [\[633\]](#).

(Time expired)

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (5.08 pm): I rise to support the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill. We stand in this House today while the word 'unprecedented' is used a lot in the most extraordinary times for Queensland, Australia and indeed the world. It is a health and economic crisis the world has not seen before, not one that I have seen in my generation. It has had a severe impact on every generation of Queenslanders, young or old. The term 'social distancing', a term I had never heard of or referred to before, seems to be the new way of life for Queenslanders and Australians. Since our last sitting, we have seen our world turned upside down. We have seen our incredible Queensland lifestyle turned upside down. We have seen our economy across the country shaken to its core. No-one could have predicted that 2020 would unfold this way.

Fundamentally, this bill seeks supplementary appropriation for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years of \$4.8 billion. I am proud to be standing here as a representative of the Palaszczuk Labor government. We were the first to recognise the potential of this pandemic crisis back in late January. We planned for it and we have been continuing to plan for its impact, preparing and making sure that we deliver for all Queenslanders. Our Palaszczuk government has front-footed the COVID-19 pandemic from the get-go, from both a health and an economic perspective. It is hard to believe that it has only been 34 days since our last sitting. It has been good to see the bipartisan approach at the federal and state levels and the rapid response to the unfolding economic crisis that is facing our state and our nation and, indeed, the world.

In addition to the Commonwealth JobSeeker and JobKeeper and business cash flow support in Queensland, our government has acted swiftly to deliver for industry, business, households and individuals in these complicated and anxious times for all. This bill ratifies the commitments that our government has made which started on 18 February with the first major relief package of any state or territory government and was the \$27.5 million that was focused on tourism.

I want to touch on the debate that has been had in this chamber today on the situation in relation to Virgin. This issue goes further than tourism, which is a key pillar of our economy. Having two airlines provides price competitiveness. The loss of Virgin goes beyond just affecting its 5,000 employees; it affects the 13 airports across this state, hotels and their support staff, restaurants and attractions that people come to Queensland to visit. It affects transport operators, travel agents and businesses that have the expense on their profit-and-loss statements for their fly-in-fly-out workers doing business here in Queensland, in Australia and overseas and into the future. It is absolutely imperative that we make sure we have a competitive airline industry.

On 17 March we launched our \$500 million concessional loan facility for Queensland businesses, providing loans of up to \$250,000 with an initial 12-month interest-free period. That has been great for many businesses. It has encouraged them to retain staff and assisted in cash flow management. On 22 March we provided funding to the University of Queensland to fast-track the race to find a cure for coronavirus. We know that finding a cure and a vaccine to this coronavirus will be important in how we can move forward as a state and as a nation.

On 24 March we had the single largest relief package at that time that was announced by any state or government. Included within that was a \$1.2 billion health response which looked at the expansion of fever clinics, our emergency departments, providing additional capacity within acute care and more than \$3 billion in economic measures—the industry support package to assist large businesses, which make a significant contribution to our Queensland economy, to help them journey through the crisis at the moment and to make sure that we are positioning for a really bright economic future as we come out of the COVID-19 crisis.

The payroll tax relief package, which I know has been extremely well received in the Redlands, has been terrific. Redlands sits in Brisbane's east. That has meant \$8.8 million worth of financial support to our businesses. The workers assistance package consisted of \$500 million to assist workers who had lost their job with retraining and job matching. Yesterday on the ABC news was a Virgin pilot. He will be one of those people who not just accesses the Jobs Finder portal but will also have the opportunity to transition to future employment. Importantly, there is the microcredentialing, the free short courses from TAFE. In the Redlands there are many people who are interested in taking up that opportunity to look at how they can reskill and position themselves for future employment. There was also the household assistance package of \$300 million. That has been well received in our community. The amount of \$200 off the electricity bill means a lot to many householders. The arts have been significantly impacted. One only needs to look over at QPAC, the Queensland Museum and our own RPAC to see the impact that this has had on that industry. Our \$10.5 million in grants for individual artists and arts organisations is very important.

On 25 March the government allocated \$27.4 million in housing support for vulnerable Queenslanders at risk of homelessness, including providing safe accommodation for vulnerable and homeless Queenslanders and those needing to self-isolate. This was a fantastic package put together by Minister de Brenni. On 26 March we announced \$360,000 to partner with CCIQ to run proactive outreaches to small business and to expand the capacity of their call centre. Everybody in this chamber will have taken numerous phone calls from all types of businesses, small and large. Being able to access information and help and mentoring is what will help many businesses actually survive and thrive into the future.


On 6 April we announced a \$50 million package providing the three-month deferral on gaming machine taxes for our pubs and clubs. Again, that is a really important package. One only needs to look at some of our clubs and their empty car parks to see the impact this pandemic is having on them. Making sure that we help position them to get back up on their feet very quickly is important.

On 8 April we had the boost for domestic and family violence services. For Maybanke, which provides crisis accommodation in the Redlands, and for the Centre for Women & Co., the additional \$120,000 that they received in additional financial support from this \$5.5 million package was invaluable. I spoke to Stacey Ross from the Centre for Women & Co., who said this could be invaluable in providing crisis response to Redlanders. On 9 April the rental assistance grants program was announced, worth \$19.7 million. I know that many in my community in the Redlands are looking at taking that up as they have been impacted by COVID-19. On 12 April we released the relief package to provide free community kindergarten—I took a lot of phone calls on how the community kindergarten is important to our whole Redlands community—to make sure that our essential workers are able to have their children still in kindy and to make sure that our kindies are still able to operate as we journey out of this COVID-19 crisis. They are important assets to our community. On 14 April we boosted grassroots community based healthcare providers that had been impacted to the tune of \$28 million.

On 25 March, the parliament having sat the week before, I had the opportunity to be involved in another new normal for many, which is Facebook Live. I did an update with our Redlands Coast Chamber of Commerce and our local businesses. It is really important, and it is part of our role, to make sure that we provide the best information. The gravity of COVID-19 in our communities is far-reaching. It is impacting so many different aspects of our lives and the way that we function and operate. Being able to assist those organisations get to the truth and provide the information that they need to move

forward is really important. I spoke with Rebecca Young, the president of our Redlands Coast Chamber of Commerce, who commended our government on the stimulus and support packages, saying that it goes a long way to giving confidence to businesses in the Redlands.

These additional appropriations represent a commitment to my Redlands community and to all Queenslanders, a commitment that we will be with them all the way, to support our collective journey through this crisis and into recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (5.18 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. The bill authorises the Treasurer to pay amounts from the Consolidated Fund for departments for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years. In addition to the \$54.698 billion appropriated in the 2019 budget for this financial year, the bill is seeking a further \$3.181 billion to fund the government's coronavirus response.

In addition to the \$27.349 billion appropriated in the 2019 budget for the 2020-21 financial year to cover 1.4 years of government operations, the bill is seeking a further \$1.615 billion to fund the government's coronavirus response for the next financial year, starting 1 July 2020. The total amount of new appropriation from the Consolidated Fund for coronavirus measures of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years is \$4.796 billion.

Before we were hit by the coronavirus pandemic, Queenslanders were already facing a tidal wave of debt—all \$91 billion of it. Unfortunately, when we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that debt will have become a tsunami. Even before the first case of the coronavirus was detected in Australia, Queensland was at the bottom of the country's economic leaderboard, with record debt and unemployment. Hospital waiting times had blown out, our children's education standards had fallen, our police were overstretched and under-resourced, youth crime was out of control and we had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. After five years of a Labor government, Queensland also had the most bankruptcies in the country and business confidence was at rock bottom. At the same time, the Treasurer also introduced nine new taxes or increased taxes, ripping a further \$3.5 billion out of the state's failing economy.

No-one could have predicted the economic, social and health crisis that we have been dealt in the form of the coronavirus pandemic. Despite these unprecedented times, Queenslanders have proudly responded to the challenges and proven yet again just how deep the Queensland fighting spirit runs. However, Queenslanders deserve and expect far better leadership and economic management during these times. They do not deserve decades of ongoing economic pain and hardship brought on by a Labor government that has shown time and time again an abject failure to manage the state's economy.

Last week media reports confirmed what most Queenslanders already knew: according to a poll, only 20 per cent of Queenslanders were satisfied with the Palaszczuk Labor government's response to the coronavirus. This result, published in major papers, was the lowest result of any government and well below the 38 per cent of Queenslanders who were very satisfied with the performance of the Morrison government. More than two-thirds of the Queenslanders surveyed were gravely concerned about the state of the Queensland economy over the next 12 months and they are not alone. Earlier this month, CCIQ chief economist Dr Marcus Smith said that his biggest concern was that the economic crisis facing the state could become a financial crisis with a bigger impact than the GFC.

It was the architect of the once-strong Queensland economy, former Treasury and investment boss Sir Leo Hielscher, who first rang the alarm bells when he said that the Palaszczuk Labor government had no strategy, no plan and no program to pay down their debt, which at that time was forecast to hit \$83 billion. Fast-forward to today and that \$83 billion is forecast to reach \$91 billion and counting. Sir Leo lamented the loss of the AAA credit rating at the hands of our current Treasurer's mentor, Anna Bligh. Cash resources and superannuation surpluses had been raided and debt was still rising. He said that our recent budgets had been balanced by the reallocation of our cash reserves. The most respected Treasury boss of our time was saying that this government was robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Now we learn that this year the Palaszczuk Labor government will not even be able to deliver a proper budget process for the people of Queensland. Come October this government will ask every Queenslanders to put their faith in them, despite desperately trying to avoid scrutiny of their economic performance and accountability. Given this government's track record of integrity scandals and economic mismanagement, it is no wonder that they are now using the cover of a health crisis to avoid

scrutiny of the state's finances. Let us remember that this is the same government that spent \$10 million on consultants to work out how to reduce the number of consultants hired by the government and raided \$5 billion from the superannuation of thousands of Queensland government employees.

While other states and territories have announced comprehensive support packages for businesses, Queensland businesses have been left languishing. The Palaszczuk Labor government was the last state government to announce a major stimulus package. The federal government had announced two rounds of stimulus before Labor had even delivered one. When the businesses in my electorate of Ninderry and around the state looked for confidence and support from the Palaszczuk government, their silence was deafening. When they did respond, Labor's assistance package fell desperately short of what is needed to save jobs and support families. The sad reality is that over 120,000 Queenslanders have lost their job to the coronavirus and thousands of businesses, including many on the Sunshine Coast, are facing the very real prospect of never reopening their doors. We have been encouraged by the response of the federal government. It would be fair to say that while the Prime Minister has been doing the heavy lifting, announcing around \$320 billion of economic support, Queensland businesses have been left to languish thanks to the failure of this Labor government. Every day I receive dozens of calls from small business owners who are desperate for a lifeline from a government willing to invest \$200 million in a foreign owned airline. The Palaszczuk Labor government has failed Queenslanders at their time of most need.

The LNP have outlined a range of sensible support measures, but those too have been overlooked by the government. Those measures include introducing an electricity price ceiling so that households and businesses do not have to pay any increases in power bills during the declared public health emergency and for a period after as determined by the government; lifting the payroll tax threshold from \$1.3 million to \$6.5 million from 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020 to provide instant relief for around 15,000 Queensland businesses—that is nine months compared to five months of relief announced by this government; freezing current registration of motor vehicle fees for the financial year starting 1 July 2020; introducing a bulk water price ceiling so that households and businesses do not have to pay any increases in bulk water bills during the declared public health emergency; providing payments to households in medically enforced isolation; fast-tracking \$500 million worth of road projects to create new jobs in regional Queensland; delivering fast state government payments to small business suppliers to improve cash flow and prevent job cuts; and providing small businesses with emergency grants of up to \$10,000 to match similar grants that every other state has.

Queenslanders lament for the days when Queensland was an economic powerhouse. Today, even though we are seeing positive signs that we are winning the battle against coronavirus, the economic prognosis is dire thanks to a Labor government that has no plan for the future. Only the LNP can provide Queenslanders with a long-term economic plan and a road to economic recovery.



Hon. ML FURNER (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (5.26 pm): I rise to support the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill that is being debated in the House this afternoon. The bill enables a comprehensive range of supports for Queensland during the COVID-19 public health emergency. These are unprecedented times and we have a Queensland government that is willing to enact unprecedented measures and facilitate unprecedented cooperation with the Commonwealth to get the best possible outcome for Queenslanders.

Queensland moved faster than any other state to declare a health emergency. We moved quickly to provide initial assistance to the first impacted industries and then we acted decisively with the most significant and comprehensive jobs, business and health support package seen anywhere in the nation. The Queensland government's support for jobs, for business and for public health has led the nation. The passage of the legislation before the House this evening will ensure that that support can continue to save jobs and promote the state's recovery. Importantly for business and for employees, the Palaszczuk government has outlined a \$2.5 billion suite of measures, including payroll tax relief, a worker displacement program to connect unemployed workers with areas of labour demand, electricity bill rebates for small and medium sized businesses, liquor licence fee waivers, tourism industry support and specific support for our fishing industry.

Initial support in the agriculture and fisheries sector included market diversification and resilience loans designed to help directly impacted exporters and their supply chain businesses to source new markets or adapt their processes to keep their workforces employed and to keep business revenue flowing while things settle down. We are still working with industry every week to determine where roadblocks might be and how we can assist, so that this vital industry keeps employing Queenslanders and keeps our food and fibre supplies moving at the high standard that Queenslanders and their

customers right around the globe have come to expect. We have put in funding to support local government, industry and business with recovery strategies, targeted financial support and counselling, and provided \$400 million in land tax relief for property owners.

A critically important facility helping Queensland businesses to not only survive but also maintain their workforce is the \$500 million COVID-19 job support loan package offering low-interest loans up to \$250,000 to assist with carry-on expenses such as employee wages, rent and rates and other related expenditure. The Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority manages the application and processing of these loans which will be a vital bridge to assist Queensland businesses.

Due to strong demand, QRIDA has now closed the scheme to new applicants. I am pleased to inform the House that as of yesterday QRIDA had approved 1,390 applications worth \$206.4 million, much of which is already deposited into the bank accounts of those Queensland businesses. That is \$206.4 million that is helping Queensland businesses to survive and improve and importantly supporting 18,785 Queensland jobs. These loans are interest-free for the first 12 months. The Palaszczuk government is supporting Queensland businesses and their workers during this trying time. We have Queenslanders' backs.

I have to take a moment to thank the incredible staff at QRIDA who have been moving mountains to put this scheme into action quickly, effectively and efficiently. There has never been a greater need for swift action to support Queensland businesses and jobs. QRIDA and its people have made it possible. There has been more than \$200 million in targeted business loans already approved, with the remaining funds up to \$500 million being processed as we speak.

I want to table some documents and reference some of the good stories before I proceed. In Charters Towers, a fourth-generation family that supports 32 local jobs has been successful through those loans to continue to support that amount of people locally. A Goondiwindi civil engineering company has been able to continue their support of 40 regional workers through the COVID-19 Jobs Support Loans. Some 30 people are supported through Red Rooster through Michael Taylor's success in getting that loan approved. Closer to home, Clear Mountain Lodge has been able to provide immediate cash flow relief, allowing the business to refund cancelled bookings, pay suppliers and pay employees' entitlements. I table those for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Bundle of Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority fact sheets relating to COVID-19 [\[634\]](#).

This is a direct injection that not only will support those businesses and those jobs but also will be a vital stimulus to the state's economy over the coming months.

QRIDA and staff have been unsung champions in the response and I thank them for all their hard work in this respect. Last year QRIDA marked 25 years of serving Queensland. Over that time more than \$3.6 billion has been invested in the future of rural and regional Queensland. The latest loan package will bring the total support it has delivered to Queensland to more than \$4 billion.

Supporting the jobs of Queensland is not a new thing for the Palaszczuk government. Creating jobs has been at the heart of what this government does and what this government stands for. We know that our agriculture and agribusiness sectors have been the backbone of Queensland's economy and represent an essential economic pillar both before and during this extraordinary pandemic.

Queensland farmers and agribusinesses are resilient and innovative. They have shown that year after year. They are showing it now through rough times, even as many continue to deal with drought and its effect. It is pleasing to see that even during the COVID-19 crisis the sector is finding new ways to meet the demand for quality food and fresh produce.


Many people are rediscovering the joys of baking while they are working and isolating at home. Who does not love the smell and the taste of homemade bread straight from the oven? That is where Kialla Pure Foods at Greenmount has stepped up to meet a growing demand. Digressing slightly, I inform members that they were successful through the RED grants. Their business has improved by 300 per cent, allowing them to employ six more staff. It is a great success story that we are hearing out of difficult times at present. Among the workers they have put on are a musician and also a former mine worker. If it were not for the Palaszczuk government's RED grants, home-grown companies like this would not have been able to secure that equipment needed to supply hungry Queenslanders with quality organic flours, pancake mixes and other baking ingredients.

Creating and protecting Queensland jobs is in the Palaszczuk government's DNA. We will continue to fight for every Queensland worker and for all Queenslanders' jobs. That is what we stand for. Queenslanders are doing what they need to do to help flatten the curve to save Queenslanders'

lives. We have their back when it comes to protecting Queensland jobs as well. We have been doing everything we can to protect Queenslanders' jobs and the economy to make sure that Queenslanders can bounce back quickly from this pandemic.

During the global financial crisis, I was proud to serve the federal parliament as a Labor senator for Queensland. We knew then that we needed to act fast. We needed to target assistance. We needed to make sure that we supported both businesses and employment. As a result, Australia was one of the few countries in the world that did not experience a recession and hundreds of thousands of Australian jobs were protected. Now, as proud members of the Palaszczuk Labor government in Queensland, we are once again doing what is necessary in unprecedented situations of global significance to support Queensland businesses and to protect Queensland jobs.

Along the path of engagement with stakeholders, I have had many unexpected complimentary comments from people such as Minister Littleproud, the federal agriculture minister, commending the Palaszczuk government for our actions during this difficult time. Just yesterday with me over the phone, an LNP senator from Tasmania, Senator Duniam, was commending the Palaszczuk government for what we have done during this COVID crisis. The Queensland Farmers' Federation, AgForce, Rachel Mackenzie from Berries Australia—these are all people recognising the good work that the Palaszczuk Labor government has done in these difficult times for not only Queensland jobs but also the Queensland economy. I commend this bill to the House and encourage people to support its passage.

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (5.36 pm): COVID-19 has touched everybody in this state. I have come all the way down from North Queensland to give an account of how it is affecting us in Hinchinbrook, North Queensland and the greater region of the Townsville footprint. COVID-19 has been mostly affecting a lot of the small businesses in our area. I would like to give an account of how it is affecting those small businesses.

So far we have seen the federal government stand there saying we have all got to hang out for JobKeeper, but we have a situation where that will not be enough to save a lot of these small businesses. Small businesses are calling out for more help—more help from the Palaszczuk Labor government, more help from the state. They are asking us, 'How are we supposed to pay the power bill? \$500 will not be enough off our next power bill to pay that.' People are asking us right now how they will keep the gas on. We have cafes opening and making \$90 a day in turnover. These little cafe operators are saying, 'It costs us \$45 a day in power just to keep the lights on and the cold rooms running.'

I turn to this appropriation bill. In the supplementary appropriation for 2019-20 there will be \$3.18 billion, then a further \$1.614 billion in the year 2020-21. On the crossbench, we do not have a lot of staff to find out exactly where this money is being spent. I am glad to hear from the opposition side of the House that they are kept in the dark just as much as we are. From reading this, no-one really knows what is going on. All we have been told from the government side of the House is that it has all been announced through media release. Throughout most of this pandemic, we have seen policy delivered by media release or by press conference. Half the time we are all running around catching up trying to find out what is happening next. It would be a little nicer if we had a little bit more cooperation from the government side of the House when it comes to announcing some of these funding packages, as well as directives which are coming through. It is confusing to a lot of people out there, not only in the Hinchinbrook electorate but also in North Queensland.

The government needs to look at other ways to stimulate the economy right now. That is why the KAP have led the charge. We have heard other people say that we should be backing what other states are doing, but it is inherently more expensive to do business in North Queensland. That is why we have asked for Queenslanders to be able to access \$20,000 grants if the Palaszczuk government was to make that available. That would not only significantly help those out there right now to try to keep the doors open to ensure that they are there when this is all over but also help those businesses that are trying to go through the process now of innovating.

I talked to a business owner this afternoon who said to me, 'Nick, we will not make it through this because we have actually innovated.' I asked him to explain that a little bit further. Given their turnover has not dropped by 30 per cent, they do not have access to the JobKeeper payment. Their profit margins are lower than ever. They are going backwards. They say that the Morrison government is letting them down. They are asking what the state is going to do to help them out. We will continue to push for a \$20,000 grant. We think it will help businesses and keep them on track so they are there when their doors can open again.

We have a fish and chip shop owner in Innisfail who is in a very similar situation. He said, 'Nick, when we light the gas burner to heat the oil for the day, whether we put four pieces of fish through it or 400 pieces of fish through it, it costs exactly the same amount in terms of gas.' It is the same situation in terms of running the coldroom. We are asking that some of the nearly \$4 billion go back to our small businesses that are crying out for help right now.

We have heard about the \$200 million that the Palaszczuk government has pledged to save Virgin airlines. The KAP has a slightly different stance on that. We say that we should not be bailing out an overseas airline; we should be buying into it. This is a great opportunity for us to have a controlling stake in a strategic asset in Australia. Over the last 10 years the price of regional flights has gone through the roof compared to flights in and out Brisbane to Sydney or Melbourne. Those routes have been looked after by a duopoly. Regional centres are suffering right now. The Mount Isa to Townsville route is nearly \$1,000 one way. That is absolutely disgusting.

This is a real opportunity for Queenslanders to buy into this strategic asset. People could ask: where is the money going to come from? We are discussing appropriating money right now. Some could go to that. Why do we not look at our super funds? QSuper could invest in this airline at a rock-bottom price. It would be an opportunity to capitalise on something that will bounce back. We need this airline to bounce back, not only for Queenslanders but also for our tourism industry.

There are 100 other things that I could go on about, but I would like to give other people the opportunity to speak to this bill. To conclude, if we are going to get ourselves out of this hole once this is over and work ourselves out of a depression we are going to have to spend some serious money on nation-building infrastructure. We will have to look at dams. There is a dam project out at Hughenden that is shovel ready now. We have the money from the federal government sitting there.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Sorry to interrupt, member for Hinchinbrook. Pursuant to the motion agreed to today and the time limit for this stage having expired, I will put the question.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Question put—That clauses 1 to 3, as read, stand part of the bill.

Motion agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title


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

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 5.43 pm to 6.43 pm.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (6.43 pm): I present a message from His Excellency the Governor.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): The message from His Excellency the Governor recommends the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE BILL 2020

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 protect the health, safety and welfare of persons affected by the COVID-19 emergency, to facilitate the continuance of public administration, judicial process, small business and other activities disrupted by the COVID-19 emergency, including by easing regulatory requirements and establishing an office of small business commissioner, to provide for matters related to residential, retail and prescribed leases affected by the COVID-19 emergency and to support the Queensland rental sector during the COVID-19 emergency period and to amend the Acts Interpretation Act 1954, the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 and the Statutory Instruments Act 1992 for particular purposes

GOVERNOR

Date: 22 April 2020

Tabled paper: Message, dated 22 April 2020, from His Excellency the Governor, recommending the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020 [\[635\]](#).

Introduction

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (6.44 pm): I present a bill for an act to protect the health, safety and welfare of persons affected by the COVID-19 emergency, to facilitate the continuance of public administration, judicial process, small business and other activities disrupted by the COVID-19 emergency, including by easing regulatory requirements and establishing an office of small business commissioner, to provide for matters related to residential, retail and prescribed leases affected by the COVID-19 emergency and to support the Queensland rental sector during the COVID-19 emergency period and to amend the Acts Interpretation Act 1954, the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 and the Statutory Instruments Act 1992 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020 [\[636\]](#).

Tabled paper: COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020, explanatory notes [\[637\]](#).

Tabled paper: COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights [\[638\]](#).

Today I introduce to the House the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020. We are here for Queenslanders, and today's bill provides some certainty about very important matters as well as a toolkit to modify particular arrangements across the statute book where necessary. After I outline the contents of the bill, I note that I will move that the bill be declared urgent.

These are unprecedented times. Queensland, the nation and indeed the rest of the world are experiencing a public health emergency of a kind that we have never seen before—the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to reassure Queenslanders that my government is taking decisive action. On 18 March 2020 the parliament urgently passed the Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Act 2020, which included providing enhanced powers to the Chief Health Officer. Today I present a package of further reforms to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 emergency.

This bill is the result of a collaborative effort across government and represents at its core amendments designed to help Queenslanders get through this crisis. In particular, the bill includes a legislative modification framework which has general application across the statute book; facilitates implementation of the national cabinet decision in relation to good faith leasing principles for relevant non-residential leases in Queensland consistent with the national code; provides for the establishment of a Queensland Small Business Commissioner to deliver expanded advocacy functions for Queensland small business and mediation services in relation to small business tenancy disputes; provides certainty for property owners and tenants and ensures that parties who are unable to fulfil their obligations under residential tenancy laws due to COVID-19 are protected; and makes specific discrete amendments to the Acts Interpretation Act, the Parliament of Queensland Act and the Statutory Instruments Act.

At the outset I want to acknowledge the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill, if enacted, and any regulations or instruments made under it will expire on 31 December 2020. Everything in this bill is time limited. These are extraordinary times, and the bill contains the tools to take extraordinary but necessary measures if required. We all as elected officials will be judged for what we do during this

emergency period. The COVID-19 emergency is evolving. There is nothing stopping us from coming back to parliament at some later date and changing the sunset requirements as the situation demands. Our government is taking necessary steps for Queensland and for our community.

First I will turn to the modification framework provided for under parts 2 to 5 of the bill. The modification framework proposed is not the panacea for everything. That is not its purpose, nor could it ever be. In the time permitted it simply would not have been possible to bring forward a bill which amended a multitude of acts across the statute book. Rather, the modification framework provides the toolkit to ensure there is clear legal authority to make certain particular interventions to facilitate our institutions continuing to function to the extent possible in the circumstances of the pandemic and to allow for timely and flexible responses in managing disruptions caused by social distancing measures. This modification framework toolkit was developed based on consistent themes and issues. Furthermore, the design of the framework has had regard to the experiences and approaches adopted in other jurisdictions in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

The modification framework in the bill provides for existing requirements to be altered by secondary instruments in the following areas if necessary: statutory time frames; attendance at places or meetings, making and associated use of documents and physical presence requirements; and, of course, proceedings of courts and tribunals. Predominantly the bill provides that the secondary instrument which must be used is an extraordinary regulation. An extraordinary regulation made under one of the modification provisions will need to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly within 14 days and is subject to disallowance processes. In addition, there is an ability for a statutory instrument to be made in accordance with clause 12 of the bill in relation to modifying statutory time frames. Statutory instruments must be tabled in the Legislative Assembly within 14 days of being published on a relevant website and are subject to disallowance processes.

A limited exception is also provided for under the bill where notices are issued providing exceptions to statutory time frames for modifications applying to particular persons. The bill requires that the responsible minister may only recommend the making of an extraordinary regulation to the Governor in Council if the minister is satisfied it is necessary for the purpose of the act as outlined in clause 2 of the bill. Equally, an entity may only make a statutory instrument if the entity is satisfied that the instrument is necessary for the purpose of the act as outlined in clause 2 of the bill. This means the power is only triggered, for example, if it is necessary to protect the health, safety and welfare of persons affected by the COVID-19 emergency or to facilitate the continuance of public administration, judicial process and other activities disrupted by the emergency.

Retrospective application is provided for within some of the modifications provisions to a day not earlier than 19 March 2020. This corresponds with the date that the first public health direction was made by the Chief Health Officer in relation to limiting mass gatherings. All other regulations and statutory instruments made under the COVID-19 act will expire on 31 December 2020. I will now briefly outline the specific categories of the modification framework that provide a head of power having regard to the safeguards I have just outlined to modify current requirements.

Part 3 of the bill enables regulations to be made to provide alternative arrangements for how documents are made and used in order to minimise the need for people to be near other people. Importantly, this will ensure that documents associated with end-of-life decision-making and estate planning such as wills, enduring powers of attorney and advance health directives can continue to be made even with the requirements for social distancing. It will also mean that other documents such as deeds and statutory declarations can continue to be made. This will allow a range of personal, business and government matters to continue during the crisis. Property can continue to be bought and sold, deeds can be made, and dealings with government can continue as much as possible within the confines of social distancing. These reforms have been requested by stakeholders, including the Queensland Law Society, and similar reforms are also being made in other states and territories.

Part 3 also enables regulations to be made in relation to private alternative arrangements for meetings and personal attendance requirements in order to minimise the need for people to be near other people. This will ensure that people are not put at risk and are not forced to breach social distancing requirements in order to comply with current laws. For example, if a person is summonsed to answer questions by an investigator, they could, if a regulation is made, be required to do that via audiovisual technology instead of attending in person or they could be required to provide an affidavit instead. Similarly, the inspection of premises, meetings, examinations and other matters could be permitted to be conducted using audiovisual technology and substituted with other viable alternatives in the circumstances.

Part 4 of the bill deals with statutory time frames. A range of acts across the statute books contain strict time periods. Those periods, how they operate and who and what they relate to are infinitely diverse and variable. Time frames may attach to things such as the delivery of reports, consideration of budgets, exercising of powers and functions, expiry of legislation and a range of different people and entities, including individuals, businesses, courts and other bodies as well as government. Social distancing requirements and other impacts of the COVID-19 emergency may mean that some strict time frames cannot be complied with. Given the uncertainties and unknowns inherent in this rapidly-evolving and ever-changing environment, the modification provisions in the bill provide a flexible enabling framework for time limits to be addressed effectively and efficiently if and when this becomes necessary.

Let me reiterate: this bill is not the answer to everything. It will not cover every single time frame. Just because these provisions exist does not mean they must be used. Part 4 includes two key mechanisms for modifying statutory time frames. Firstly, a provision is included where an entity already has power to modify a period. The provision will ensure that the existing power of the entity includes modification on grounds relating to COVID-19. In the circumstance where the modification applies to a particular person, it may be made by a notice issued to the person stating the modification and the reasons for it. If the modification applies generally or to a particular class of personal matters, modification may be made by a statutory instrument. Secondly, where no power to modify already exists, the period may be modified by a regulation.

Part 5 of this bill deals with proceedings. By their nature, proceedings before courts, tribunals or other quasi-judicial entities are generally not compatible with current health advice on social distancing. This is because they often involve personal contact, including personal appearance requirements or requirements for documents to be signed in the presence of another. The bill provides power to modify statutory time limits in relation to proceedings. Where the modification is to apply generally or to classes of persons or matters, the modification may be made by an extraordinary regulation. If a modification applies to a particular proceeding, a court—which is defined to include a tribunal and entity with a judicial or quasi-judicial function—has the discretion to modify the period providing this is exercised through the issuing of a notice to the parties involving stating the modification and reasons for the modification.

The bill allows regulations to be made providing for alternative arrangements in and related to these proceedings, including to allow things to be done by audio or audiovisual means. Should it be required, this will enable reduced personal contact in registries and courtrooms and other necessary procedural changes. The bill provides the minister responsible for the act with the ability to make regulations under the act once passed and, if necessary, provide for alternative methods of a limited range of things such as filing, signing, verifying or giving documents or using audiovisual links for appearances across the justice system. The bill allows for retrospective application for a limited range of procedural changes under a regulation to a date not earlier than 19 March 2020. This will provide scope, if required, to ensure that any changes to procedural practices that may have been put in place to deal with the various public health directions do not impinge on the legal validity of subsequent proceedings.

I will now briefly outline the purpose of parts 6 and 7 of the bill. As honourable members will be aware, the national cabinet has agreed to a national code, including a common set of fair leasing principles, to underpin and govern short-term intervention to aid non-residential tenancies under financial distress where who are unable to meet their lease commitment due to COVID-19 impacts. The bill provides the legislative framework for the implementation of that intervention in Queensland. It does so by providing for a regulation-making power for the purpose of: preventing landlords from evicting tenants in financial distress; increasing rent except where rent is linked to turnover; penalising tenants who stop trade or reduce opening hours; charging any interest on unpaid or deferred rent; and making a claim on a bank guarantee or security deposit for non-payment of rent. The regulation-making power is expressly to apply to retail shop leases under the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 and other leases that may be prescribed.

The power will allow regulations to be made that: prohibit the recovery or possession of premises under a relevant lease by a lessor; prohibit the termination of a relevant lease; regulate or prevent the exercise or enforcement of another right of a lessor of premises under a relevant lease; exempt a lessee or a class of lessees from the operation of a provision of an act or relevant lease or other agreements relating to the leasing of premises; require parties to a relevant lease to have regard to particular matters or principles or a prescribed standard code or other document in negotiating or disputing a matter under or in relation to a relevant lease; require a mediator, conciliator, arbitrator, tribunal, court or other

decision-maker to have regard to particular matters or principles or a prescribed standard or code or other document in mediating, conciliating, hearing or deciding a matter or proceedings relating to a relevant lease; provide for a dispute resolution process for disputes relating to relevant leases; and prescribe any other necessary or incidental matter. The regulation-making power is time limited to 31 December 2020.

As it is anticipated the legislative framework for the fair leasing principles will need to apply during the COVID-19 pandemic and potentially a subsequent reasonable business recovery period, the framework will continue to be monitored. Our government will consult with key stakeholders on the development and implementation of the fair leasing principles framework in Queensland.

The bill will also establish a Queensland Small Business Commissioner to deliver advocacy functions and dispute resolution support for small business, including mediation for retail leasing disputes under the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994. The bill establishes the commissioner's role with specific regulation-making powers that will enable the regulation to be used to prescribe the dispute resolution procedure for small business. This regulation will set out the specific details of the function, including the approach to mediation, appointment and jurisdiction of mediators and referring small business leasing disputes to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal or the courts.

Small businesses are critical to sustaining the Queensland economy and Queensland's capacity to respond to, and recover from, a significant period of impact from the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction of this bill will establish a dedicated support function that specifically meets the needs of small business and provides them with access to advice and assistance in relation to resolving disputes. Establishing the Queensland Small Business Commissioner will give small businesses a single point of contact for leasing disputes resulting in time, money and resource savings for small business and government.

Let me now turn to the amendments which deal with residential tenancies. This is part 8 of the bill. The COVID-19 emergency is having unprecedented impacts on our residential rental sector. More households are in or at risk of rental distress due to the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. To address these issues, national cabinet has agreed that the states and territories will implement a moratorium on evictions over the next six months for residential tenants who are unable to meet their commitments due to financial hardship caused by the impact of COVID-19. An immediate legislative response was required to implement the moratorium and support and provide certainty to the residential rental sector to manage these impacts. This also extends to people in rooming accommodation, such as boarding houses.

This bill establishes a temporary emergency regulation-making power to address issues arising from COVID-19. The emergency regulation will deliver the following protections. The moratorium on evictions for rent arrears is implemented for six months from 29 March 2020 for tenants experiencing financial distress due to the impacts of COVID-19. The moratorium on evictions applies to tenancies where household income, including any government assistance, has reduced by 25 per cent or more as a direct result of COVID-19 or the rent payment comprises 30 per cent or more of the reduced household income and the tenant cannot afford to pay the rent.

Fixed term tenancy agreements where the tenant is impacted by COVID-19 that are due to expire before 29 September 2020 must be extended to at least 30 September 2020 unless the tenant requests a shorter term or wants to leave. Normal processes apply to ending tenancies for reasons not related to COVID-19. The bill also extends notice periods or time frames within which an action can or must be taken by the other party to enforce their rights. Database listings will be restricted to prevent the listing of tenants in COVID-19 rent arrears.

Requirements for property owners to undertake routine repairs and inspections will be relaxed to protect the health and safety of all parties. Vulnerable tenants will have the right to refuse physical entry for non-essential reasons if there are COVID-19 concerns, such as a member of the household has a higher health risk profile. If they do, they will be required to facilitate an alternative inspection method for sale or reletting, such as by videoconference or photographs. Essential activities, such as urgent repairs and checking smoke alarms, will continue subject to public health directions. Tenants who meet eligibility criteria and need to end their tenancy early will have their break lease fees capped at the equivalent of one week's rent if their total household income has reduced by 75 per cent or more and they have less than \$5,000 in savings.

In the first instance, tenants and property owners should try to agree ways to manage COVID-19 impacts that help sustain the tenancy. In some cases, this may include negotiating a temporary variation in rent. A tenant's capacity to repay rent arrears as well as any subsequent impacts to the property

owner's finances need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Property owners and tenants should try to agree on the term of the reduced rent as well as any repayment arrangements. If agreement cannot be reached, conciliation facilitated by the Residential Tenancies Authority will be mandatory.

Provision will also be in place to allow people to end their tenancy if they need to during the COVID-19 pandemic, including if they are experiencing domestic and family violence, with protections in place to limit their liability for the end-of-lease cost. The introduction of additional grounds for ending a tenancy ensures property owners and tenants can end a tenancy if their circumstances change as a result of COVID-19 and they have a genuine need to—for example, if the property owner is in significant financial distress due to the impacts of COVID-19 and needs to sell the rental property.

Special considerations for vulnerable tenants will ensure that people experiencing domestic and family violence will be better supported to leave their home quickly and safely during the public health emergency and the tenant can request their rental bond contribution to be refunded. A tenant experiencing domestic and family violence who wants to remain in the rental property can also change the locks without consent, although they must provide copies of the keys or access codes to the property manager or owner as soon as practicable. Minister de Brenni has consulted extensively with the residential rental sector to ensure these measures deliver a fair and balanced deal for property owners and tenants.

I now turn to part 10 of the bill which includes discrete amendments to the Statutory Instruments Act 1992 and the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 allowing regulations to be made to deal with expiring subordinate legislation and commencement of laws. These amendments allow for an extension or postponement for a stated period of up to 31 December 2020 in line with the expiry of the general modification provisions. Importantly, as with limitations imposed on the exercise of the modification framework provisions, a regulation for extension or postponement may only be made if it is necessary for COVID-19 related purposes. Let me be clear: these provisions do not provide for automatic extension or postponement. Rather, they are sensible safeguards to call upon if needed during the COVID-19 emergency. These provisions will also expire on 31 December 2020.

Finally, I move to a matter dear to all of us, the institution of parliament. The COVID-19 emergency and its associated social distancing and travel constraints have necessitated considerations about how the House sits, meets and makes decisions. As members will appreciate, the current laws, practices and procedures governing our sittings assume that we will be physically present in the chamber. While our parliamentary committees have been permitted to meet by electronic means for some time, the government believes that the current health emergency requires the Assembly itself to have this option.

While we as a House have the power to adopt standing and sessional orders for the conduct of our proceedings, amendments to the Parliament of Queensland Act are required before the House could meet by electronic means. I stress that the options to have electronic sittings of the House will only remain in for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency in Queensland. We are not ruling out regional members travelling to Parliament House in May. I will also take the advice of the Chief Health Officer in this regard. Once it is over, the provisions will cease to have effect.

To this end, the bill amends the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to set out that the Legislative Assembly may: sit and transact business via electronic means during the COVID-19 emergency; allow members to attend, form a quorum and vote by electronic meetings or by proxy at a sitting held during COVID-19; and give the Assembly the authority to make standing rules and orders to set out in detail how it will meet and conduct business via electronic means during COVID-19.

In relation to the forming of a quorum, at a meeting of the Assembly the number required will remain at 16 exclusive of the Speaker or Deputy Speaker. However, the act is being amended to provide that, at the sitting by electronic means during the COVID-19 emergency, members will be considered present either in person or by telephone, video or other electronic means or by proxy. With voting on questions, the act is also being amended to provide that, when the Assembly meets by electronic means during the COVID-19 emergency, voting includes a member voting by telephone, video or other electronic means or by proxy.

The amendments to the act do not go into the specific processes that could be engaged to use electronic means to conduct business in the Assembly. It will be the standing and sessional orders to be adopted by the House that will provide the detail of the procedures to be followed at a sitting by electronic means. Adopting these measures by standing and sessional orders will give the House the flexibility to more readily refine them if needed without having to amend the act.

As members will know, the Parliament of Queensland Act currently provides a system for members of the Legislative Assembly to vote by proxy, although historically it has been seldom used. The current provisions provide for a member to be able to vote by proxy when the member is in a state of ill health as certified by at least two doctors and is unable to attend upon the Assembly chamber in person. These provisions are considered inadequate for the purpose of the COVID-19 emergency as members may be in a state of good health but the need for social distancing and other community measures make it impracticable for them to attend Parliament House. The amendments will provide for a separate but complementary system for attendance and voting by proxy for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency to be implemented by standing orders if required by the Assembly. Again, this will give the House the flexibility to develop and refine such a proxy system without the need to amend the act.

Since the late 1990s, the Assembly's standing orders have provided for parliamentary committee members to participate in committee meetings by remote means. To ensure this practice is consistent with the Parliament of Queensland Act, the bill makes it clear that members may be present and vote at committee meetings either in person or by telephone, video or other electronic means. These committee provisions will be a permanent measure lasting beyond the COVID-19 emergency. The bill upholds the fundamental institution of parliamentary democracy by ensuring this House can continue to meet and conduct its business successfully by electronic means during the social distancing and travel constraints of the COVID-19 emergency.

In conclusion, we can all acknowledge the significance of the challenge presented by COVID-19 and the scale of response required. This bill demonstrates the commitment and drive of the government to support Queenslanders. We are here and we are listening. For complete transparency, because we are dealing with rental properties I want to declare that I have two rental properties and they are declared on my pecuniary interests register. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (7.09 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 Whiting): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

Declared Urgent; Allocation of Time Limit Order; Suspension of Sessional Orders



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (7.10 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That under the provisions of standing order 137, the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill be declared an urgent bill and not stand referred to a committee and be considered immediately;
2. That a maximum of three hours apply to enable all stages of the bill to be completed at this day's sitting;
3. That for consideration in detail of this bill sessional order 8 be suspended to allow the Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport and the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development to be able to speak in relation to clauses which amend legislation that they are responsible for without time limits; and
4. If all stages have not been completed by the time specified, Mr Acting Speaker shall put all remaining questions necessary to pass the bill, including clauses and schedules en bloc and any amendments to be moved by the minister in charge of the bill, without further amendment or debate.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Second Reading



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (7.11 pm): I move—

That the bill now be read a second time.

This bill builds on Queensland's significant achievements to date in containing the spread of COVID-19. As we continue this fight, we must ensure that we are as prepared as we can be to respond to the COVID-19 emergency. Prepare for the worst and hope for the best, so to speak. This bill enables us to do just that: it equips government with a flexible toolkit, one which is also appropriately targeted, is proportionate and enables the government to maintain continuity of essential services to Queenslanders. The bill creates a set of temporary powers of general application which is designed to temporarily modify the operation of a range of requirements, if needed, in the following areas: statutory time limits; proceedings of courts and tribunals; and attendance at places or meetings, making and associated use of documents and physical presence requirements.

Further safeguards and scrutiny processes are also built into the operation of these provisions. These include requiring that, other than in limited circumstances, the powers are to be exercised by way of extraordinary regulation or statutory instrument, which must be tabled in this House and are subject to the disallowance process of this House. The Human Rights Act will also continue to apply to any measures implemented under the temporary powers, providing another important layer of scrutiny and protection. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, these powers are time limited and therefore temporary. Any regulations or instruments made, as well as the COVID-19 emergency response act itself, will expire on 31 December 2020.

I just want to take a minute to illustrate the important way the modification powers in the bill may be used. There is a number of requirements across the statute book as well as the common law which requires a thing to be done in person, such as the witnessing of documents, attendance at meetings or a visit or inspection by an authorised person of a particular site. As a result, the bill provides the ability for a regulation to be made under any affected act which puts in place alternative arrangements for how documents are made, meetings are held and attendances are conducted. Modified arrangements could include allowing meetings to be held or inspections carried out using audiovisual technology, for example.

Importantly, modified arrangements can also be put into place for making documents such as wills, general powers of attorney, enduring powers of attorney, advance health directives, statutory declarations, deeds and many other types of documents. I can advise the House that consultation is well advanced on this issue and I wish to thank the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland for their proactive and cooperative assistance on these issues to reach workable solutions.

The bill also outlines a set of principles in relation to non-residential tenancies and a regulation-making power to address issues arising from COVID-19. As we know, small businesses are a major employer across all of our regions of Queensland, and they are clearly being hit hard under COVID-19. The Palaszczuk government understands this. That is why today we are also progressing legislative amendments that will move us towards implementation of measures to support non-residential tenants.

Part 7 of the bill includes a regulation-making power for a temporary moratorium on evictions on the grounds of financial distress, prevent rent increases except in cases where business turnover has increased, allow leases to be extended for the term of a rent waiver that has been agreed to by a property owner and tenant, and provide for mediation and dispute resolution processes. The regulation-making power will apply to retail shop leases under the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 and other categories of lease prescribed. The regulation-making power also allows for the regulation to be made retrospectively.

This bill also provides for the establishment of the Small Business Commissioner and a regulation-making power for residential tenancies and rooming accommodation. Minister de Brenni and Minister Fentiman will speak to these particular and important amendments in the bill.


The bill also provides for amendments to the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. As Leader of the House, I am proud to see the Queensland parliament take an important step in ensuring it can continue to sit during the COVID-19 emergency, as required. These amendments are indeed historic and will give this House the option of being able to meet by electronic means during the COVID-19 emergency, if necessary.

Part 10 of the bill also amends the Statutory Instruments Act to create a power to delay the automatic expiry of subordinate legislation, and the Acts Interpretation Act to create a similar power to temporarily delay the automatic commencement of principal legislation where there is a genuine need, resulting from COVID-19 impacts.

I would like to record my sincere thanks to all staff in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, in particular, staff within the Strategic Policy and Legal Services Unit, my director-general and also the Office of Queensland Parliamentary Counsel for their unwavering dedication and hard work.

The bill presented to the House today cuts across a number of different ministerial portfolios. On that note, I thank my ministerial colleagues for their strong engagement and deep commitment to ensuring our public institutions continue to properly operate to serve the people of Queensland.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge and thank the Premier for her steady hand, for her strong leadership and for guiding us through these very difficult times for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (7.17 pm): I rise to speak to the government's emergency response bill, which was introduced just this morning and is to be debated during today's sitting. The bill and the draft regulation that underpin the implementation of the residential tenancy reforms deal with some of the key challenges our communities have faced in responding to the coronavirus global pandemic, particularly in relation to financial transactions, commercial and residential leasing protections and the operation of both our criminal and civil justice systems.

I want to start by thanking all Queenslanders for what they have done and the sacrifices they have made to suppress the coronavirus spread. Make no mistake, the actions of all Queenslanders have saved lives. Today's news of no new cases overnight is certainly good news and more proof that the suppression is working.

Mr Minnikin: Well done, ScoMo.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take that interjection because it has been the Morrison government that has led Queenslanders through this global pandemic. I would like to put on record the state opposition's thanks for the federal government's contribution to Queensland.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting) Members, I point out that at the moment all conversations and comments in this chamber are quite audible and can be quite distracting. Just bear that in mind.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Today's news about no new cases overnight is good news and more proof that the suppression is working. Queenslanders desperately hope for a road to recovery from this global pandemic. Any new laws must reflect Queenslanders' ambition and hope that this crisis will pass and that we will not be defeated. The bill contains powers to make extraordinary regulations and statutory instruments. These are unprecedented powers, but they have been used before and we recognise that these are unprecedented times. As the long title says, the bill aims to protect the health, safety and welfare of people affected through the coronavirus pandemic.

The LNP opposition will not oppose the bill and appreciates that many of the provisions contained in this bill have a limited life to the extent that they will expire on 31 December 2020. The use of Henry VIII clauses are not ideal but certainly not unprecedented. The Queensland Law Reform Commission considered Henry VIII clauses in a 1990 report and considered them warranted in emergency, unforeseen or extraordinary circumstances. I believe that we are living through such extraordinary circumstances.

The bill implements changes which ensure social distancing requirements can be maintained but that legislation that covers attendances at places or meetings can continue to operate under those changed circumstances. These include matters relating to the functioning of our justice system which is vitally important to maintaining the laws of our state and to protecting the safety of all Queenslanders. These matters are also referred to in part 5 of the bill which deals with the proceedings of our courts and our tribunals.

Coronavirus should not be an excuse for our justice system not to function. There are also changes that facilitate the signing and witnessing of documents and the certification of signatories vitally important for so many transactions and other business in our society. Part 4 of the bill modifies statutory time limits, which gives important flexibility to financial transactions and other matters. The bill also appoints a Small Business Commissioner on the recommendation of the minister until 31 December 2020. The functions of that Small Business Commissioner are to (a) provide information and advisory services to the public about matters relevant to small businesses, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 response measures. Given the lack of response from the Palaszczuk government to small businesses, as I referred to during the debate on the appropriation bill, I know that this will be a very

hectic task. Further, (b) assist small businesses in reaching an informal resolution for disputes relating to small business leases; and (c) administer a mediation process prescribed by regulation in relation to small business tenancy disputes.

Again, I reiterate that this commissioner's recommendation is until 31 December 2020. There are also accountability mechanisms so that the commissioner is accountable to the minister. We ask the minister, where it is appropriate, that those reports be made public so that issues that are raised via the Small Business Commissioner to the minister are transparent, open and accountable. That is what we would like to see. We know that our small businesses are hurting and that they just do not have the faith in the minister who has carriage of this department. It is important that these reports are made public so our small businesses can keep this Palaszczuk government accountable and so those issues are transparent.

Part 8 of the bill deals with residential tenancies and rooming accommodation, certainly one of the most contentious issues in Queensland over the past little while. The bill provides for a regulation-making power under the act to protect the rights and responsibilities of all parties in a tenancy agreement. I put on record that my husband, Jason, and I do own a rental property, which is properly declared.

A crisis always tells us a lot about a government's priorities. When the public first heard about the Palaszczuk Labor government's proposed rental package, it is an understatement to say that it sent shockwaves through the property industry. Make no mistake, everyone agrees that tenants impacted by COVID-19 need to be supported throughout this crisis, but property owners also need support and protection as well. We are talking about mum-and-dad investors, self-funded retirees, people like the Premier—who has two properties—and me—I have just declared—and about those property owners who need support and protection from their governments as well. Without investors, we simply do not have a rental market. It is quite simple and a fact that this Palaszczuk Labor government fails to understand. When those opposite first put forward their rental laws, they were the most draconian and unfair laws across the nation. Both mum-and-dad property owners and self-funded retirees faced coping the brunt of the financial fallout. Asking one group of Queenslanders to shoulder the heavy lifting—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Order!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I so want to take that interjection, thank you very much to the member opposite. This is exactly why—

Government members interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Linus Power, the member for Logan.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order members!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is so obvious. Like I said, the Palaszczuk Labor government is so out of touch that the member for Logan does not understand that their most draconian and unfair laws initiated an unprecedented campaign against the state Palaszczuk government and the Premier of this state in the middle of a crisis. It shows how out of touch the current government is. Asking one group of Queenslanders to do all the heavy lifting is unfair, unbalanced and unacceptable. That is why tens of thousands of letters ended up in the Premier's inbox and why the opposition stood with property owner investors and with tenants who also are property owners. That is why we stood with the REIQ and ensured—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, I will not pull up those interjections at the moment; they are coming from all sides. Once again I remind you—thank you member for Toowoomba South—that all conversation is audible at the moment and is quite distracting to everyone.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I do wish to take the shadow Attorney-General's interjection as he just pointed out that a lot of those landlords, the property owners who had been working so hard to save people's lives during this coronavirus, are the affected people. I refer to the nurses, doctors, paramedics and those people who have worked so hard for their entire working life and invested their money into a second property so that they can become self-funded retirees who do not need to live off the welfare system in retirement. They are the people we are trying to help. I take the interjections of Labor members who so clearly are out of touch when it comes to these changes that both the Premier and

ministers of the Palaszczuk government had to do a flip-flop, backflip or whatever we want to call it. Thank goodness the LNP opposition's push for that change came through and that we stood with the REIQ in those terms.

These laws were reminiscent of the politics of envy that Queenslanders overwhelmingly rejected from Bill Shorten at the last federal election. Those laws were met with a tidal wave of negative feedback from the property industry and those opposite in the Palaszczuk Labor government were forced into doing the embarrassing political backflip that they have done. They were no doubt the mastermind of the Deputy Premier, assisted by one of her left-wing deputies, trying to implement some kind of wicked wealth redistribution. Property investors and inspiring property investors are now in no doubt that the Palaszczuk Labor government does not understand property rights. Labor does not value the investment these people have made and, more importantly, the Palaszczuk Labor government simply cannot be trusted.

Which leaves us with the bill before us today. Earlier this week I received an email from Ron and Marie Cavanough. They had saved hard to build an investment home in the Lockyer Valley, but earlier this year everything changed when Ron was diagnosed with a heart condition. Ron could no longer work and they were forced to sell their property to survive. As the weeks went by it became clear that their tenant was using the language that had been used by the Premier of Queensland and the new rights granted to them by the Palaszczuk Labor government to not vacate their property. The tenant was 50 days in rent arrears and Ron and Marie were simply unable to sell their home. Marie wrote to me saying—

As a landlord I have no rights, while someone effectively squatting in my house has all the rights. Please explain to me why this is fair.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Members, direct your comments through the chair.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am more than happy to table the email for the Minister for Small Business who so rudely giggled at Ron and Marie's problems. It seriously shows—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Unfortunately Ron and Marie are not alone. Labor's laws will impact mum-and-dad property owners and self-funded retirees across the state.

Government members interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I take that interjection. I am pretty sure it was that the Palaszczuk government should be ashamed of what they have done to Ron and Marie; was that what you just said?

Ms Pease interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the chair!

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I think the Labor government should be ashamed.

Ms PEASE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence at the Leader of the Opposition's allegations against me. They are completely untrue and unfounded and I ask her to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, will you withdraw?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I withdraw. But when it comes to the people—

Ms PEASE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. There is no 'but' associated with a withdrawal.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand, thank you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Is that a reflection on the chair?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me! The way that I took it is that the Leader of the Opposition had withdrawn and continued on with her speech. Have I got that right, Leader of the Opposition?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, you have.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may recommence.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. The LNP has been very clear about how we would achieve a balanced plan that protects the rights of property owners and supports tenants through this global health pandemic. Those on this side of the House have been fighting for rent deferrals rather than rent waivers, with no interest accrued; the establishment of a minimum income reduction threshold of 25 per cent before a tenant can qualify for protection measures; any rent request be substantiated with evidence—very simple; removal of the one week's notice to break lease rights for tenants; and removal of the proposed automatic right to a six-month tenancy extension with the reduced rent. It is clear that it is only the LNP that will stand up for the property rights of mum-and-dad investors and self-funded retirees and it is only the LNP that can be trusted. It is clear that now more than ever Queensland needs an LNP government to build a stronger economy.

The bill also amends the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to allow for the use of technology that enables reasonably continuous and contemporaneous communication to meet standing rules and orders of the Assembly, including voting in exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that these measures are only for exceptional circumstances relating to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The opposition has always maintained that following the health advice is critically important. There is and has never been any advice that parliament should not sit. The LNP has continued to offer its support, to work with the government and to deal with issues in front of us and in front of Queenslanders. That includes ensuring that this parliament can continue to sit under different arrangements and maintaining social distancing.

I also foreshadow a number of amendments that I will seek the leave of the House to introduce. They are urgent and important issues and are outside the long title of the bill. For the benefit of all members, I will now table them and speak to them briefly before seeking leave at the appropriate time during consideration in detail of the bill to move them.

Tabled paper: COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020, amendments to be moved by Mrs Deb Frecklington MP [\[639\]](#).

Queenslanders need jobs and better job security. Our unemployment rate was consistently the worst in Australia before the coronavirus outbreak began. Tens of thousands of Queensland jobs were put in jeopardy because of this coronavirus. Tearing down Paradise Dam is a jobs crisis of Labor's own making. It defies belief that the Palaszczuk Labor government is pushing ahead with its devastating decision to lower Paradise Dam. It defies international expert advice.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I fail to see how the Leader of the Opposition's remarks pertain to any matters in the bill that is before the House and I ask you to rule on the matter of relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand what the minister is saying. It is outside the long title of the bill. I understand it refers to some amendments that you wish to move in the future.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That is correct. I have foreshadowed the amendments that I have tabled.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you have foreshadowed those amendments and you can speak to them at that time. In the meantime, please stick to the long title of the bill.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you. I will talk to the long title of the bill which goes to the safety and welfare of all Queenslanders. The safety and welfare of all Queenslanders certainly includes the need to protect people's income, their livelihood, their health, their wellbeing and their safety. The LNP will move the amendments that I have foreshadowed to ensure that the tearing down of Paradise Dam does not happen because we need to do everything we can to protect the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders right at this time.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. A moment ago you ruled on the opposition leader's attempt to raise matters outside of the long title of the bill and then the Leader of the Opposition went on to take the opportunity, despite your ruling, to continue to refer to those matters outside the long title of the bill even when it was expressed to her clearly when those matters could be discussed. I ask you to bring her back to the bill before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Certainly you have a point of order. Leader of the Opposition, you were doing well until you mentioned Paradise Dam which is outside the long title of the bill. I remind you to stick to the long title of the bill and speak on those particular amendments at the appropriate time.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Those opposite who were just trying to interject might like to pick up a copy of the bill, which states that this is 'An Act to protect the health, safety and welfare of persons affected by the COVID-19 emergency', which is exactly what the LNP opposition is doing in relation to support for this bill. We are also showing our support for all Queenslanders and their safety, their wellbeing and their livelihoods, whether it is utilising the residential tenancy changes or making sure

that their businesses that rely upon agriculture and water can continue. That is their safety. That is their wellbeing. That is their welfare. That is their mental health. That is exactly what we are trying to protect. Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your leniency in allowing me to get that out.

I note that one of the most concerning issues that people are grappling with at this time—one of the most concerning issues that goes to the health, safety and welfare of people—is skyrocketing crime under the Palaszczuk Labor government. We know that crime does not stop because of the coronavirus.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I think on two occasions now, or perhaps three, you have ruled on relevance in relation to this bill and the attempts by the opposition leader to waste the parliament's time. We have heard a lot from the Manager of Opposition Business about how important it is for members to make their contributions, yet the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Thank you, Minister. I have your point of order.

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

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will call you in a moment, member for Toowoomba South. I remind those who are presenting points of order that it is not a chance to debate. Yes, member for Toowoomba South?

Mr JANETZKI: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am looking for your clarification. Clearly the comments are relevant to the long title of the bill, being about health, safety and welfare. In addition, the long title talks about judicial process. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek your clarification on relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I point out that issues raised, whether it be a dam or issues regarding crime, have been debated long before this bill was introduced. This is the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill. Please keep that in mind. Leader of the Opposition, you were talking about health and wellbeing, which is fine. However, please do not try to tie in issues that clearly have arisen before the emergency.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I would point out to the House that these issues have not gone away because of the coronavirus. They have escalated. They have got worse. It goes to the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders and to keeping them safe in their homes. That is why we are foreshadowing the amendments to the Youth Justice Act, for example. There is a reason parliament needs to sit and this bill certainly covers that. It is so that we can address the issues that are facing Queenslanders right now.

The minister opposite may like to think that he is running a dictatorship, but it ain't the case. That is not the case. Ours is the Westminster system of government. Oft times it is during a crisis that you see how well a government is going. It is a terrible government that introduces the most draconian, unfair residential tenancy laws in the nation. It is up to the opposition to haul in the government and make sure that it does not run roughshod over mum-and-dad investors. The minister knows that if the REIQ and the state opposition had not stood up to the Palaszczuk Labor government this state would have had the most draconian and unfair laws in the nation.

It is the same for mums and dads who, right now, are sitting in their properties and feeling unsafe because the crime rates are still going up under the Palaszczuk government, yet the Palaszczuk government refuses to do anything about it. This is an emergency. This is a crisis of the Palaszczuk government's own making. Crime does not stop because of the coronavirus. By sitting today the parliament has an opportunity to fix the soft laws that Labor has introduced. It is time that the Labor government starts listening.


Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The matters that the opposition leader is going to clearly are outside the long title of the bill. You have given a very clear direction about when those matters should be debated. I do not know how many times your patience should be tested.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will consult with the Clerk. On this point of order, there have been rulings in the past where people can speak to amendments that have been circulated by the government. In this case, the amendments have been made by the opposition and I believe they have not been authorised to be circulated as yet. Once again, I ask the Leader of the Opposition to speak to the long title of the bill. I understand where you are going, but certainly if you are specific about where you are going with these amendments I would warn you against that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: We certainly know that community safety has to be a No. 1 priority for any government, particularly during this time of great uncertainty. If the Palaszczuk government fails to support the opposition's sensible amendments that we have tabled tonight we will take them to the election in October. It is clear that the only way to save Paradise Dam and to do something about juvenile crime is to get rid of the Palaszczuk Labor government. I will move on.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I was about to caution you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I would like to talk about land valuations as well, but I will move on. At this time Queenslanders need strong, effective and principled leadership, but all Queenslanders can see is a government that puts itself first time and time again. We have seen that with the government shutting down debate tonight. When the worst of this crisis is over, Queenslanders must ask themselves some hard questions. The most important question will be: how long can Queensland afford to carry the Palaszczuk Labor government? Labor has already cost us too much. The people of Queensland certainly deserve a new government. The LNP will be the government to get Queensland working again.

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport) (7.48 pm): Of course I rise to speak in support of the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020. In particular, I would like to address matters that relate to the portfolio of housing and homelessness, for which I am responsible. Additionally, I will speak about the establishment of the Small Business Commissioner. The Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job of protecting Queenslanders. We are getting on with the job of delivering the essential services that all Queenslanders need to get through this pandemic. We are getting on with the job of leading Queenslanders through this with a fair and steady hand; ensuring that they are kept safe, especially and importantly the vulnerable, whether they are a vulnerable individual, a household or a business; and making sure that we do what we have always done, which is to listen to the experts to guide our decision-making.

Queenslanders are no strangers to working together when times get tough, whether it's joining the Palaszczuk government's Care Army or the thousands of people who have given blood over the last couple of weeks or working out a fair rental agreement until income support comes through.

As members would be aware, it was the Prime Minister on 29 March who announced the national cabinet's decision to implement a six-month moratorium on evictions. This was for tenants who are unable to pay their rent due to the impacts of coronavirus. Since this announcement, we have worked hard through all the issues. We have listened, we have unpacked concerns, we have clarified what will work and we have refined our approach, working through from an announcement of a framework to a policy, and tonight to an amendment to an act to enable a regulatory framework and finally a guide for managing the sometimes difficult and complex path. It is a guide to support Queenslanders to understand their rights; to assist in discussions about their individual circumstances, be they lessor or lessee; to assist in coming together in collaboration to new agreements where because of COVID-19 that is necessary. We have launched a brand-new residential rental hub. It is responsive to the needs of tenants and property owners. It will continue to develop as the circumstances facing our state and its citizens develop. The hub forms part of the new COVID-19 website and can be accessed by visiting www.covid19.qld.gov.au/the-hub or by simply texting the word 'hi' to 0480000782.

The amendment bill is quite a straightforward one. It will create a head of power which will allow the government to create an emergency regulation to implement the national cabinet decision to support Queensland property owners and tenants during the period of the pandemic. As part of this support, we are publishing a practice guide to guide property owners and their tenants in their discussions to negotiate a way through the next six months.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement and the release of the framework, the Palaszczuk government consulted with tenants and real estate peak bodies to flesh out the contents of a policy for adoption through a regulation. Together with industry, we have finalised the Residential Tenancies Practice Guide COVID-19. It will, subject to the decision of this parliament, reflect the regulatory approach whilst providing some easier-to-understand case study scenarios.

It remains that this government will not let Queensland tenants affected by COVID-19 be evicted where they have been impacted by the virus. It also remains that we will not let anyone who has not been affected by COVID-19 run roughshod and take advantage of this very serious situation. We said since day one that these circumstances are not the landlords' fault and are not the tenants' fault. Nothing in what is contained in the amendments of the draft regulation impacts anyone in the way that the member for Nanango has suggested this evening.

I want to thank all the property owners and tenants who have already worked together to make arrangements where families have been severely financially impacted by COVID-19. This practice guide will assist mainly those Queenslanders who cannot reach agreement on this issue—a very small percentage.

The draft regulation which I will table tonight strikes a fair balance for tenants, owners and property managers. It will be a temporary set of measures to ensure tenants and owners are protected during this pandemic. Tenants who are suffering or who have suffered excessive hardship because of

COVID-19 who cannot meet their rent commitments cannot be evicted or listed in a tenancy database because of that suffering. All other rules and obligations, as we have said from day one, that are compatible with social distancing and quarantining rules will be required to be met or are adjusted by the regulation in a responsible and practical fashion.

Upon passage of the bill, I will be seeking to make the regulation to give retrospective effect to the moratorium on evictions announced by the Prime Minister on 29 March 2020. These amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act allowing us to make the emergency regulation will cover landlords and tenants up until the end of the six-month moratorium on evictions as announced by the Prime Minister.

I advise the House that this morning I spoke with His Excellency the Governor about the regulation and sought his permission to table a draft copy in this parliament for the benefit of members. Since Australia's economy has started to go into hibernation, millions of Australians have lost their jobs or significant amounts of income. The regulation will have a retrospective effect. His Excellency agreed there was a need to provide clarity to members and to Queenslanders by enabling the draft regulation to be visible sooner rather than later. I table, as I speak, via electronic means, for the benefit of the House, the draft regulation.

Tabled paper: Draft Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020, subordinate legislation 2020 No. [\[640\]](#).

Nobody could have expected the situation that landlords and renters find themselves in today. These regulations provide protection to all parties who are subject to those leasing arrangements. We all know that it does not benefit either a tenant or their landlord or the property manager if a tenancy collapses. Nobody should be without a place to call home, especially when we are all being asked to stay at home. In addition, the regulation will give the minister the power to publish a practice guide to govern the conciliation process and provide clear guidance to tenants and owners during negotiation.

To ensure appropriate supervision of the temporary measures I can inform the parliament that I have established a special COVID-19 housing security subcommittee. Independent parties, including Tenants Queensland, the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, the Queensland Council of Social Service, Q Shelter, along with the Residential Tenancies Authority, will supervise, observe and report to me regularly on the implementation and impacts of the measures.

During the public health crisis, we are giving victims of domestic and family violence the means to escape a dangerous tenancy and to be able to do that quickly. I want to especially thank the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence for her support in making sure we support the needs of Queenslanders in crisis. If a person needs to escape a violent relationship and leave their rental property that they call home, the Palaszczuk government will not allow barriers to stand in their way. These reforms mean that right now, as more and more victims feel less able to move about freely in the community, we intend to give victims the support to and, as the Premier outlined earlier, the ability to end tenancies quickly, to change locks, to access their bond and to separate from co-tenancies. I want to especially acknowledge as well Tenants Queensland and the REIQ for their collaboration around these critically important measures. They and advocates in the domestic and family violence space advise me that these provisions will indeed save lives.


I now turn to the aspect of the bill that relates to the Small Business Commissioner. The electorate that I am honoured to represent, the electorate of Springwood, is home to hundreds of businesses that help drive the local and Queensland economy, businesses like Fresh on Allamanda, Merino Country, Enamel Dental Studio, Cycle in Surgery, Big Mountain cycle shop, gyms like Lifestyle Springwood and World Gym, and iconic food outlets like Billy's Backyard BBQ, The Grove, Christopher's and dozens and dozens more. These small businesses support thousands of jobs in our community and we all know that they are doing it tough. During this pandemic period, it is right that we do everything that we can to help them, help them so that they can keep their staff in a job. The establishment of the Small Business Commission is an incredibly positive step for every one of them. Local small businesses from Mount Cotton to Rochedale South need that vital support right now more than ever to manage disputes with their commercial landlords where they have been forced to close their doors temporarily. The Palaszczuk government will deliver them expanded advocacy services and a dispute resolution service. The Small Business Commissioner will go a long way to supporting businesses in our community.

I want to congratulate the Premier, the Deputy Premier and especially the Minister for Employment and Small Business for their work in supporting those family and small businesses, and importantly their workforce, during this pandemic.

Times are tough, but we all know that Queenslanders are tougher. These new laws and their subsequent regulations were drafted with the assistance of stakeholders to make sure that we could protect Queenslanders who are experiencing hardship as we speak. I want to thank the REIQ and Tenants Queensland that have provided advice and feedback to the government during this process.

I would also like to thank all of the staff of the Department of Housing and Public Works and those at the Residential Tenancies Authority who have been working hard every day to put this package together. Your dedication to Queenslanders is profoundly impressive, thank you. Additionally, I would like to thank the officers responsible for the drafting and preparation of the bills and for the draft regulation. Thank you for your persistent high standards.

This pandemic is not over yet. There is still a ways to go before life begins to return to normal. No matter what, the Palaszczuk government will be there to support all Queenslanders through this for long as it takes. Today is a great day in this state—another zero cases of coronavirus in Queensland. I am proud to be a Queenslanders because Queenslanders are awesome. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (8.00 pm): I rise to speak to the bill before the House. It is amazing to listen to our Premier and the ministers who represent this government because they will tell us things but they will not tell us the truth. This bill gives the government extreme regulation-making powers in respect of a lot of acts. It allows them to make a number of changes within those acts. I want to focus particularly on the areas that fall within my portfolio responsibility.

Before I do that, I would like to point out to members that the Premier said that this was a democratic way of doing this. She said that the parliament would get the opportunity to disallow the regulation. The standing orders allow a member of this House to give notice on a sitting day that they will move to disallow a regulation that a minister has put forward. The government then has 14 sitting days after notice is given to bring that debate to the House and for the regulation to then be possibly disallowed. I point out to the government that we are not sitting much at the moment. Therefore, those 14 sitting days could well be next year sometime. We do not know.

The minister has put forward a number of provisions in the regulation that could be amended. It is really important that there is some clarity around commercial tenancies. We all know that the Prime Minister, via the national cabinet, announced on 29 March that there would be a national code of conduct. It is up to the states to implement that. This bill gives them the regulation-making power to do that. Have we seen any regulation around commercial tenancies? No, we have not. Possibly somebody out there has, but the LNP certainly has not seen that. There has been no transparency and accountability from this government with regard to talking to this side of the House about these particular issues. After all, members on this side of the House actually have some business experience so we know what we are talking about. I ran a chain of retail shops. I employed hundreds of people and did quite well. I am used to dealing with the Westfields and AMPs of the world.

Commercial tenants need clarity. Quite frankly, they are not getting it. What they have had from this government is mixed messages. For the last couple of weeks they have been getting mixed messages from this government around commercial tenancies and residential tenancies.

Yesterday afternoon at around three o'clock the LNP was given three documents—two bills and one draft regulation. There were no explanatory notes to the bill given to the LNP. Members know that bills can be very hard to work through so members need the explanatory notes. We have not seen whether this bill is compatible with the Bill of Rights that the government introduced last year. They table a document that tells us whether a bill is compatible with the Human Rights Act. We have not even seen that for this bill. The Premier tabled it, but it has not been given to the LNP. We have not seen it. We have not had a chance to read it and see whether it is compatible.

I want to speak specifically about residential tenancies. I wanted to speak before the Minister for Housing spoke because I had a number of questions I wanted the minister to answer. Given that he has already spoken he is not going to have the opportunity to answer those questions. I hope that he gives one of their other speakers the answers to these questions. This bill will be guillotined, I am sure, and I will not get the chance to ask these questions.

I refer the minister to page 8 of the draft regulation he has brought forward. It talks about 30 per cent of income. It talks about a 25 per cent reduction in income or 30 per cent of people's income being used to pay the rent on their premises. There will be tenants who decided that they could afford to pay more than 30 per cent of their income on rent and signed up to a rental agreement with their landlord. How does this regulation affect those people who have already signed up and were paying more than 30 per cent of their income on rent? Nothing has changed in their lives. They still have their jobs. They have not lost any of their income. They do not fall into the 25 per cent category. How does this regulation deal with those people? It is completely unclear and it is causing a lot of angst for people who are trying to work out how they fit into the tenant situation or the landlord situation.

On page 9 of the regulation there is an emergency period set by the Public Health Act. It is unknown at this stage how long this particular regulation will be in place, but there are 50 penalty units or roughly 6½ thousand dollars attached to this if somebody has given a tenant a notice to leave which is considered under the regulation to be an eviction.

The minister spoke about the rental hub that he has put in place. The rental hub has been giving out information for the past couple of weeks. It has not been very clear to people. People have looked at their situations, looked at what is in the media, looked at what the REIQ has put out and looked at what the minister has put out and it has been very unclear to them. Where they did get clarity was from QCAT which said that the law has not changed and that they have to proceed as if the law is still in place.

There will be people out there who have given a notice to leave to their tenants and now under this regulation it will be considered an eviction. There is a 6½ thousand dollar penalty attached to that. I would like some clarity from the government as to whether this will apply to people who took what the government said at face value, worked out what they could do, moved forward with that and now all of a sudden find that there is a regulation that they were not expecting which has a 6½ thousand dollar penalty attached to it.

On page 10 of the regulation it talks about causing a tenant to vacate the premises because of false or misleading information. Exactly the same thing applies there. The landlord looked at their situation, looked at what QCAT was telling them and moved forward with the process. They could face a 6½ thousand dollar penalty. The government needs to answer that question.

Clause 15, on page 15, provides for failure to leave. At the end of the day, if the tenants and the landlords cannot negotiate they are to go to the RTA for compulsory mediation. If that fails, they can go to QCAT for a determination. The draft regulation appears to say that the tribunal must not grant an application to terminate if the rent is unpaid because of COVID-19. So they go through this whole process of talking with their landlord and then going to the RTA for mediation to try to find a solution, but at the end of the day when they go to the tribunal it cannot take into account anything other than have they paid their rent or not. There is a gap there.

Under clause 30, on page 25, the tribunal cannot examine domestic violence under paragraphs (i) and (ii) when deciding on an application about a notice ending tenancy. If that is challenged by the lessor under subclauses 34(4) and (5), it requires the tribunal to look at the domestic violence situation. There are mixed messages. On the one hand, the tribunal cannot look at a domestic violence situation; on the other hand, the tribunal has to take it into account. There are so many gaps in this regulation, but we are not going to get the opportunity to deal with them under a disallowance motion because the parliament will not be sitting.

Clause 41, on page 31, is of concern to tenants because they can give a notice of intention to leave if the premises do not comply with the minimum housing standard. That is what the regulation says. Under the housing legislation act 2017, power was given to the minister to put a regulation in place to set that minimum housing standard—and that has not been done. This regulation refers to another regulation that does not exist. Maybe the minister could explain to us how that will work in real terms. After all, we are dealing with tenants and landlords who live in the real world. Tenants rent from a landlord and the landlord wants to take care of their tenant, but the information is completely confusing them. Until there is clarity around this, these people cannot move forward.

I would like to raise a number of questions with the minister about the RTA. We are of the understanding that, if landlords and tenants cannot negotiate on a reasonable basis, they can make an application to the Residential Tenancies Authority for a compulsory mediation. My question to the minister is: how many mediators has he now appointed to the RTA? How long is this going to take?

Mr deBRENNI: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I understand where the member is going with this. It is probably a useful question. If he is asking about resources that have been applied to government agencies, he may have taken the opportunity to consider that during the appropriation bill. This is a completely different bill. My point of order is on relevance.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Pugh): Member, I ask you to stay within the long title of the bill.


Mr HART: The regulation which has been put in place by this bill allows people to go to the RTA, so it is a valid question to ask how many extra staff are there and what are their qualifications. I would also like to know how many extra staff there may be in QCAT. We are hearing from people in the real world who are having to deal with this on a daily basis that there is in fact a six-week wait at the RTA at the moment for compulsory mediation. Here it is that we have landlords and tenants who cannot

negotiate because, based on the information the government has put out to tenants, tenants believe they do not have to pay rent under any circumstances. This regulation clarifies that they do in fact have to pay rent, but there is a six-week lag at the RTA. The next step is QCAT—another lag. This could drag on for months and months without landlords being paid the money that they are owed.

The only benefit for landlords is that the government is telling them that they can go to their bank and have their costs or their loans deferred for a period of time. That is no benefit to a landlord. They will have to pay them eventually. That is the problem with this government. They think when you borrow money you never have to pay it back. They are very good at borrowing more and more money but never paying it back. That is part of the problem that we have here. We have a government that is completely incompetent, it has no understanding of how real business works and it is not prepared to be transparent and accountable with the people of Queensland.

Quite frankly, it is not good enough that we have a whole bunch of commercial tenants out there who do not know what they need to do tomorrow. They were looking to this government to provide them with answers today. The government led them to believe that there was a bill coming before the House today that would clarify this situation for them—and it does not. It gives the government regulation-making powers to do it, but the minister should tell us when this regulation is coming in. If he cannot tell us, which of the other ministers here can tell us when commercial tenants will have some clarity in this situation? Those people tell us that they do not have any clarity and they are relying on this government—this failed government—to give them the clarity that they need to move forward.

(Time expired)

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (8.17 pm): What we are living through right now is unprecedented. Never has there been an event that has changed so much of our lives in such a short amount of time. While supporting the health of Queenslanders has been paramount in the Palaszczuk government's response, of course we are also supporting our state's economy and our state's businesses.

As the Premier stated earlier, this is a twin crisis requiring twin responses. This crisis is causing havoc across our state's economy and our state's 445,000 small businesses. These businesses represent the backbone of our economy. They are the lifeblood of our local communities. According to some reports, 86 per cent of Queensland businesses will be adversely impacted by COVID-19. To date, the Palaszczuk government has responded with over \$4 billion in economic stimulus. We are now in new territory and our world will never be the same. We have to do things differently.

In the name of public safety, health directives were issued forcing many businesses to close their doors and stop trading. Local pubs, gyms, cinemas and cafes have been forced to close their doors or drastically pivot their business models. It has been fantastic to see so many businesses move so quickly and innovatively to an online way of operating and moving to supply takeaway or home delivery. It is great to see local communities supporting their local small businesses and to see small businesses giving back to their communities.

Despite these stories though, there is no doubt that small businesses are struggling. Doors may be closed but the bills including rent, wages and utilities of course have not stopped. National cabinet has agreed that during this unprecedented crisis no tenant should be evicted from their premises. We are asking landlords and tenants to work together, but this is not always possible. When negotiations break down, small businesses currently need somewhere to turn. Legal challenges are costly, especially when our time-poor small businesses are too busy just trying to survive.

This bill not only amends the Retail Shop Leases Act to support those tenants who are suddenly unable to pay their rent as a result of COVID-19 but also establishes the role of the Small Business Commissioner. Having a commissioner with the power to negotiate rental disputes will give small businesses a hand when they need it most. They need more than just an advocate; they need someone with the powers to mediate these disputes which is exactly what happens in other jurisdictions.

New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia all have small business commissioners. These commissioners provide a single point of contact for disputes, especially with regard to retail leasing disputes. In Victoria, over half of the disputes dealt with in 2018-19 related to leasing matters, and that was before COVID-19 hit. Clearly, there has never been a greater need for a small business commissioner in Queensland. We are already hearing troubling stories from businesses that have been reaching out to us with leasing disputes. A popular bar in Nundah that had to close its doors during COVID-19 has been struggling to bring the landlord to the negotiating table. Instead of

talking, the landlord continues to issue breach notices and fines. A dance studio in Helensvale on the Gold Coast also reached out for help in relation to an uncompromising landlord. This is exactly why we need to provide dispute resolution procedures for small mum-and-dad businesses.

The need for such a role was previously highlighted during consultation for the development of our new Queensland small business strategy. Small business owners and key stakeholders indicated that they would benefit greatly from expanding and strengthening the functions of our current Small Business Champion. In particular, there was strong support for dispute resolution services to reduce costs and time for small businesses. Key groups seeking this change included the Australian Industry Group, the Australian Small Business & Family Enterprise Ombudsman and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland. Currently, small businesses have to navigate multiple pathways to seek information on dispute resolution services such as QCAT, adding complexity and increasing time and costs for small businesses. In the absence of a state commissioner, small businesses in Queensland must go to the national system, the Australian Small Business & Family Enterprise Ombudsman, for assistance. Our small businesses absolutely deserve a commissioner who will provide a key support function that is currently missing. The initiative will give them a clearly identifiable single point of contact in the Queensland government to help them understand the options to resolve retail leasing disputes.

Dispute resolution can come at significant cost for small business owners in terms of legal services, time away from their business, lost productivity and income, additional expenses and stress. National data from the Australian Small Business & Family Enterprise Ombudsman identifies the most significant impacts of disputes experienced by small business are financial loss, opportunity costs and damaged reputations. Establishing this position right now sends a clear message to small businesses across Queensland that we understand the challenges they face and we are here to help them meet those challenges.

The new commissioner's key functions will include: continued advocacy support and information for small businesses; being a single point of contact for businesses on leasing disputes; providing initial information and advisory services; connecting tenants and landlords through premediation services; and trying to identify solutions prior to progressing mediation. If a dispute is brought before the commissioner it is proposed that he or she will have powers to compel both parties to attend mediation prior to the matter progressing to QCAT or the courts. The commissioner will also potentially help implement the National Cabinet Mandatory Code of Conduct SME leasing principles during COVID-19 for small businesses. The state government is currently determining how the code will be implemented in Queensland.

Earlier this month the Deputy Premier and Treasurer announced measures to support the protection of commercial and retail tenants from eviction. These measures are being underpinned in part by \$400 million in land tax relief for property owners which must be passed on to tenants. In her contribution to the debate the Leader of the Opposition expressed concern about whether or not the government would publish reports from the Queensland Small Business Commissioner. I can assure the House that the commission will absolutely report on performance through the department's annual report. That would include performance on mediation services undertaken.

I do want to take the opportunity to express my view that it is a little ironic for the Leader of the Opposition to express concern about the Labor government being transparent and accountable in the role of Small Business Commissioner, when in fact under the LNP government when the member for Nanango was Campbell Newman's assistant minister those opposite abolished the office of the commissioner. That is why Queensland is now one of the only states that does not have a small business commissioner.

Ms Simpson interjected.


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Pugh): Order!

Ms Simpson interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Maroochydore, I called the House to order.

Ms FENTIMAN: When we came back into government in 2015 we created the role of Small Business Champion, which gave small businesses a voice at the national table for reform that had been lacking for years under the LNP because they slashed the office of the commissioner. I am incredibly proud that, at a time when small businesses need support most in relation to mediation and retail disputes, the Labor Party government is reintroducing the office of the commissioner for small business to help small businesses after those opposite cut it.

Work on establishing the Queensland Small Business Commissioner will begin immediately after this legislation is passed. The Palaszczuk government wants to give small businesses hope towards recovery in the short term and, more importantly, success in the longer term. This bill gives them that hope. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (8.25 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill. The Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister for housing have already addressed some of the problems in relation to residential tenancy questions and the Small Business Champion. I know the member for Maroochydore will advance those arguments again shortly. However, I want to begin my contribution tonight with a reflection on some of the philosophical problems we currently face in Queensland and in a range of parliamentary democracies around the world.

What we are facing now more than at any other time is tension on the separation of powers. Normally, the separation of powers tension rests more likely between the legislature and the judiciary; however, what we are seeing now is tension between the legislature and the executive. What we are seeing is unprecedented. It is a commonly used word at the moment. We are seeing legislative power being transferred to the executive at rates not seen before. If you turn to part 2 of this bill it immediately brings this into question.

This is not something we should be skating over. Yes, these are extraordinary times. In fact, clause 5 of the bill actually talks about extraordinary regulations. These are extraordinary times; however, the power to transfer legislative power to the executive should not be undertaken lightly. It should not be glossed over as it has been by so many of those opposite already this evening. This transfer of powers does come with inherent risks, and that is why more than ever the opposition will be watching the regulations that are made by this government extremely closely. If you look at clause 5 of the bill—and the Leader of the Opposition mentioned this—they are what you would colourfully call Henry VIII clauses. That is where the executive, through regulation, has the power to enact regulation that is inconsistent with the act.

If you turn to subparagraph (5) that is exactly what it says: an extraordinary regulation under an affected act may be inconsistent with the affected act. What that really means is that the executive can enact a regulation that is inconsistent with an act that has been passed by this House. That is quite an extraordinary power. Clauses of that nature have been less and less tolerated over the years. The Leader of the Opposition referred to a Queensland Law Reform Commission report in 1990. It was the subject of scrutiny in a legislative committee report in 1997. These clauses are serious, and let us not ever forget that we in this House should be debating principles rather than details. As we have seen in the Commonwealth parliament with the tax act and the Corporations Act, there are problems when you have too many details in a principles based act. The acts are so technically full that they are nearly incomprehensible. It is appropriate that this place delegates subordinated legislation, however, there are grave concerns when that power is delegated to the executive.

One of the major reasons why the LNP opposition will always be sceptical of any diminishment of parliamentary sovereignty is because we on this side of the House do not trust this government. We simply do not trust this government to make regulations that are right, that are consistent with the act and that are for the betterment of Queenslanders. We only need look at the entire consultation process. My colleague the member for Burleigh has already talked about the residential properties, but we cannot help but look at the process of consultation that the honourable members for Springwood and South Brisbane underwent in this particular area of the COVID-19 response. They stood up on the Friday afternoon, with clearly the left faction of the Labor Party in full swing and full cry, having had no consultation. That left residential property owners with no choice but to fight back.

All of this was at the height of the COVID-19 response. All of those hardworking men and women in Queensland who have investment properties—those nurses and teachers—had to take up arms and get behind the REIQ campaign and a range of other campaigns and fight back. The politics of envy were on full display that afternoon as the honourable members for South Brisbane and Springwood stood up and had not consulted or considered those hardworking men and women who simply wanted to invest and get ahead in their own personal lives. That left thousands of emails being sent out. Everyone in this House would have got those emails pouring into their offices from around the state. Finally, a week later, in an abject concession, the member for Springwood came out and walked away after some serious consultation with the REIQ and a range of other groups.

While the opposition will be supporting this bill tonight and the Henry VIII clause power that will enable executive regulation to perhaps be inconsistent with the act, we are only doing that because this is an unforeseen emergency and these are unexpected and unanticipated circumstances. We are only

doing it because there are clear sunsets in the act itself, whereby it is 31 December for the act to expire and also for the delegated regulation. That is why the opposition is satisfied under these circumstances to accept this clause this evening.

I turn from that philosophical question for a moment to the actual clauses that enable this change. I am reminded again of a government that is too slow to act. We hear it regularly that this government is extremely slow to act on the concerns of so many in the community. We know that COVID-19 has brought our health system under full examination and we know that it has nearly stopped the wheels of commerce but they are still grinding. We need to look at New South Wales. It would have helped if the administrative assistance that is on display in this act tonight was received earlier.

For instance, I was already receiving concerns and complaints about people unable to witness documents in the middle of March. How do I swear an affidavit under the Oaths Act? How do I sign or witness an enduring power of attorney? How do I give that notice under a contract document that requires a physical delivery of a document? How do I transfer property under the Land Title Act? How do we keep the administrative wheels of commerce turning? The New South Wales parliament had passed an act of this nature a month ago. The Queensland Law Society wrote to the Attorney-General on 27 March about these problems, and I have written to the Attorney-General about these problems. Here we are nearly a month later, while the economy is under serious pressure—

Mr Powell: It's because we have not sat.

Mr JANETZKI: I will take the interjection from the member for Glass House. It is because we have not sat. The claims of bipartisanship are farcical. It is farcical to suggest that there is bipartisanship going on in this House. We have had the suggestion we could have a bipartisan committee that could be chaired by one of the opposition members, as is happening in other jurisdictions. Let us take the best ideas from Commonwealth parliaments and enact them here. New South Wales passed an act nearly a month ago that saw those administrative wheels of commerce that are so important, and here we are trying to pass this act tonight.

Again, it is entirely appropriate. We do want to see the execution and witnessing of documents made easier. We do want to see enduring powers of attorney signed, as well as notices under contract, but we could have moved sooner. It goes to show again why this House must keep sitting. It must keep sitting because the circumstances of this COVID-19 crisis continue to change. They are not consistent. It is not the same from one day to the next. There are new problems that come up on any given day.

I want to turn very briefly to some of those proposals that are seen in this bill tonight from the Queensland Law Society and other lobby groups like the Strata Community Association. We have 50,000 strata titles around Queensland. Back-of-the-envelope maths tells us that that is about a thousand annual general meetings a week so these provisions respond to a number of calls for help from lobby groups, including the Queensland Law Society. It is true that there may be occasion, as is mentioned by the Queensland Law Society, for us to examine whether these particular administrative enhancements could go beyond 31 December, but anything of that nature must always go through the parliamentary committee process. We have seen democracy severely curtailed. At the moment there are no public hearings and there is no stakeholder engagement. There is no true parliamentary committee scrutiny of the bills before the House, and that is what we need more of right now in these extraordinary times.

I want to turn briefly to the amendments to the Parliament of Queensland Act. Again, this is one of the provisions that has been discussed tonight and it has been on the books under the standing orders. I am talking about voting by proxy. Voting by proxy is quite an extraordinary thing to be talking about in our parliament. I understand it is being considered abroad and it has been a part of the UK House of Commons system, particularly for men and women on parental leave and for feeding mothers, so it is not without precedent.


However, this is an extraordinary path for this House to go down and it cannot go down that path lightly. There are not many details in this bill as to what proxy attendance would look like. The Premier made some comments on that but I am very intrigued and would like to better understand how exactly proxy voting would work and what it would look like. I presume another member would act as a proxy, but how would it operate in practice? I know the Premier made some minor comments on that. However, I would appreciate some additional detail if at all possible from the Attorney-General. Otherwise, it is entirely appropriate that we bring the House into the 21st century and consider what technology we can use and what additional ways we can meet virtually that will make our jobs easier and help us through these extraordinary times to continue the important work of democracy in Queensland.

One of the things about the REIQ campaign and the campaign that saw the minister back down and reconsider the amendments was people power. There are serious concerns from a whole range of people to see these amendments through tonight.

I have had a number of barristers and others reach out to me and raise concerns at a constitutional level as to whether these provisions will stand the constitutional test of just terms. I expect to hear more about claims of that nature arising in the coming weeks as property owners are very concerned about those issues. I expect it will not be the last we hear of that.

I also want to offer my support for the amendments that will be moved by the Leader of the Opposition outside the long title of the bill that relate to health and safety, public administration and delivery of justice in Queensland. They are appropriate amendments. The wheels of this parliament must continue to turn. Yes, our primary objective right now is to address the COVID-19 pandemic and to make sure our response is full and fair. However, the wheels of government must continue to turn.

(Time expired)

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (8.40 pm): I rise to speak to the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020. This bill establishes a framework enabling subordinate legislation to be made as required so that emerging issues during the COVID-19 pandemic can be responded to quickly and for the limited time that they are required. It obviously covers a range of issues, but I wish to speak particularly to the measures which it puts in place to continue to ensure that our domestic and family violence and youth justice systems operate effectively.

I begin with the domestic and family violence matters. I note that when the Attorney-General, the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Small Business offered the opportunity to members of the opposition to actually hear about these amendments, not a single member turned up that I am aware of. We offered an opportunity to explain all of these things. This is certainly very dear to my heart, but it did not seem to be of enough importance for any of the members opposite to actually come along.

Another unwelcome consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic is an anticipated increase in domestic and family violence. Queensland families are under significant stress owing to health concerns, isolation and financial pressures. Sadly, some abusers will use COVID-19 social restrictions to further control and intimidate their partners. We have been working very closely with domestic and family violence services to assist them to continue to protect and support clients safely.

I am in regular discussions with the domestic, family and sexual violence sector including legal services about impacts on their clients and services. I am aware that some procedural requirements under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 require individuals to be physically present for processes such as filing personal applications for domestic violence orders and having evidentiary documents verified and orders served. The last thing I want during this pandemic is to put further stress on victims of domestic and family violence or to put them in danger of not complying with social distancing requirements while trying to seek the protection of a domestic violence order.

If there is evidence that there is an impact on private applications, the bill means we can make a regulation. The bill will enable a regulation to be made to address these matters if necessary. This would mean that people can continue to make private applications for a domestic violence order while maintaining social distancing requirements. It would also mean that police can serve orders on respondent persons without a need for personal service. Our courts continue to operate, and domestic and family violence proceedings are a priority. My department will continue to work with courts and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to monitor the impacts of social distancing requirements and progressive regulation if required.

The COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill will also make time limited amendments to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 to alleviate pressures on those impacted financially by COVID-19. The COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill will establish a temporary emergency regulation-making power in the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 for matters necessary to respond to the COVID-19 emergency to deliver improved rental market stability during this period. The proposed regulation provides for a number of time limited COVID-19 response measures including measures to give tenants experiencing domestic and family violence more options to manage their tenancy agreements and to enact plans to end the violence.

A tenant who believes they can no longer safely continue to occupy the premises because of domestic and family violence committed against them can end their interest in the agreement by: giving the lessor or manager seven days notice of their intention to leave, supported by some evidence of

domestic violence; leave immediately after providing the notice and have their liability of end-of-lease costs capped at the equivalent of one week's rent; request their rental bond contribution be refunded to them; and change locks to their rental property without consent.

The types of supporting evidence that can be provided are provided for in the regulation and are intended to be broad. I often hear from people who are experiencing domestic violence that one of the things that stops them from leaving is concerns about breaking their lease agreement. These amendments will remove that barrier.


While the amendments are time limited to help people experiencing domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, this will provide an opportunity for close monitoring and oversight of these measures to provide valuable insights into how these arrangements operate and to inform future reform.

The bill also provides the mechanism for courts to adjust statutory time frames for both civil and criminal proceedings such as those under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 should this become necessary during the pandemic if courts are further impacted.

Before I go on to speak about youth justice matters, I do want to acknowledge the hard work of the Minister for Housing and the excellent partnership we have had in working with domestic violence service providers to make sure that this really responds to a need that there is growing concern about for domestic violence victims.

The bill on youth justice matters will mean that regulations can be made to allow restorative justice conferences to take place via videoconferencing or telephone during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that young offenders continue to be held accountable for their actions. It is also important that victims of crime continue to have the opportunity to confront young offenders with the impacts of their crimes and have a say in how they should make amends. The bill will enable a regulation to ensure restorative justice conference agreements can be signed off without delay and the offender can take steps to make amends.

Before I finish, I do want to really recognise the work from the Minister for Small Business around the Small Business Commissioner. I have had the great privilege of working closely with the Small Business Champion, who performs a most important function with small business. It is a wonderful reform that will be greatly welcomed by our struggling and wonderful small businesses.

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (8.47 pm): I, too, rise to address the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020. At the outset, I express my sympathy to those families who have lost loved ones here in Queensland, across Australia and around the world as a result of this pandemic. To those suffering from the disease itself and also those suffering the economic hardships, my prayers are with you. To those on the front line, our medical professionals and essential workers, I say a very genuine thanks not only on my behalf and that of my family but indeed on behalf of the entire electorate of Glass House.

It certainly is a very strange time. I commend the good residents of the Glass House electorate for the way they have responded. Initially, there was a high level of anxiety, particularly in a couple of communities where there were cases identified. However, in the large, everyone has done the right thing by the social distancing laws and the health directions that have been given at the state and federal level. Communities have continued to try to operate as best they can. We have tried to support our small businesses as best we can. It is my hope that if we can continue to operate the way we are, we will come through this sooner rather than later, both in terms of saving lives and also saving livelihoods in terms of businesses and jobs.

Others have spoken about the various elements of this bill. I want to drill down on one specific part that has obviously caused a lot of consternation over the last couple of weeks in the electorate of Glass House and, as others have said, across the state. The bill primarily introduces the regulation-making power to amend existing statutory and regulatory requirements to do the following—and I focus, as I said, on this: govern retail and other prescribed leases through prohibiting the termination of leases and recovery of possessions by lessors; exempt lessees from the operation of legislation; require lease parties to abide by particular matters or principles; provide for mediation and dispute resolution processes for leases; and govern residential tenancies and rooming accommodation through imposing a moratorium on evictions, amending the grounds on which eviction notices can be given, enabling disputes about unpaid rent to be conciliated by the Residential Tenancies Authority, suspending obligations under the residential tenancies act and amending tenancy agreements.

It is worth pointing out, particularly to those property owners, be they commercial or residential, in the electorate of Glass House, that the laws we are debating and passing tonight will not solve all the problems that have been identified but will put in place the ability to make the regulations that will.

Please, we are getting there. Potentially, we could have got here sooner had parliament sat sooner. It has not. This law is necessary to allow those regulations to be made to enact what was agreed at the national level around a code of conduct for commercial premises but to also make significant changes to the rental arrangements here in this state.

It is worth pointing out as others did that unfortunately it took a bit to get to the solution that it looks like we got to. I do commend the REIQ and the vast majority of property owners who are mum-and-dad owners across the state for taking it up to the government when the government clearly had not consulted and clearly overreached. Where I hope we land as a result of this legislation is in a far more reasonable outcome for tenants and for landlords. Let us face it—none of our landlords want to see their tenants out on their ear. They want to work in a way that ensures they are provided with accommodation, but that needs to be done in a fair way.

If you allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, one of the best ways to do this is to read into *Hansard* some of the comments made by a number of constituents around the electorate. One who said it best is Mr Greg McCosker of North Maleny. He said—

My Landlords Rent Default Policy provides that it will only respond “when you have taken all reasonable steps legally available to you under the Residential Tenancies Act or similar legislation or any other legal avenue available to you to mitigate any loss to evict the tenant. Under the former government proposal—

That is the one prior to the minister and the Treasurer standing up last week saying they were resetting—

and I presume under the next proposal, we will not be able to evict a tenant unable to pay their rent due to loss of income arising from the COVID-19 issue as that is the common intention of all governments. Therefore, on that issue I have no problems as I cannot take any legal action to mitigate our loss or evict the tenant. Our tenants say they are seeking casual work and will pay whatever they can each week but they cannot put a figure on it as they do not know what their income will be. Therefore I do not want to be in a position where I am required by legislation to reach agreement with the tenant on a reduced or zero rent arrangement as then I have consented to the loss and I would be most surprised if our insurer would meet a claim on that premise. Our tenants are concerned about the impact on their rental history and where the notices to remedy the breach of rent arrears will be on their history as I anticipate the legislation will provide that a tenant cannot be evicted for non-payment of rent I presume there will be no requirement for notices to be issued as they will be unenforceable, but some clarity around that would be good. I imagine a landlord will not be able to access the bond to recover lost rents as the agreement will not be at an end, but I have not seen that discussed in clarity as required. I have assured our tenants that regardless of any changes to the legislation we will not be evicting them while they have no income as a consequence of COVID-19. My preference is that the original tenancy agreement remains on foot as the tenant cannot be prejudiced as they will have legislated protection and therefore any shortfall in rent can be readily identified to facilitate a claim on our insurance. I do not want to compromise our insurance cover. That way if they offer to make up any shortfall in rent when they do return to paid employment, the debt will be established by what was owed and what has been paid. I basically agree with the LNP position—

which I sent to Mr McCosker—

If rent was deferred by agreement, then I imagine our insurer would say we have not suffered a loss as we have simply pushed out the period for payment of the rent. If the period was to be extensive, eg eight months, with no income in that time it would make it very difficult for landlords, whereas if a tenant simply had not paid rent in accordance with the agreement and were not at risk of being evicted then the loss arises at that time on rental period by rental period (eg fortnightly basis).

I think where we have landed addresses many of Mr McCosker's concerns, but he has raised a number of points that I do hope inform the regulation that will sit underneath these laws. I hope that the minister takes that on board and makes sure that each of those are addressed.

Interestingly, I was also contacted by Mr David Turner of Rocksberg who let me know that, as his insurance on his rental property was up, he was unable to reinsure the property. I assumed at the time that that was only for rental loss. No, that was for building insurance and, indeed, for public liability insurance. I did a bit of searching and, sure enough, just about every building insurer now has disclaimers on their websites saying that they will not take on new business. Indeed, many existing insurers are not renewing insurance policies at this time because of the uncertainty. I hope that what we are doing tonight and the regulation that follows gives enough certainty that those insurers can again do that. It is crazy. I get the rental loss—and Mr Turner does, too—but then not to be able to provide building insurance or public liability insurance seems crazy. The team at Maleny Property Rentals also sent through some examples. They said—

We have worked hard on coming up with solutions for individual cases, all of which has worked so far. In one case, we negotiated just one week's free rent so that tenant was not in constant arrears while waiting for government assistance. This resulted in a win-win situation as it got her out of her initial plight. The owner has done a good thing and now she takes pride in keeping up rent payments as she is grateful for his gesture when she was in need. We find this can be a really powerful way of keeping the tenant happy and cooperative from the start. Another scenario where the tenant (carpenter) lost his job and waiting for government assistance, he is now oiling the decks of the property in exchange for one week's rent. Again everyone happy...We had another tenant who has lost all her work. Came up with a proposal of getting \$150 per week rent relief but once things were back to normal she would go back to normal rent plus \$50 a week until rent was repaid. This was formalised in an agreement.

They went on to add—

The most worrying thing in the proposed legislation is the lack of transparency when it comes to tenants not paying rent. The questionnaire I gave you and have also attached, would give us something to work on instead of a “I just can’t afford to pay rent”. The amount of government funding that is injected into various packages would in our opinion need to at least cover some, if not all, rent for most families.

Again, some of that was addressed in the minister’s comments.

What we are not getting tonight, though, is how we assist those property owners—again many of them mums and dads—who own commercial properties. I know that there is a national code of conduct and again the regulatory powers are being passed tonight to put that into act, but how that plays out is still not quite understood. Take the case of Eddie and Linda Vann of Witta. They own a shop. They do not have a bank loan over the property. The monthly rent is their major source of income, and without it they will be struggling to pay their own commitments. They are on good terms with the tenant. They have indicated that she only pay what she is capable of paying, but what has been offered will not come close to the full rent. They have read the government guidelines on commercial properties with regard to waiver and deferral of rent, which outlines assistance for the tenant but which provides no relief for landlords in their position. Apart from the two \$750 government support payments, there currently appears to be no other assistance that the Vanns can claim. There is still plenty of work to be done in the commercial rental space. Also, Anthony and Patricia Robinson of Montville said—

We have heard so much about how government will help small business but for some unusual reason we do not qualify as a small business. From what we have been told from our accountant, we do not qualify for any assistance at all. Here we are working hard so that we can maintain financial independence and not be a burden on the government or the community and there is nothing. Self-funded retirees are utterly forgotten. Self-funded retirees were the ones that bore the brunt of the asset depletion of subprime fiasco. We know that we are not the only working retired who have struggled in particular those who use Airbnb to survive with the circumstances that have impacted us and they I am sure would like someone to come and bat for our cause. Please help hardworking self-funded retirees who in normal circumstances are not a burden on the government.

They are one of many in the community who still need assistance through this time. I know the health crisis takes priority. I know that we are trying to save lives, but we also need to save those livelihoods particularly of those self-funded retirees who have done all the hard yards to make sure they are not a burden on any government of any persuasion. Now is the time that they need a hand-out and a hand up.

Before I close, this bill is about emergency response powers. I cannot help but reflect on some debate we had in our last sitting on 18 March around the Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Bill. At the time, one of the things we talked about was the temporary use licence. It was supported by those on this side and, indeed, it was fashioned off temporary environmental licences or emissions licences that we put in place during the LNP’s term in government.

I am a bit disappointed that we cannot see further action on a refinement of those laws. I was contacted by Mr Glen Carpenter, a director of Spire Law, who is representing a number of builders in particular who are trying to use the temporary use licence to allow them to continue to operate. Sadly, what they have got back from the minister and the department shows that there is still a lot of ambiguity. Felicity Tait, manager of the development assessment division within the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, wrote—

Thank you for your temporary use licence application to vary construction hours at ...


As discussed with you on the phone this morning, a temporary use licence (TUL) can only be applied for use of a premises within the jurisdiction of the Planning Act 2016. A TUL cannot be used for the following:

- To vary advice provided within development approvals under the Planning Act 2016
- To impose new conditions that are not linked to the variation of an existing condition or use contained within a development approval issued under the Planning Act 2016
- To vary conditions approved under the Building Act 1975, the Environmental Protection Act 1994 or any other act or authority.

What that means is a lot of uncertainty in the building industry at this time. What is clear is that, whilst we passed that bill in the last sitting, the bill we are debating now and will pass this evening will address many of the issues that we are facing on the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay regions of this state; many will not be addressed. It is creating a lot of headaches, particularly for small businesses and mum-and-dad self-funded retirees across my electorate.

I would ask, given that we will probably not have time for ministers to respond before the debate is guillotined, those opposite to consider the contribution I made on behalf of my constituents tonight and take on board the input of Mr Glen Carpenter of Spire Law and make this easier, help them get through this so they are able to continue to provide the services that they provide—whether that is as

a landlord, a carpenter, a lawyer or whatever it may be—once we come through this crisis that we are currently experiencing. In the meantime, to the people of Glass House, please continue to practise social distancing, please keep safe and please stay sane.

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.02 pm): I rise to support the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020 and all of the regulation-making powers that that bill contains. We have heard from many members about the extraordinary circumstances that we find ourselves in at the moment with a worldwide pandemic. I congratulate the Premier and the ministers that I share the cabinet with on the work that we have been doing to ensure that Queensland is leading the nation in addressing COVID-19, not only its impact on the health and wellbeing of its citizens but also the manner in which we acted very quickly when this came to light. As a result, we find ourselves in a terrific situation at the moment where we are seeing a reduction in the number of positive cases and hopefully some light at the end of the tunnel.

This pandemic has had, without a doubt, a great impact on many citizens of Queensland and Australia. Compared to the country which my family came from—Italy—and the circumstances that they find themselves in, and compared to the US with its slowness to move, we moved very quickly here in Queensland. In some cases we took other states and leaders with us, kicking and screaming all the way. In hindsight we are all geniuses. I congratulate the Premier. We started the work here in Queensland. No-one can deny that. The record speaks for itself. We were the ones out there first saying this is an issue that must be addressed on a national basis, it will become a national crisis and it will affect the citizens not only of Queensland but of Australia.

Most of us would know people who have lost their jobs. My own daughter, who at the moment is in Melbourne working for the Malthouse Theatre, has not been paid for five weeks. Her flatmate, who works in the theatre, is in a similar situation. My nephew who moved from Sydney to take up a job with a limousine company here in Queensland has not had any work. Who is renting limousines at the moment? His girlfriend and her father, who also moved to the Gold Coast for the same company, have not been getting any work. My best friend's son, a pilot for Qantas, has been stood down and is not receiving any funding. I could go on and on about constituents in my area who have been stood down, are not working and are not receiving any money.

I welcome the regulations contained within the bill. In particular, I want to address the regulation amendments in relation to the rental relief framework, along with the commercial arrangements that we will be putting in place for commercial properties. We do not have a small business commissioner in Queensland and it will be great to establish one. I congratulate the minister on that. This will increase the likelihood of small business non-residential lease disputes being resolved earlier and avoid those protracted negotiations that often happen, the additional cost for small business and reduce strain on existing mediation and resolution services. That is fantastic for an area like my electorate that has many commercial businesses—small, medium and large. I know that they will welcome a much more streamlined process should they be having any issues with regard to this extraordinary situation we all find ourselves in.

In relation to the assistance that we have been giving to some of these businesses, I have some figures on the payroll tax rebates. The amount of \$300 million has already been paid out to 11,000 businesses. They will not pay any payroll tax for the rest of this year, which gives them a cash flow, which is what has been affecting many of these businesses. This is a great saving for them. In the Brisbane inner city alone, around \$65 million has been paid back to around 1,500 businesses. I have had calls from people in those businesses saying to me how fantastic it has been that they have received this money which gives them cash flow during these difficult times. I commend the minister on those initiatives. In relation to the loans: \$200 million, 14,000 businesses, 18,000 jobs.

When it comes to the rental relief framework, nobody expected the situation owners and renters find themselves in today. In my electorate I probably have one of the highest percentages. The latest profile of my electorate had about 63 per cent of residents as renters. For that many renters we have just as many landlords. I want to declare an interest here. My register of interest includes properties that I have an interest in.

The majority of people in my electorate get on and do the right thing. No matter what it is in relation to COVID-19, the scare campaign coming from those opposite, the fearmongering, the absolute exaggeration and hysteria is breathtaking. One little thing happens and we hear whingeing, whining and carrying on. Those opposite are absolutely suffering from irrelevance. What a contrast that is to the federal area where both the opposition and government are getting on with it. Here all we have is a bunch of whingeing, whining, complaining, carping irrelevant nobodies. It is a shame that they put fear

in people. I spoke to the minister in relation to the rental area and it was always going to be a balanced approach. How many of those opposite picked up the phone and spoke to the minister in relation to this matter? Not one of them would have. The whingeing, the fearmongering and the carping that went on is a disgrace at a time when both renters and tenants would be suffering because of this pandemic.

Both landlords and renters have found themselves in a difficult position. If a landlord loses a tenant, it is difficult to pick up a new one given the number of jobs lost. I know that landlords have been doing all they can to keep their renters, because as people are losing their jobs it is becoming more difficult to find new tenants. In turn, renters do not want to find themselves on the streets, so they will not do anything against their landlord. That covers the majority of cases.

The minister brings this legislation to the House following discussions and having listened to people, which is what we do. As a great Labor government we take a balanced approach. That is always the case when it comes to how we negotiate these requirements. Those opposite, with their whingeing and fearmongering, are making disgusting and outlandish statements. They salivate at the thought that there is something that they can exaggerate to bring about complete hysteria.

I congratulate the minister on the bill before us. It takes a balanced approach. It will determine which people are affected by COVID-19. Only those renters will be able to negotiate with the employer and demonstrate—it was always going to be demonstrated; that was always going to be the case—their situation. We will implement a freeze, because the national cabinet decided that they needed to do something to protect renters. No-one wants to see people out on the street during a pandemic. We are in a pandemic. It is not a walk in the park. It is not a merry-go-round. It is a pandemic crisis and we want to do the best for everyone. If people just calmed down and stopped the hysteria, we would get on with business in this state and we will get out of this much sooner—

Mr Hart interjected.

Ms GRACE:—despite those irrelevant comments from the member for Burleigh. The bill outlines how a tenancy can be extended in extreme hardship. It introduces protections for people experiencing domestic and family violence. Tonight we have heard from the minister about such situations. I feel sick when I hear that because people cannot leave their houses domestic violence is rising. It absolutely saddens me to hear that. This bill provides for those conditions in a balanced way, after listening to the circumstances.

The bill provides clarity about appropriate entry to property. You cannot just enter a property if someone tests positive for COVID-19. There has to be a balanced approach to how you do that. This regulation will enable that to happen. The bill introduces compulsory conciliation to allow parties to reach agreement around rent. Real estate friends have rung me. They know that we are a balanced and fair government. They say, 'Grace, surely this is not right?' They have even referred to the relevance of those opposite.

In addition, a regulation under the act gives the minister the power to publish guidelines. I know the guidelines give all the answers to the questions that those opposite have raised tonight and they do so in a balanced way, setting things out clearly and properly. If we pass the regulations, they will assist tenants and owners in reaching agreement. As I have said, most parties would reach agreement; most would do the right thing.

To ensure that these laws protect people, a COVID-19 housing security subcommittee will be established to oversee implementation and advise the government on any adjustments required. Even if unforeseen issues arise during this worldwide pandemic, we can always go back and look at it again. Nothing could be more balanced than that. I commend the changes. I commend the bill. I congratulate the minister on working through these issues. The national cabinet decided that there will be no evictions in hardship cases. That came out of the Prime Minister's mouth and we are implementing it now. These regulations will ensure that people are protected.

Members opposite sound like a broken record. During these times I ask them to stop their whingeing, stop their whining and stop their fearmongering. These are worldwide serious pandemic health issues. I ask them to get on board and help Queensland get through this by looking after our community, as we have done from the word go. Ours was the only state that did that. Our Premier was the first one to come out about COVID-19. History will write itself in that regard. You cannot change what happened. You cannot change the books. The whole time I have been speaking, the member for Burleigh has not stopped making irrelevant, idiotic and absolutely baseless remarks. That describes the remarks of all of those on the opposition benches. I commend the bill to the House.



Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (9.14 pm): We have heard how this government wants to tell all Queenslanders that they are idiots as it goes way beyond what the national cabinet proposed for mum-and-dad investors and their tenancies. We believe there should be a balanced approach. It is about compassion and practicality with tenants and landlords. The minister said, 'Listen to us. We have your interests at heart, but don't ask us any questions.' She is abusing the thousands of mum-and-dad investors who have been writing letters to the government. We did not write those letters. We have also been receiving letters from people who understood that the balance was not there. That was the concern.

The national cabinet process has moved quickly, but not this government. We have been waiting for the detail. Finally we are in the House for this rushed sitting. We received the legislation midafternoon yesterday and now it is before the House and we are debating it. However, not all the legislation is here because we still have not seen the provisions with respect to commercial leases. Retail shop leases are covered as already prescribed in regulated contracts, but a whole raft of other contracts that were part of the mandatory code that the national cabinet brought down are yet to come before this parliament in legislation or regulation. I will go through a few of those.

Members have talked about the distress experienced by both tenants and landlords. This might come as a surprise to the minister who was just ranting, but most landlords are small mum-and-dad investors. Guess what? The same is true with a lot of commercial property as well. Certainly that is the case on the Sunshine Coast. I am not talking about Westfield, Lendlease, Stockland and the other really big guys. I am talking about the majority of landlords who are mum-and-dad investors who have worked hard. They might be doctors, nurses or teachers. Whatever their background, they had an aspiration. That is why it is important that government does not lecture those people, call them idiots and rant as we have just heard the minister do, because the government will get it wrong. For everyone's sake, it is vitally important that we get it right. Not only is this about lessening the impact on people today; this is about ensuring that there will be rental and commercial accommodation into the future and that people have the confidence to invest in that sector. If we are to rebuild Queensland, you have to listen to those voices and not abuse them.

I want to address the issue of the Small Business Commissioner. It is a positive move to have mediation available in the many cases that would otherwise be bogged down in QCAT. QCAT is a train wreck. There are so many delays with QCAT. To have an alternative mechanism for mediation, if it is done right, is a positive. In Queensland that role has been provided by the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. However, in respect of the history that the Minister for Small Business put to the House before, I need to correct the record. The previous small business commissioner existed briefly in 2011. It was introduced by a Labor government and abolished by the Newman government. While it is true that the commission was abolished by the Newman government, let us get the facts right. It had absolutely no statutory power. I table this library briefing.

Tabled paper: Queensland Parliamentary Library research brief, dated 22 April 2020, titled 'Powers of the previous Small Business Commissioner' [\[641\]](#).

I wanted to find out what they actually did. There was nothing in the statutes. The library could not find it in any statute. It had no powers. It was a powder puff. It was a title and not a role of substance. I believe in principle that the proposal for a small business commissioner to provide mediation is a positive step, because it is important that people not only negotiate in good faith and avoid a dispute but also have access to good information early so that, hopefully, they can work things out as much as possible.

When we say we are all in it together, not everyone has an even power balance in that process. I acknowledge, with some of these small business tenants who have approached me, the concern that they had where they could not get some of their landlords to talk. That was certainly the case for one hairdresser who contacted me who was quite distressed, losing 50 per cent of her business—it is probably more by now. I said, 'You still need to make the offer, have a conversation, start putting it in writing, but I am sorry we still have not seen the legislation.' Finally we saw the legislation that partly addresses their situation. There are all these other tenancies and landlords who still have not seen that because it has not come before the House.

I want to refer to the briefing that I had with the Minister for Small Business and thank her for the briefing yesterday afternoon. As I understand from that briefing, there will be a panel of mediators to provide a non-binding mediation. They will not have the ability to compel evidence or a mediation. I am not sure if I heard the minister in the House saying before that the Small Business Commissioner would have the power to compel mediation. That is not my—

Ms Fentiman: Compel parties to attend, but mediation is non-binding.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you. I cannot see it in the legislation. Whether that is because I have missed it in the legislation—I cannot actually see that in the legislation. I would like to have an explanation as to where it is in the legislation. If it is coming forward in regulation, I think that is a bit of a mistake; it should be in the legislation.

I will table also a brief in respect to the relative powers of all the small business commissioners who exist in Australia. They have different powers. The New South Wales commissioner makes it clear in the legislation in regard to their powers that people are required to participate in mediation. That role has evolved to have stronger powers over the years. It has a much clearer set of powers in regard to the legislation.

Tabled paper: Queensland Parliamentary Library research brief, dated 9 October 2019, titled ‘Small business commissioners’ [642].

What we are looking at here today does not really outline those powers as such, but I acknowledge that the government is saying it is a trial, that they will have this in place until the end of the year and then they will look at it again and potentially may legislate more fully. I do not see those powers that have been alluded to before, but I am happy to be corrected if they can be identified in the legislation. If they come forward in regulation, I think that is a mistake; it should have been in this legislation.

With respect to the commercial leases that are not yet covered, as I understand from the briefing, when they are legislated the mediation will be able to be done by the Small Business Commissioner. Those changes in legislation are to be brought down by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General—so I was told—and that the current emergency response bill allows regulations for retail shop leases but will also cover those who are under the mandatory code of conduct when those changes are made.

We must see them soon. When is parliament sitting again? Lord knows. That is one of those mysteries these days. It has not much to do with health; it has more to do with convenience and the ability of the government to move. We need to see it sooner rather than later.

I want to mention, as I did before, some of the mum-and-dad landlords. One couple wrote to me, ‘The rent from our commercial property is our monthly income.’ They are not wealthy. ‘This is our monthly income. Even so, our mortgage payments are suspended until November, but interest will accumulate. We have bills to pay.’ They are quite desperate. Still we do not know how they will be able to live because they are not entitled to other handouts and grants et cetera because they actually rely on income from their investment property.

I declare that, as per my entry in the Register of Members’ Interests, I also have investment properties. I am fortunate, though; I am not like so many others who have lost tenants. It is important that people are able to work these matters through. That is on the Register of Members’ Interests, as is the fact that I am a director of my mother’s company and she also has tenancies and rentals as well.

I want to go to the issue of the retrospectivity of some of the provisions. I know it has been talked about that it is necessary, but they are pretty big penalties for retrospective provisions in the act when we had not seen the act. We only saw the bill come out for consultancy. I think it was already drafted. We had our first glance at it yesterday afternoon. Anything that is retrospective with quite substantial penalties concerns me. Was it about \$60,000?

Mr Hart: Six and a half thousand.

Ms SIMPSON: Yes. That is a concern. I am concerned by the Henry VIII clauses in this bill. I understand that we are told it is for emergency reasons, but they have the ability to alter substantive acts and, given that we do not know what the government may seek to bring forward by regulation that impacts upon acts—legislation that comes before the full parliament—that is also of concern.

I was interested to see some comments that the now Treasurer made in regard to the Henry VIII clauses, as well as the now Leader of the House. They were talking about issues around executive government and doing things without parliament. It is interesting that they had those views then, but today we see quite strong powers coming forward and not clearly what they intend to amend in acts via regulation. That is not something we should be championing. We need to know more clearly what it is that they envisage. What is it that they envisage?

The other issue I want to raise is that there is to be rental relief. The government announced a rental package which sounded good, but people still have not seen it which is causing a lot of distress too. I want to quote from one person who was after that rental relief package who said, ‘I know this was asked last week, but has anyone actually been contacted by the RTA in regard to the rental grant or


received funds yet? I have a tenant who applied on the date it started on 2 April. Still nothing has been finalised. I have not been contacted. A second tenant provided the information 1½ weeks ago. Still there has been no reply. The third tenant got a reply that they will get a reply within four days and that was several weeks ago. When will it come through? How hard can it be? Why is it taking so long?

I want to address the amendments to the Parliament of Queensland Act and some of the provisions that are mooted for remote sittings and the ability to use electronic measures. Once again it is supposed to do with extraordinary events in relation to COVID. Not all legislation though is extraordinary, so I am very uncomfortable with a provision that is giving power to the executive government to potentially shut down the voices except when you have your finger on the switch and that voice can be heard.

Whether you like it or not, the beauty of the chamber is that you can see people and you know that they are going to speak and that they will agree and disagree. It is a very organic, granular process and it is pretty robust, but it is the best one we have. There is a place for electronic measures where there are extraordinary circumstances, but, boy, you have to have checks and balances around it. I do not see that here.

I am concerned by it because whoever has their finger on the switch can turn it off and we will never know who has had their voice shut down. There will be no public gallery to witness it. There will be no witnesses to see that happen. It is something that can be done in secret. That really does not yet have the checks and balances that I think are appropriate where we have the technology to facilitate but also eliminate the voices that must always be heard. Whether the government likes it or not, it is important that one can be heard and not just the majority because we all come in here and represent our constituents who have voted for us to speak on their behalf and to know that we are doing everything we can to make sure that we represent their voices.

We want to see fair and balanced laws and regulations. I do not know if that will happen yet with the commercial aspect. I hope that the level of detail that is required to make sure that is fair is done soon so that all these people who are still in distress, both landlords and tenants, will know what the sphere is and what the regulations are that they are dealing with. It has to be resolved. We have to see that soon. We certainly want to see that so that those who really are fighting to get on with their lives will know what the rules are and they can work in good faith to achieve that.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (9.29 pm): I have been reflecting on the circumstances we are faced with. I feel that in the future we may well be asked by perhaps a grandnephew or grandchild about the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. They may ask, 'Weren't you in parliament during that time? What did you do?' Members like the Premier and the Minister for Health will be able to answer, 'I kept Queensland safe.' Others like the Treasurer and the Minister for State Development, the member for Woodridge, will be able to say, 'I fought to keep industry and jobs alive in Queensland.' The Minister for Education will be able to say, 'I kept both teachers and students safe while running the largest online learning program Queensland will ever saw.' The Minister for Housing, the member for Springwood, is keeping people in homes. He will have something he is able to tell people in the future. At the same time, he is protecting the integrity of the rental market.

When the Prime Minister said that no-one was to be evicted during the coronavirus, he was looking out for both tenants and landlords. He wanted to see tenants continue to pay rent. He wanted to see that preserved. He wanted to see tenants connected to their landlords and their houses so that when things are restored that market will be intact. He also wanted to see tenants stay in houses. He did not want to see a massive increase in homelessness that would lead to further health problems.

I have looked carefully at what the minister has proposed. It is a balanced approach dealing with the principles that the Prime Minister outlined. I was disappointed to see that in the middle of a crisis there were those—and some on the other side are included in this—who took this as an opportunity to mislead Queenslanders, both landlords and tenants, when it comes to the situation we face.

Ms Pease: Who would do that?

Mr POWER: One of the issues mentioned was that a tenant would not have to prove in any way that they had lost income. I had heard this said. I notice that the member for Burleigh still believes this mistruth.

A policeman from Mundoolun gave me a call. He is a landlord. He said, 'I have heard what has been said.' I said to him, 'The member for Springwood is actually from a small business family. He knows about these types of investments. I do not think it is right, but what if I ring him and get that the information?' We had been told that all the information was available, but for the member for Burleigh's benefit I point out that there is a website called The Hub. Is that correct minister?

Mr de Brenni: Yes.

Mr POWER: The minister said, 'Linus, just scan down to the section where it has commonly asked questions.' One of the commonly asked questions was for landlords. I dutifully went to that. It explicitly states—there is no ambiguity there whatsoever—that to get any kind of rental discount people would have to show that they have been impacted by COVID-19. It is absolutely clear. It is there in black and white.

Mr Hart: What did it say?

Mr POWER: It went even further to say that if agreement could not be reached—and obviously agreement is not going to be reached if someone cannot prove they have been affected if they are not going to show their wage documentation and their statements from Centrelink—the RTA could demand all of the documentation necessary to make a decision. Admittedly, I had not sought to find this out, but I asked the minister and I was given absolutely clear directions where to find the information. It took 30 seconds of effort to understand the policy that is so important to both landlords and tenants. What we heard today from the member for Burleigh is that he never bothered to spend 30 seconds to actually find out what the policy is.

There will come a time when we are asked what we did at this time. Some members will have to say, 'I intentionally misled tenants and landlords in an attempt to score political points.' That is something that will stay with them. I commend the minister for taking a balanced approach to this. This primarily looks after the rental market. It not only connects tenants and landlords, which is essential if we are going to restore this market after this crisis, but also allows tenants who have been massively impacted by the crisis to stay in their own homes, as the Prime Minister outlined. I am deeply disturbed that people see this as an opportunity to mislead people. This is so simple. It is vital that people pay their rent on time and in full. When they come back into the job market we know they will do that.

When we look back, one of the things the Premier would be able to say with dutiful and rightful pride is, 'I put differences aside to work with the Prime Minister for the good of our nation.' I think that this could stand as a lesson for others. Some members on the other side—I commend them because I have had some good discussions with them; I am not going to single anyone out because they will probably damage their position—they have been useful in terms of feeding information through about cases and developments and what is happening in workplaces. We have been working together for our state. I commend those members for that.

However, some of the LNP leadership should hang their heads in shame. I imagine that their answer to a grandnephew or grandchild's question in the future will be deeply embarrassing. The opposition leader could say, 'I made a video of myself touching groceries and then putting them back for others to pick up.' That is bizarre, I know. Others could say, 'I tried to wreck an airline and throw thousands of families out of work.' Others on the LNP front bench could claim that it is all a scare campaign. This is on the parliamentary record. It is bizarre, I know. Others could say that they attacked good initiatives, undermining public confidence in our health message at the worst possible time. The member for Kawana could say that he ignored the Prime Minister's 1.5-metre rule for workplaces by calling us all in here.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Member for Logan, I do appreciate your words of wisdom, but could you please come back to the bill. You are straying significantly from the terms of the bill on any interpretation.

Mr POWER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your guidance. That is their legacy. I need to emphasise that this is not the approach of everyone in the LNP. I will have to answer the question about what contribution I made to the COVID-19 response. I know that I tried to be positive, to give feedback and to be constructive about what was happening in the electorate of Logan to help us through this.

The House is proposing that the Economics and Governance Committee, of which I am a member, conduct an inquiry and report on both the Queensland government's response to COVID-19, especially its economic response, and the Australian government's response to COVID-19. This is part of what is being debated in this bill. This is a serious role that we would be undertaking. This is part of the ongoing examination of the situation that is contained in this bill that does need to be passed tonight. I think it is essential that it is passed. I encourage everyone to vote to pass this bill.

The committee would take this role seriously and look at some of the initiatives and threats that face us, especially on the economic front, and the role of the federal government, which I think has been extremely positive, how it affects Queensland and how we fit into this. We want to be positive and

helpful. We want to add to the knowledge around a difficult policy response. I want to be able to say in the future that I helped in the most serious crisis we have collectively ever faced. My support for the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020 is in this sense. I want to say to our future generation, 'I carefully evaluated the facts, I helped improve the situation and I voted to support the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill.' I encourage all members to do the same.

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (9.39 pm): I rise to speak to the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill. I also declare that my wife and I have an investment property which is declared on my pecuniary interests register.

I want to address a couple of issues that we have heard from honourable members opposite including a rather shrill contribution from the Minister for Education, who I think must be feeling the pressure of recent days in her portfolio, criticising this side of the House for some of the ways in which we have been carrying on in this debate about rental issues, tenants and landlords. Even the member for Logan did that in his contribution just a moment ago.

I think the proof of whether there were some changes from the Minister for Housing and Public Works was evidenced last Friday when he was sent out to do a press conference here on the Speaker's Green and we then all received a release that said, 'We have listened.' If there was nothing in the original proposal that did not have to be changed, why would the minister put out a release that says, 'We have listened'? It is obvious that there were concerns with the original proposal, as our shadow minister, the member for Burleigh, has expressed.

We did not start the complaints. In my case, as it happens, whilst I was in between ringing constituents who have been concerned about other issues that we have had to deal with on the Gold Coast—such as crime and JobKeeper and JobSeeker issues, as I have already mentioned in the debate on the appropriation bill—I happened to receive a statement from my property manager. I do not have it with me, but it outlined a number of issues that the REIQ had clearly expressed concerns about in terms of what the rental tenancy and landlord policy was going to be. It was not the opposition who started it.

I said to many constituents whom I subsequently rang, 'If the LNP went out and said that this is what we were planning to do, many people would say, "You are just politicising it." So, having consideration, we did not do that. What I subsequently did with the scores of constituents of mine and constituents of honourable members in surrounding seats who I communicate with—in fact, we ask people when they write to my office, 'Would you please tell us where you live?' because we cannot always find them on the roll and we want to make sure we do send them a response. Many of these people were writing to us with their concerns. It was not an opposition scare campaign.

As I have said already, that is proven by the minister's press conference. As I drove home I subsequently watched his press conference at which he clearly dealt with and extensively dealt with over, I think, 15 minutes—it was a lengthy press conference—many of those issues. It is just a bit rich to cop it from those opposite when we were the messenger. We wanted to make it as clear as possible for people with whom we are communicating and with whom I will be communicating from tomorrow. I have already said I will be communicating with them from tomorrow. I have said, 'I will give you an update about where we are at the moment,' having advised them that the government had said they had listened. I will be advising them tomorrow or in the days following this sitting about what it is that we have decided tonight as a parliament.

I think it is a bit rich when there were original suggestions that forgone rental might not be able to be collected, and the anecdotal evidence that I was receiving from many of the constituents to whom I have spoken was that they had met people or had renters in their own property who said, 'I'm not paying rent anymore, because the Prime Minister said I don't have to.'

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Thank you, member for Logan. You have made your contribution.

Mr LANGBROEK: That shows the importance of making sure that when messages come from leaders they are clearly enunciated and that, if it is in an area that is to do with state legislation, then the state parliament needs to rapidly enact laws and make sure that the messages that go out are correct before we come into this place and have to deal with the consequences for our constituents who are concerned about the messages that they are hearing.

I only have 37 seconds left! I wanted to talk about a Broadbeach Waters' mum who relayed a heart-wrenching story to me on the phone, detailing how her husband's tattoo parlour was shut. He was left with no job and they have three kids. Their eight-year-old was packing her bags in fear—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock. We are going to reset the clock, member.

Mr LANGBROEK: I do not think it has been 15 minutes, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: He may have been misplaced.

Mr LANGBROEK: I know I am erudite but I didn't think 10 minutes had passed that quickly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will not enter into debate on that one. The member has the call.

Mr LANGBROEK: I was speaking about a Broadbeach Waters' mum that my staff told me about. She had spoken to them first. Her husband's tattoo parlour was shut, so he had no job. Their eight-year-old daughter was packing her bags in fear as she had overheard mum and dad talking and thought that the police were going to evict them. Here are some words from other locals. These represent just a handful out of scores of calls and emails I have received and made. One local said—

We have worked hard to have an investment property to ensure we can be self-sustainable in retirement. My family has the imminent and foreseeable risk to lose our short- and long-term financial viability because of this proposal.

On Facebook a similar sentiment was expressed, with one person saying—

[This proposal is] so lopsided and discriminatory towards landlords, many of whom have worked hard to get a leg up and NOT rely on government assistance. To even suggest a landlord might lose up to a year's rent and the tenant has to offer no proof of reduced capacity to pay, is just mind-bogglingly wrong.

Mr de Brenni: It's not true. So you told them that wasn't true?

Mr LANGBROEK: I take that interjection. The point was that this is what people were writing to me about their perception of what the government had told them. Ministers will attest to this that, when I get a complaint from a constituent, I do not pass judgement on it to them. I send it to the minister for clarification.

Mr Power: You don't inform them of what the reality is.

Mr LANGBROEK: The important issue is that the messages that were coming from this government—and it is clear that they had to change those messages because the minister came out subsequently and said, 'We have listened.' One local emailed me to question the fairness of the reforms, saying—

How is it fair for any landlord to keep things afloat when they still have to pay all the expenses? Landlords too can lose their job and have no income.

Do you have any issue with that, member for Logan? I do not think there is anything there that is too hard to understand.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, direct your comments through the chair, if you do not mind.

Mr LANGBROEK: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker. Another constituent expressed her frustrations at being penalised for working hard and her concerns that she will not be able to pay her own bills under the previous reforms, saying—

As a Landlord, am fortunate enough at my age to have worked and saved for 55 years, I am now very concerned with the Governments allowing tenants to opt out of paying rent.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan!

Mr LANGBROEK: I continue—

I rely on my weekly rental to pay the Body Corporate, Council Rates and water as well as help pay my weekly bills ... I understand the hardship we are all going through, but we as Landlords are being penalised for owning a rental property. This is not fair, I am into fair, but this is going to cause such hardships to myself if this law is to go ahead.

It is good to see that lobbying from the LNP team, stakeholders such as the REIQ and locals has resulted in Labor being dragged back to parliament with major reforms to their original plans due to the backlash from thousands of Queenslanders. However, this does not discount the anxiety and despair Labor's previous bill, or proposals for a bill, caused within my community. The measures that Labor originally proposed went well beyond the intent of the national cabinet mandatory code of conduct and, as such, are the most onerous in the country.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, I have asked you several times now to cease your interjections. Next time you will be on a warning.

Mr LANGBROEK: As the father of three young adults, I understand how important it is to support tenants during this pandemic. However, Labor's previous proposals shifted the burden onto landlords to the extent that many were convinced that they were about to go bankrupt. It was not fair that

mum-and-dad property owners, self-funded retirees and young people who have saved and sacrificed to buy their first investment property were initially expected to cop the brunt of the financial pain under Labor's misguided approach.

The tonality and approach towards landlords in the bill before us today seem to have softened since the initial package was announced—specifically, the circumstances when a person suffers excessive hardship because of COVID-19 emergency including when the person's place of employment has closed or trade or business has been restricted and the person suffers a loss of income of 25 per cent or more or the rent payable by the person is 30 per cent or more of the person's income. This has to be proven with specific and relevant documentation. However, if there is more than one tenant or resident, the criteria then becomes 25 per cent or more reduction in the combined total income.

With regard to the moratorium on evictions, until the end of the COVID-19 emergency period a lessor or lessor's agent must not evict a tenant for failing to pay the rent if the failure relates to the tenant suffering excessive hardship because of COVID-19. In terms of extending residential tenancy agreements, if the tenant is suffering excessive hardship the lessor must, before the term of the agreement ends, offer the tenant an extension of the term to 30 September 2020 or an earlier date requested by the tenant. Rent continues on the same terms.


I received an email from a constituent who told me that he was returning to Australia, and he was concerned because he had a tenant whose lease was due to expire at the end of June. This fellow wanted to move back into his own unit, and he was concerned that he would not be able to under the legislation originally proposed. That is a matter that obviously still needs to be clarified. The extension of short tenancies also applies to residential tenancy agreements for movable dwelling premises.

With regard to the conciliation of disputes about unpaid rent, either party may make a request for dispute resolution, or if the matter is not resolved through conciliation either party may apply to the tribunal for an order of that unpaid rent. The lessor and tenant may enter into a tenancy variation agreement at any time. I understand that many will come to an agreement and they will try to do the right thing for each other. I have spoken to constituents who said that they had tenants for up to 12 years, and they tried to take care of those tenants during the GFC. These things are often reciprocated at other times when they themselves have been in circumstances when they needed assistance from another party.

Constituents with concerns about entry to premises can note that the rules of entry continue to apply other than to the extent prohibited due to a person in the premises being subject to a quarantine direction, or where it would contravene a public health direction, or the tenant or other person at the premises is a vulnerable person. Under those circumstances the tenant must allow the lessor or agent to carry out the inspection by virtual inspection or videoconferencing.

Domestic violence continues to be a major concern during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the requirement to self-isolate. If the tenant believes that he or she can no longer safely continue to occupy the premises, the tenant may end their interest in the agreement by giving notice in the approved form and the agreement ends seven days after the notice is given. In terms of notice to leave, the lessor must not give a notice to leave without grounds if the tenant is or has been suffering from excessive hardship because of the COVID-19 emergency.

It is clear that the overwhelmingly negative feedback from Queensland's property industry and voters was loud and clear. Throughout the duration of COVID-19 it is vital that we enact fair and well-considered laws in this House to bring some form of security, consistency and certainty to Queenslanders who are understandably anxious as we prepare for the next normal. That is what the LNP will continue to fight for and why we are seeing changes to the rental reforms today. I will continue to advocate for the resources and laws my community needs during this time and beyond.

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (9.52 pm): My commitment to the small business sector is on record both in this House and in the Mount Ommaney community. Prior to being elected I spent most of my working life—and all of my life—in and around small business, and it is a family tradition that continues to this day. My little sister is the local barista at All Things Tasmanian in River Hills. Thanks to all the public servants who are working from home they are doing a roaring trade right now. They have literally never been busier. I am proud to say that my sister was single-handedly responsible for implementing social distancing measures in that shop before they were mandated by government. That is a great example of local businesses stepping up to the plate and innovating in this environment.

I know from speaking to locals, families and friends in the industry that, for most, conditions have never been tougher than they are right now. That is why the good leadership of government and community is important right now. I want to thank the Centenary & Districts Chamber of Commerce, my

local chapter of the CCIQ, for their leadership under president Ada, vice-president Adam, Lisa Bailey and Louise Draper for their leadership of our community businesses. I use the word 'community' advisedly. I have seen so many businesses step up and help each other out in adapting to these social distancing changes and working together to come out the other side of COVID-19 stronger than ever so they can keep looking after our local community.

In Mount Ommaney, as you would all be aware, we have so many great local businesses and landlords, as the member for Surfers Paradise well knows, like Thilani Catering in Jindalee, Odontologica Dental in the Centenary suburbs and Envirochill, which is a home based innovative local business in Sinnamon Park. Yet another, Bailey Print Group, has retooled their business away from printing and they now make PPE. My favourite local brewery in Sumner Park now makes hand sanitiser too. Our Mount Ommaney locals love supporting these small businesses. You know that I host the small business awards every year, so I know that these legislative changes are going to be embraced by our—

Mr HART: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance.

Ms PUGH: We are not going to do this again, are we?

Mr HART: Yes, we are.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Please resume your seat. A point of order has been made.

Mr HART: It is all very nice to hear all of this, but it has nothing to do with the bill.

Ms PUGH: This is the second time you have done this to me.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am going to ask you to sit down because I have not made a ruling yet on the point of order. I think you are straying a long way from the bill. You are talking about small business, but I do not see it relating to the terms of the bill, even in the explanatory notes. If you can come back to how your contribution in relation to small business directly relates to the bill, please proceed. Otherwise, move on to a second topic.


Ms PUGH: In particular, I am incredibly excited about the transition of our small business champion to our Small Business Commissioner. The transition from a small business champion to a small business commissioner will bring Queensland in line with New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia, which all currently have small business commissioners. In 2016 under the Palaszczuk government Labor created the Small Business Champion role to be a strong advocate for small business and representation at national discussions. This was after the LNP abolished the business commissioner and left Queensland businesses without an advocate.

I am really pleased to say that Ms Maree Adshead, Queensland's inaugural Small Business Champion, has been a passionate advocate for the sector since her appointment more than three years ago. I think she is an excellent choice to fill this new role. The need to strengthen and expand the role of the current part-time Small Business Champion was recognised late last year by key stakeholders, including small business and industry groups. The need for a commissioner was highlighted during recent discussions regarding our next small business strategy discussion paper—this was before the current crisis—and the need has only grown since then. Small businesses right across Queensland need vital support now to manage disputes with their landlords. Many have been forced to close their doors or innovate dramatically as a result of the pandemic. More than just an advocate, they need somebody with real power, real teeth, to mediate disputes—just like what happens in other jurisdictions.

One example is a clothing store at Kenilworth that has opted to close in order to comply with social distancing requirements. The owner has been told by the landlord that her lease is cancelled because she failed to open the store during trading hours. The landlord will not consider a rent reduction in this time either. This is just one of the many examples of businesses faced with situations that need professional advice and support to navigate leasing issues during these unprecedented times.

Already many small businesses have been reaching out to our hotline in need of support in navigating this process. We have asked tenants and landlords where possible to work together, but we know this is not always possible. When negotiations break down, small businesses currently have nowhere to turn. Legal channels are costly and our time-poor small businesses are hurting. Having a commissioner with the power to negotiate rental disputes will give small businesses a hand when they are most in need. I can think of many small Mount Ommaney businesses that do need this now during COVID-19. We are acting now in this current time of crisis when small businesses need this additional dispute resolution. I think it is really important during this time, but I think there are going to be long-term

benefits for small business far beyond this COVID-19 crisis. It is for that reason that, as a former small business manager, I am so excited to see the introduction of a small business commissioner. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (9.59 pm): I would like to start by offering my condolences to anybody who is suffering right now from COVID-19 throughout Queensland—whether they are suffering with the virus personally, whether they are dealing with the hardships of owning a small business and a loss of income or whether they are in the situation right now of having disputes with their landlord about whether or not they can pay the rent. There are a lot of people out there who are doing it tough and I would like to acknowledge that. I would also like to acknowledge those people working on the front line—whether they are a health worker or an essential worker keeping this country running right now. We are able to see that some jobs are essential and some jobs are not. It is great to see that the mining sector and the agricultural sector are going very strong right now.

Through this situation, we have seen a lot of miscommunication between different lobby groups and the state government. Literally, every day we open our electoral office and we walk in we are waiting for the next wave. What is going to be the next wave we will have to battle? Will it be something from QPS? Will it be something from Queensland Health? Will it be a new health directive or will it be like something I copped a couple of weeks ago? We had phone calls from firearm dealers to tell us that they had just received a letter from Weapons Licensing saying they had to shut their businesses down. They had been told to shut down even though there was no real reason why they had to shut down. They were told that they were not able to open the following Monday if it was not sorted.

This is the problem that happens if there is not proper consultation with an industry. All the powers were given to the Chief Health Officer to make decisions like that, and that is what got us into that situation. After two weeks of lobbying backwards and forwards, we were able to see some clarity and common sense prevail in what Weapons Licensing was able to allow licensed armours and dealers to actually do.

People might ask what this has got to do with this part of the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020. I believe a very similar situation has happened between the REIQ and the state government. There has been some miscommunication, and some misinformation has got out to the wider community. My mind boggles to think that a large industry body as reputable as the REIQ has not been given the right information. There must have been some sort of consultation with them—or perhaps there was not. Either way, this is the information that was put out into the community. Once again, if there was better consultation from the state government and better community engagement with the state government perhaps a lot of this going backwards and forwards could have been avoided—as well as the thousands of emails we all received over the last couple of weeks. We have had not only landlords but real estate agents lobbying our offices trying to find out what these changes are going to look like and what we are going to do about stopping some of the things that were being presented.

Where this legislation seems to have landed is quite measured. I believe it is in the right place. It does two things. It protects the rights of landlords, while also making sure those who are suffering hardship at the moment due to COVID-19 are not falling through the cracks and becoming homeless and therefore becoming another problem not only for government but for society. Nobody wants to see anybody on the street right now. People deserve to have a roof over their heads. During this time, both parties need to be looked after.


We have seen some regulation come through and I am concerned by a couple of things, and a couple of speakers tonight have actually raised this as well. Once you have been able to show that you have special hardship due to COVID-19, tenants can ask for a reduced amount in their rent but there is a section in item 6(b)(ii) where it talks about rent payable by the person under the rental tenancy agreement or room accommodation agreement is more than 30 per cent of the person's income. That may be a situation where that person can ask for a reduction in the rent if it is over 30 per cent of their income, whether it is through JobKeeper, JobSeeker or a reduction in their hours. That confuses me a bit and hopefully someone can give me some clarity on that. There may be people out there who decided to pay more than 30 per cent of their income for their rent back when they were making good money but now they are in a situation where that is not the case.

I am very happy to see the situation around extending the lease if it is due to expire before 29 September. That is a good thing. There are similar changes also for inspections and emergency repairs where people are required to adhere to social distancing and quarantine regulations. These inspections and repairs can be met through alternative ways. Virtual technology is sensible in that situation. That will help a lot of people, especially those who are vulnerable to this disease at the moment and scared about letting tradespeople or others into their house to do these inspections.

There are provisions in the bill to look after people who are affected by domestic violence. I do note that those people are in volatile situations. Whenever there is debate about money, people being unemployed or people's future, tempers can flair. There is no excuse for domestic violence but we would all have to pretend we are living under a rock to think it is not happening or not going to increase in this situation. It is good to see that these people will be protected during this time. Like I said, the last thing we want to see is anybody out on the street during this situation.

There are provisions in this for meetings to be held and statutory declarations to be signed via technology to avoid people actually having face-to-face contact with each other. I see that as a good thing. There are also provisions in the bill that give parliament the ability to sit via a technological platform. That is probably a good idea if we get into a situation where we have a second spike. We seem to be heading in a direction right now through the social distancing that has been put in place and that we are abiding by where we are flattening the curve. Let us hope that all the people in Queensland work together to continue on that path, but if the situation does arise where we do have a spike and we cannot sit in this House like we are today, it would be great to see us use some sort of technological platform. However, let us hope if we do get to that point that whatever we decide to use is tested because we did have a situation this week where the education system crashed a bit with the online learning. I received a fair few complaints about that, but I think if the system in parliament did not work we would have a lot of angry people in here complaining to the parliament and I do not want to hear that.

In closing, the KAP will be supporting this bill. We hope people can continue to work together. We hope we can continue the open dialogue so we do not have a situation where we have a week of people going backwards and forwards with misinformation creating hysteria out there. One can understand why those people were upset and angry. They are mum-and-dad investors. They are people who have worked hard in whatever industry they have chosen to get themselves to a point where they can take a second mortgage out on their house to try to buy an investment property to perhaps have a little nest egg for their kids as they grow up or be able to retire as a self-funded retiree. That was all about to be taken away from them with the stroke of a pen. I can understand why people in the community were very anxious. Like I said, through consultation and the backwards and forwards, we have been able to land in a place where landlords and renters are protected. We will be supporting the bill. We commend it to the House.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.08 pm): I rise to support the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020. There can be no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on every aspect of life. Whether it is physical distancing or working from home arrangements, which many of us are adjusting to in our community, or the dire economic impact, no area of life has been left untouched.

That is certainly the case also in terms of the Transport and Main Roads portfolio where we are encountering unique issues and problems. For instance, we quickly came to terms with the health risk posed by international vessels transiting Queensland waters and berthing at Queensland ports. We acted early and we acted hard and we have had no known infections come into Queensland via a Queensland port to date, in contrast to a certain other state, and we aim to keep it that way. We have also had to make adjustments about how we deliver customer services to thousands of Queenslanders, whether it is for rego renewal, driver licensing or the many other services at a TMR customer service centre.

We have had to intervene across every mode of transport to ensure connectivity in regional Queensland. Many of the issues we have encountered have been caused by requirements that exist in transport legislation. In some cases, that can be as simple as complying with a time requirement such as when people have to renew their driver's licence. In other cases, our transport legislation has required people to do things which now, of course, the health advice recommends not doing. In all these cases, we have been confronted by the human impact of our laws on ordinary Queenslanders who have been trying their best to do the right thing. Largely, that has certainly been the case. I commend Queenslanders for their cooperation and their commitment to dealing with the times. We understand how hard those resolute efforts have been.

The bill provides a legislative framework which will have application across a whole suite of legislation including transport legislation. The bill sets up a scheme by which government will have the ability and the authority to make certain changes to the law where that is needed specifically in response to COVID-19. While we have been countering many of the issues thrown up by the pandemic so far, we know there will be other challenges as we progress. That is why it is necessary for government to be armed with the tools necessary to respond to this rapidly changing and evolving environment. If further measures are needed, the government will bring further legislation before the House.

We will not be found wanting when it comes to our response to this health emergency. In my portfolio we have already taken steps to address some of those issues that have manifested. I was very pleased that we were able to give comfort to older drivers in relation to the requirement to hold a current medical certificate. This issue was a source of great concern for many older drivers, their carers and also their family members. Indeed, I know that many members in this place would be familiar with the issue as many of them raised it with me.

While senior Queenslanders were urged to remain at home by health advice, under the transport legislation they were required to have a current medical certificate in order for their driver's licence to be valid. Many such medical certificates became due for renewal, and senior drivers were worried about having to attend their doctor's surgery or their optometrist given the increased risk that that trip presented. The changes we introduced included that medical certificates that were obtained to meet the senior driver requirements that expired after 29 January 2020 will be considered valid until six months after the emergency ends. During this emergency period, senior drivers will not be committing an offence if they drive while not holding a valid medical certificate.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Pursuant to the motion agreed to today and the time limit for this stage of the bill having expired, I will now put the question—

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Question put—That clauses 1 to 36 and schedule 1, as read, stand part of the bill.

Motion agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 36, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 1, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

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

Motion agreed to.

MOTIONS

Suspension of Standing Order



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.13 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That standing order 263A be suspended until further notice.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Adoption of Sessional Orders



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.13 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the sessional orders circulated in my name detailing special procedures for transacting business shall be adopted and apply from assent to the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020 until that bill lapses or the House is dissolved.

SESSIONAL ORDERS—SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR TRANSACTING BUSINESS IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES (COVID-19 PANDEMIC)**Special Procedures take precedence**

1. These Sessional Orders implementing Special Procedures, where inconsistent with Standing Orders and other Sessional Orders, take precedence until the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020 lapses or the House is dissolved.

Electronic participation

2. The Speaker may approve technology (including hardware, software and systems of use) for meetings of the Legislative Assembly whereby all or some members, including the Speaker or Deputy Speaker presiding, may be present by telephone or video or other electronic means.
3. The technology approved by the Speaker must enable business to be transacted and allow reasonably continuous and contemporaneous communication between the Speaker or Deputy Speaker presiding and the members present, and between the members present.
4. The Speaker may:
 - (a) Mandate security protocols and procedures for Members and Officers to follow using the technology to join the meeting; and
 - (b) Mandate the networks and devices that may be used (or not used).
5. The Committee of the Legislative Assembly may approve modified rules of debate, order and behaviour for members seeking the call, taking points of order and other matters related to regulating debate which may be at odds with normal practice and procedure, but are best adapted to enable the meeting to occur with the approved technology.
6. The Speaker shall, prior to any sitting where technology in 2. and 3. is to be used, ensure reasonable instructions and support to all Members prior to the meeting to enable their participation by the technology approved by the Speaker.

Broadcast

7. The Speaker shall approve the broadcast of meetings of the Legislative Assembly held in accordance with 2.
8. The Speaker shall determine whether such broadcast will be live or delayed.

Quorum

9. Members who are participating in meetings of the Legislative Assembly by the technology approved by the Speaker may be counted towards a quorum.

Attendance

10. The Clerk and his delegates are responsible for counting the attendance of Members in the meeting and recording their attendance in the Record of Proceedings.
11. A member is deemed to be in attendance if they are:
 - (a) physically present at the place of the meeting; or
 - (b) have joined the meeting at any time during the day's proceeding using the technology approved by the Speaker.

Tabling of documents

12. Members seeking to table documents will provide the documents to be tabled to the Clerks at-the-Table via email to TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au in PDF format.

Amendments and Notices of Motion

13. An amendment to any question or notice of motion must be provided to the Clerks-at-the-Table via email to TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Distribution of material required to be circulated

14. The Clerk or their delegate will distribute documents, including tabled papers and amendments to bills and notices of motion, to Members by email.

Procedure for putting question and holding vote

15. When the Speaker has put a question to the House, Members may indicate their agreement with the "Ayes" or "Noes" by calling "Aye" or "No" and physically raise their hand at the time each proposition is put. The Speaker shall declare whether the "Ayes" or the "Noes" have it.
16. Any Member who has voted against the majority as declared by the Speaker may demand a vote by calling "vote".
17. When a vote is demanded, the bells shall be rung for four minutes and the Speaker shall then call for a vote. However, if there has already been a division in respect of that order of the day or motion, and there is no intervening debate, the Speaker may order the bells to be rung for one minute.

Voting—Party vote unless a conscience required

18. Where a vote is demanded, a party vote is held unless the subject of the vote is to be treated as a conscience vote.
19. If the Speaker has received prior advice from a party whip of a conscience vote, the Speaker will permit a personal vote to be held instead of a party vote.

Procedure and rules for a party vote

20. In a party vote:
 - (a) when the bells have finished ringing, the Speaker shall state the question to the House;
 - (b) the Speaker asks the Government Whip and Opposition Whip to cast the party's votes;
 - (c) the Speaker asks the Leader of any Minor Party (or other Member delegated by the Party Leader) that has more than one Member in the Assembly to cast the party's votes;
 - (d) The Speaker then calls in turn members of other minor parties, recognised parties or independents participating in the meeting at that time to cast their votes;
 - (e) the Speaker declares the result to the House; and
 - (f) the result of the vote will be entered in the Record of Proceedings.
21. Votes may only be cast for the Ayes or Noes but Minor Party votes may include both votes for the Ayes and Noes.
22. The total number of votes cast for each party may include proxy votes (see 24.) but must not include:
 - (a) any Members who have been paired;
 - (b) any Member who will not be attending the meeting that day (see 11. above) and who has not notified of a proxy in writing (see 24.);
 - (c) any Member who has been asked to withdraw from the Chamber under Standing Orders 252 or 253A or named under Standing Order 254 for the period they have been ordered to withdraw or are excluded.

Procedure for personal vote

23. In a personal vote:
 - (a) when the bells have finished ringing, the Speaker shall state the question to the House;
 - (b) votes may only be cast for the Ayes or Noes;
 - (c) the Clerk reads the names of each Member by their electorate (alphabetically and one at a time) and the Member shall cast their vote orally for the Ayes or Noes;
 - (d) the Clerk will then report the votes to the Speaker;
 - (e) the Speaker will declare the result to the House; and
 - (f) the result of the vote will be entered in the Record of Proceedings.

Proxy Votes

24. A member (the absent member) may notify the Speaker in writing that the member will be absent from nominated meetings of the Assembly and desires to vote as a member at those meetings—
 - (a) by way of a named proxy who is also a member (the first proxy); or
 - (b) if the first proxy is not present, by another named proxy, who is also a member (the second proxy).
25. The proxy may vote as and for the absent member either without voting in the proxy's own right or in addition to voting in the proxy's own right.
26. Party Whips may include proxy votes by its party members in any party vote (see 22.)

Incorporation of speeches

27. A member in attendance (see 11.) and physically present may, by leave of the House, incorporate their speech or part of their speech in debate on a matter.
28. A member in attendance (see 11.) and using the technology approved by the Speaker may provide the Speaker with their speech in debate on a matter and request that the Speaker on their behalf, by leave of the House, incorporate their speech in debate.
29. A member who is paired may provide the Speaker with their speech in debate on a matter and request that the Speaker on their behalf, by leave of the House, incorporate their speech in debate.
30. The following rules apply to all incorporations:
 - (a) The member's total speech must not exceed that which would normally be allowed in the time allotted (160 words for every 1 minute of speech time);
 - (b) Speeches should not include graphs, charts or other material;
 - (c) Members must provide the Clerks-at-the-Table (via email to TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au) and Parliamentary Reporting (via email to Hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au) with their speech in electronic form prior to leave being sought to incorporate their speech. Other members will be provided access, on request, to a members' speech prior to the publication of the record of proceedings; and
 - (d) All speeches must be provided to the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker prior to leave being sought for incorporation. Speeches intended to be incorporated should not offend Standing Orders in any way, such as by containing personal reflections or imputations.



Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (10.14 pm): Unbelievable! I support it! Well done. Thank you for consulting me on it.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.14 pm): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 19 May 2020 to a place, either the Legislative Assembly chamber or the Undumbi Room, to be advised by the Speaker.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.15 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Coronavirus, Queensland Border Closure



Mr LISTER (Southern Downs—LNP) (10.15 pm): I rise to speak about the matter of the border closure in my electorate of Southern Downs. We would all be aware of the necessity to close the Queensland border and the fact that the work of the federal and state governments has resulted in a great slowing in the spread of coronavirus and the protection of life. I get that, as do my constituents in Southern Downs. However, the closure of the border we share with New South Wales has caused grave difficulties for many of my constituents.

It is not like Coolangatta, where there are services on both sides of the border. In my electorate of Southern Downs I have about 400 kilometres of country bordering New South Wales and many of the communities share a common interest with those on the other side. They may live just inside New South Wales and have to go to the doctor or shop in Queensland, or they may live in Queensland and find that the ambulance comes from New South Wales if they have a heart attack or a car crash.

The trouble with the border closures is that there have been concrete blocks placed across most of the existing crossings between New South Wales and Queensland. This has cut off residents on both sides from emergency services, from schools, from doctors, from the shops and also in many cases from farmland. They may own farming properties on both sides of the border. In one unfortunate case, a farmer contacted me to say that he has to do a 200-kilometre round trip with a low loader to take a tractor from one side of his property to the other. This is unacceptable.

I have written at length to the Premier. In fact, I have written to her twice on the matter of the border closures and I have received a dusty response simply restating the same statements that the government has already made. I have asked the state government to open more border crossings. I stress that I am not talking about expanding the category of people who are entitled to cross the border. I am just saying that no-one in this state should have to drive a 200-kilometre round trip to conduct their normal business when they are a prescribed person who is entitled to cross the border.

I would like to acknowledge my predecessor as the member for Southern Downs, the Hon. Lawrence Springborg, who is now the mayor of Goondiwindi Regional Council. He and his council have done a great job in working with the local police to organise a system for prescribed residents to cross at certain gates. I wish them well with that and I congratulate them on that initiative. It will not be a perfect solution. In the Southern Downs Regional Council area they have no such solution yet.

There are many people who are being gravely inconvenienced by this. I have proposed to the Premier that she get Australian Defence Force personnel to operate extra checkpoints. The offer was taken up to the extent that soldiers are now on checkpoints in the place of police. That is fine, but we still have no more checkpoints. People have a right to be able to access ambulances and their local community of interest, and they should not have to drive several hundred kilometres to do so.

Interruption.

ACTING SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Parliamentary Service Response



Mr ACTING SPEAKER: During these extraordinary times the community is pulling together in the fight against the coronavirus, and the Parliamentary Service is no exception. The Clerk approached me about possible worthy causes in the area that may benefit from the use of Parliamentary Service

kitchens and staff. The Scarlett May Foundation, based in the electorate of Greenslopes, provides meals to families of critically ill children in hospital. Last month the Queensland Children's Hospital asked the Scarlett May Foundation to double their normal monthly supply from 1,200 to 2,400 meals in response to the pressure caused by COVID-19.

I am happy to advise that from the start of this month the Queensland parliament catering unit will donate over 2,000 meals this month to the Scarlett May Foundation. I wish to thank the Speaker and the Clerk for their support in this matter, but most of all I wish to thank the parliamentary catering team led by the Executive Chef, Andrew McCrea, for their work which is helping those in need. I understand similar support is being provided by the Parliamentary Service to Wesley Mission after contact with the member for Bulimba, and just last week 208 kilos of repurposed food was sent out to the Wesley Mission. We are very fortunate for the professional Parliamentary Service which assists us all. It is great that in these tough times they are going above and beyond to serve the community.


Finally, I also wish to thank the staff of the Speaker and the Clerk and the parliamentary staff for the assistance they have provided me today.

ADJOURNMENT

Resumed from p. 837, on motion of Mrs D'Ath—

That the House do now adjourn.

Virgin Australia Airlines

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (10.19 pm): I rise on an unusual matter this evening—certainly very unusual for me. I rise to praise a Queensland LNP Senator, Senator Matt Canavan. Senator Canavan and I have our many differences, but we are on a unity ticket when it comes to saving Virgin Australia. On the *Today* program this morning, Senator Canavan spoke about the Morrison federal government's important role in saving Virgin Australia. In that interview Senator Canavan said—

I do think the government has got to get involved here. We've got to get our hands dirty to save not just those jobs, but also those services that people up here in regional areas, in Rockhampton, rely on so keenly.

Senator Canavan could not be more correct. It is why the Palaszczuk Labor government put \$200 million on the table to contribute to a national support package. Sadly, it is an option that Senator Canavan's federal LNP government has yet to take up; but it is not too late. We can still save Virgin Australia, but the Morrison government needs to step up and, as Senator Canavan says, get its hands dirty because if they do not we all know what will happen.

We saw this horror movie in 2001 when Ansett collapsed and, overnight, Qantas moved to 90 per cent market share. In many cases air fares more than doubled. Queensland, particularly regional Queensland, is staring down that same barrel being bled dry by monopoly pricing. As Geoff Dixon, the then CEO of Qantas, told the *Courier-Mail* on 4 March 2002, 'Bargain fares were simply not sustainable.' What a surprise! He also said, 'We will never go back to the airfares the way they were before.'


As a result, in 2001-02 Qantas booked its second highest profit on record at a time when every other airline in the world was suffering massive losses or going broke. They made those profits off the backs of regional Queenslanders who suffered under monopoly pricing. It took 10 years or even longer before Virgin Australia was finally able to bring competition back to regional Queensland. You would think the state LNP would have remembered this. You would think they would listen to Senator Canavan but, instead of backing, the state LNP have been attacking.

Instead of backing 5,000 Queensland jobs and cheap regional flights, they have been attacking Virgin Australia. All day they came into this chamber saying the airline was badly run, even though independent analysis demonstrated the airline was 10 to 15 per cent more efficient than Qantas on cost per available seat kilometre. The Liberal government in New South Wales thinks it is so well run they want to take it to western Sydney.

The state LNP is so caught up in politics they would rather see Virgin fail than Queensland succeed. It is why the Leader of the Opposition could not even bring herself to say, 'I want Virgin Australia to stay in Queensland.' It is why the deputy LNP leader said, 'Oh, some other airline will show up just like after Ansett collapsed.' He wilfully and deliberately ignores the lost decade suffered by regional Queensland when they were bled dry by monopoly pricing, and next time it could last even

longer. We just do not know. It is time the state LNP stopped the politics, listened to Matt Canavan, got behind Queensland and stepped up to save Virgin Australia, save regional flights and save Queensland jobs.

Burnett Electorate, Coronavirus; Paradise Dam


 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (10.22 pm): As I did not get an opportunity to speak in the debate because of the guillotine motion, I really want to put on the record some issues around the bill just passed by the House. It is devastating to see that Bundaberg and Burnett businesses have concerns about signing up to the JobKeeper payments. Local businesses are not signing up because the state government is refusing to waive payroll tax. JobKeeper payments should be a lifeline for many businesses but end up costing already struggling family businesses. We have just come through the worst years—droughts, floods and fires—and of course we want to make sure that these businesses realise the sad reality of acknowledging that there is nothing left in the bank. Many small and micro businesses have been struggling through the drought and fires and simply have nothing left. The only option for these businesses is to join the queue at Centrelink, but we can do so much more. We need to waive payroll tax.

On behalf of the local chamber of commerce, I want to point out some issues. Our community is not happy with the state stimulus package in these terms—job support loans, significant burden on cash flows to produce the necessary documentation; land tax rebate, many of our businesses do not own their buildings and find land owners unwilling to renegotiate in terms of catch-up payments not being what they need for normal trade; market diversification, resilient brands are not looking for exports but just to survive; wage subsidies, they have enough trouble keeping the doors open let alone putting on more staff; asset write-off, again they need money to purchase this new equipment; and early access to super is not a good thing. Many of these people do not have super. We need to do more. Give lockdown workers free online training and waive the gambling tax for our service clubs crying out for help. Immediately release \$500 million for road projects. Waive all licences and registration renewals for real estate agents. Land tax relief has to be a must. More importantly, we need a bulk water price freeze. Let us make sure irrigation is affordable.

Today, we tried in vain to introduce amendments to the bill in terms of reducing the spillway at Paradise Dam by five metres. This is a really crucial issue. An international expert, Dr Paul Rizzo, told the government's commission of inquiry that there is a solution to stabilising the major spillway. We really do call on the Palaszczuk Labor government to cease and desist all work until we can do more testing, establish that the stabilisers, the anchors and other works that have been done in other dams around the world will work and provide us a solution.

The call tonight is to make sure we put a 12-month moratorium on any works on Paradise Dam. Let us get all the experts back out there and ensure that we are establishing the best practice and model for Paradise Dam. We know that the \$100 million proposed by the Palaszczuk government to reduce the spillway by five metres is excessive. We know that there are solutions, but we need everyone to work together to make sure that the economic security of water security remains the No. 1 priority for the people of the Bundaberg and Burnett region.

Redlands Electorate, Coronavirus


 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (10.25 pm): In these unprecedented times, I place on record my thanks to our Redlands community in how they have responded to this crisis across every facet of how we live daily. The stats sit today at 1,024 Queenslanders, with only 20 coming from the Redlands. I think that Queensland Health's shift to more detailed statistics has been great, particularly for regions like Redlands. I put on record my thanks to our amazing frontline staff at the Redland Hospital under the stewardship of Susan Freidenberg. The member for Capalaba and I look forward this coming Friday to shouting coffees to all of our frontline staff. Our GPs who are deploying flu vaccinations across the board are doing an amazing job. Our paramedics as well—and I had them out to my own house with my mum a week and a half ago—do a fantastic job on the front line. Thank you to all of our frontline staff, including our police who have also been doing a terrific job, particularly across our islands. The Water Police have been doing an incredible job.

In the education space I thank our principals, teachers, teacher aides, support staff and parents. It is a new paradigm that we are in and everybody is coming together in a calm and patient way to ensure that we continue the education journey for our students. That has been really lovely to see. Even though there have been hiccups, I think we are all getting on with the job of making sure that our children keep learning. In the business space, I thank our chamber of commerce that has been bringing

together all of our business entities, small to large, in the Redlands. They have been doing a terrific job in sharing information which is really important in being able to direct them to the services they need to help them survive this coronavirus crisis, see a way to recovery and a journey to the end of this, particularly across the five islands within the Redlands electorate. I want to thank the small businesses that have mobilised so rapidly within days to ensure that food security was provided to our islanders. That has been fantastic. A shout-out to the Jones Group, to Skippy's, to Mick and to Fresh Salads at Victoria Point as they all have done a great job with the simple objective of making sure our islanders get the food delivery they need.

In terms of transport, there are not many Queenslanders who can say they have to travel to and from the mainland by ferry to get to those essential services. Our captains and crews have been doing an amazing job. I give a huge shout-out to the SeaLink team. In terms of our community groups, Redlands has seen one of the biggest uptakes in Care Army subscription. I thank everybody who has bought into the Care Army. It is a fantastic job that you are doing to ensure that we are a strong community. I thank our Bay Island Community Services Group as they are doing a great job, the Centre for Women & Co and Running Wild to name but a few of the community groups. I think everybody in this chamber has seen their communities mobilise to show the strength that Queenslanders bring in times of crisis. I am very proud to represent Redlands.

Legacy

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (10.28 pm): The work of Legacy is born of a promise made by a soldier to his mate dying on the Western Front, a promise that he would look after his wife and kids, a promise that no widow or family member of a deceased veteran will ever face life's challenges alone. It is a commitment that for nearly 100 years has supported elderly widows, single parents, grieving children and people with a disability—the very people we all are most concerned about during this difficult time. During my military service, the thing that concerned me more than anything was the thought of how my loved ones would be affected in the event that I was killed or suffered from a serious injury. Like many service personnel, I took great comfort in knowing that my loved ones would be supported by organisations like Legacy should the worst happen.


Since its inception Legacy has been largely supported through donations from the community and from corporate donors. While caring for more than 6,700 widows and 250 dependants spread across an area extending from Bowen to Brisbane, Brisbane Legacy has always sought to be self-sufficient, but the impact of the current pandemic is a massive threat to their work. Due to the impact of the coronavirus directly and resultant cancellation of Anzac Day events, Brisbane Legacy is facing the prospect of a \$1.4 million loss in the next 12 months. This will mean drastically reduced support to the widows and dependants that Brisbane Legacy currently cares for. I table a letter that I wrote to the Premier detailing these concerns a month ago.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 26 March 2020, from the member for Buderim, Mr Brent Mickelberg MP, to the Premier and Minister for Trade, Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, regarding COVID-19 and Legacy [\[643\]](#).

In these difficult times I appreciate that there are many compelling cases which are worthy of state government support, but today I am imploring the Premier to remember the volunteer organisations like Legacy. Like businesses and families, they too are hurting and they too need real government support to get through this. If organisations like Legacy do not receive financial support sooner rather than later they will fold. I call on the Premier to act now to support Legacy and to allow them to continue their important work for our community. At a time like this, Legacy's value to our community is only magnified and it is incumbent on the state government to do whatever is necessary to support Legacy in its time of need.

Our communities are hurting. I ask the state government to do more than the bare minimum and support the work of Legacy. It is time to show your commitment to veterans by funding Brisbane Legacy in its time of need. I say to the Premier actions speak louder than words. In the lead-up to Anzac Day we will hear many well intentioned words of support from politicians, but words are not enough. Honour the sacrifice of the veterans by supporting those who care for those who are left behind. Before I finish I would like to mention that people can donate to Legacy by going online to legacy.com.au/donate. I encourage my fellow parliamentarians and members of the community to do so.

Macalister Electorate, Roads; MacYAC; World Autism Awareness Month

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (10.31 pm): I take this opportunity in this extraordinary sitting of parliament to update the House during these difficult times on some good news within my electorate. After ongoing discussions with South Coast Transport and Main Roads and regular contact with

individuals and businesses in the Beenleigh area, I wrote to the minister earlier this year requesting that consideration be given to funding a review of the Beenleigh state roads and the development of an overall strategy to upgrade these roads to make them safer for road users, pedestrians and cyclists.

Last week I received confirmation from the minister that over half a million dollars will be allocated in the budget to investigate safety upgrades and efficiency opportunities along the Beenleigh Connection Road. Intersections at City Road, George Street, James Street and the exit 35 intersection at Rochester Drive are under consideration. This is fantastic news for Beenleigh residents, as well as for the growing number of road users who travel through Beenleigh to access the M1, and I look forward to seeing the development of upgrades which will see safety improved on our Beenleigh roads.


During times of great stress I am always heartened to see the community come together and never more so than when it is our young people at the forefront. Last year I established the Macalister Youth Advisory Committee, or MacYAC, comprising young locals who had an interest in being involved in developing a more connected community. Whilst COVID-19 has impacted the projects that MacYAC had planned to implement this year, they have turned their focus to assisting our most vulnerable. In the past 10 days the MacYAC team have made almost 1,000 phone calls to Macalister residents over the age of 70 to check on them and talk to them about whether they need to register for the Care Army. If this is an example of our community's future I think our kids are doing okay.

On our kids doing okay, being World Autism Awareness Month, I would like to update the House on where our autism journey is at. I wish I had more positive news, but like many thousands of families with a disability we have been left behind by the NDIA. His level of disability apparently falls below the threshold for eligibility for the NDIS and the NDIA meeting to discuss his case I have to say was the most brutal I have ever had. I have spent every day since he was born talking up his abilities, focusing on what he can do, not on what he cannot. But this system appears to only assist those who are able to demonstrate barriers in their child's life. It is a shame that those who have disabilities other than physical ones will have such a hard time accessing support.

Our HCWA funding for this year has already run out and it will not be renewed. No-one is quite sure what continuity of support funding will look like. We have no details. I wonder how many other children are being left behind. On a positive note, for a boy who has no concept of time he has absolutely no idea that this is not the longest home day ever and no understanding of the turmoil that is happening outside the front door. To show his development over the past 12 months, I will update the House on this year's self-portrait which I have already tabled. For the interest of members, he now has a body, stands on the grass amongst the flowers and basks under a blue sky.

Tabled paper: Child's drawing [644].

Projects

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (10.35 pm): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Robbie and Daisy Katter on the birth of their lovely daughter, Peaches Grace Katter, born on 20 April—a true gift to the Katter family.

As we come out of the back end of this COVID-19 situation we are going to be rewriting the rule books on not only economics but also the way we can do things here in Queensland and in Australia. I hope on the back end of this we decide to reinvigorate a manufacturing industry in Australia and reinvigorate the idea of building, buying and owning Australian made products. I think we have a great opportunity to do that right here in Queensland. I also want to talk about opportunities to look at shovel-ready projects that can help kickstart the Queensland economy once we come out the back end of this—projects that support mining and construction and projects that support agricultural sectors.

The CopperString project is waiting for the right amount of funding to kick off. We need that project up and running to get cheap electricity to the North West Minerals Province so that we can ensure its survival and growth. We also have the North Johnstone transfer project in the Hill electorate that will get water to the farmers who need it most. In the electorate of Hinchinbrook, the people I represent are looking for a hand to get the North Queensland bioenergy sugar mill up and running. That is a project that puts the ownership of the mill back in the hands of the growers so that more of the project is kept in the region and not sent overseas to an overseas entity. This will not only give growers an opportunity not only to produce clean, green energy from the bioenergy sugar mill but also allow them to keep jobs right here in Queensland.

We also have a walking trail project between Paluma and Wallaman Falls that is going through a business case at the moment. Let us hope that we can accelerate these projects so that when tourism kicks off in our region again we have the ability to service those people. There is also the HIPCo

irrigation project at Hughenden. These are shovel-ready projects with funding from the federal government. All we need is the right dots to be connected at the state level. I urge the state government to help connect those dots before the end of this term, not as an election promise. Let us do it this term to get these projects up and running. We also want to see a state owned rail line to open up the Galilee Basin—not just a small rail line to service one provider but to service the whole Galilee Basin. Hells Gate Dam is another project we need to see come out of the ground. This is a great opportunity for Queenslanders.

Mount Ommaney Electorate, Infrastructure



Ms PUGH (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.38 pm): It is 2020 and when it comes to infrastructure in the Mount Ommaney electorate we certainly have 2020 vision. In fact, so much has happened this year in infrastructure I barely know where to start—wait, yes, I do! It is the long-awaited Sumners Road overpass. A few months ago now the girders were laid on the first new bridge for the Sumners Road overpass. The existing bridge carries over 35,000 vehicles every single day. That is growing at a rate of about 10 per cent a year and it services the business hubs of Darra and Sumner Park as well as the Centenary Motorway. These business hubs are thriving and, in fact, the Spacer Company, based in Sumner Park, is already a government supplier to TMR projects just like this one.

The Sumners Road overpass has been on the cards for 10 long years. Before the 2017 commitment from the Palaszczuk government, Mount Ommaney locals were getting really frustrated that there was no progress on that long-awaited piece of infrastructure. Before I was elected, groups such as the Jamboree Residents Association, led by Wayne Williams, lobbied me tirelessly to get the work committed to and started, so I am forever grateful to the Premier that she recognised the importance of this infrastructure to my community and stumped up the \$80 million to build the bridge. Let us be clear: before that no-one had put the money on the table. It had been promised by the LNP in 2012, 2015 and again in 2017, but no money was put on the table to build it. The Premier put a stop to that. She funded the project in full and now it is on its way. In fact, the first bridge is full steam ahead under COVID-19 and will be open to traffic in the coming months.

Also on its way is the Ipswich Motorway \$400 million upgrade between Rocklea and Oxley. Recently on that stretch the higher bridge was opened to traffic, which is wonderful news for Oxley and Ipswich locals. Prior to the opening of the bridge earlier this year, in wet weather the road was prone to flooding, which left motorists stranded in the rain. We know that rainy roads are chaotic enough without being completely unusable because of rain. I know that commuters from Oxley, Darra and Corinda in particular will benefit from the improved route. The new higher path will get rid of that problem. It will increase the capacity for the trucks and vehicles that use that busy thoroughfare every day.

Finally I thank the gang at Urban Utilities and TMR for their quick work in fixing a significant hole in the motorway a few months ago. For a period the hole closed the motorway northbound, which really hammered home the vital importance of that stretch of motorway for the whole south-west corridor. With 90,000 vehicles using that busy stretch of road every day, we know that the Centenary Highway needs an upgrade. We have \$20 million on the table for planning. The Centenary Motorway services a very large population base right throughout Ipswich, Springfield and beyond. As I said, the business case is underway. Soon the initial designs should be available to share with the community.

Moggill Electorate, Coronavirus; Local Government Elections



Dr ROWAN (Moggill—LNP) (10.41 pm): I begin by acknowledging the terrific work undertaken by local residents in the electorate of Moggill to limit the community spread of COVID-19, that is, the novel coronavirus. Complying with public health directives, washing hands, maintaining social distancing and adhering to all the other additional measures has been vitally important. I thank local residents and all Queenslanders for their assistance and patience in tackling the spread of coronavirus. Even with the passage of the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020 and the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020, economically much more still needs to be done for all of Queensland. Certainly I encourage the Palaszczuk Labor government to continue to implement strategies to protect jobs and support small business.

On 28 March 2020, the people of Brisbane faced a stark choice between an experienced team with a proven track record led by Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner or an indecisive, inexperienced and incapable team led by the then Labor candidate, Patrick Condren. That choice was especially clear in the ward of Pullenvale, where the Liberal National Party had endorsed local businessman and community leader Greg Adermann. Greg is intelligent, driven, collaborative, a humble individual and a

person of high integrity. Greg was successful in his endeavour to win the ward of Pullenvale and he secured 59.93 per cent of the vote on a two-party preferred basis. He will serve the residents of the Pullenvale ward in a consultative and respectful manner and he will always be happy to regularly meet with local residents to discuss their concerns. Greg will be a true advocate for local residents. He will adhere to and demonstrate accountability as a local government representative. Greg and his wife, Cia, have lived in Chapel Hill for almost 30 years and they have raised their two sons locally. Greg's local knowledge and expertise is certainly extensive. Today, Councillor Greg Adermann was formally sworn in and took his oath of office as the councillor for the Pullenvale ward.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of Councillor James Mackay, the councillor for the Walter Taylor ward. The Walter Taylor ward includes, in part, the suburbs of Chapel Hill and Indooroopilly. Those suburbs are within the boundaries of the state electorate of Moggill. Frequently I see Councillor James Mackay at community events. His local knowledge, understanding of the issues and consultative manner ensure that the residents of the Walter Taylor ward will continue to be well represented within the Brisbane City Council. I take this opportunity to congratulate Councillor James Mackay on his re-election and also to congratulate Councillor Peter Matic on his re-election in the Paddington ward. I also take this opportunity to congratulate Councillor Sarah Hutton, who will represent the ward of Jamboree. I wish retiring councillor Matthew Bourke all the best for the future.

I wish Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner and his re-elected Liberal National Party council all the best for their next term of administration. I thank the Queensland Liberal National Party organisation, including the various LNP local organisational units and local LNP branch members across the western suburbs for their hard work and dedication in supporting locally endorsed LNP candidates and councillors. I conclude by acknowledging the leadership of Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister of Australia, in relation to the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Capalaba Electorate; Local Government Elections



Mr BROWN (Capalaba—ALP) (10.44 pm): It should not take a health pandemic to recognise the hard work of our essential and frontline workers and to also recognise their value in the economy at the moment, which is what I want to do tonight in relation to those workers in the Capalaba region. As the member for Redlands said, we will be recognising the frontline workers at the Redland Hospital. I thank all the doctors, nurses and associated health staff at the Redland Hospital for the fantastic work that they are doing to care for our community in this time of need.

I thank the ambulance officers and the police officers. I recognise retail workers, especially those who work in our supermarkets. At the moment they are experiencing immense pressure due to stock shortages. Unfortunately, they have experienced some of the worst of customer behaviour, but they have handled that with professionalism. I thank them very much for that and for the services that they provide. I thank the cleaners, the security guards, the teachers, the teacher aides, the early educators, the truckies and those who work in manufacturing. Day in and day out, those workers make sure that we have the goods and services that we need to save lives and to keep the economy going in this difficult time. I also recognise the workers who have given up everything to save thousands of lives: the hospitality workers, those working in the arts, musicians and sports men and women. I thank them all.

I thank another tireless worker, Councillor Murray Elliott, who represented division 7 of the Redland City Council for 23 years. Unfortunately, he lost at the recent council election. When I was growing up I knew Councillor Murray Elliott. When I came in here five years ago, I had the good fortune to work alongside him. He attended every single P&C meeting. He was at every single fete. He would be behind the barbeque from dawn till dusk, helping out. Every fortnight he would be at Alexandra Hills Shopping Centre, sitting at his card table, taking down constituent issues and helping out people.

Over the past five years since my coming into the role of member for Capalaba, Murray Elliott has been a mentor to me. He has a wealth of wisdom, particularly in the local government area around development, local roads and other infrastructure. He has a wealth of information and wisdom, which was born out in his last term as councillor. In his last term his planning and design work in regard to parks was award winning. It was a pleasure to work alongside him to deliver an over \$1 million upgrade to the IndigiScapes Centre, which will be a long-lasting legacy project of his. I thank him for his 23 years of service to the Redland City Council and the good people of Alexandra Hills.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.47 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Bailey, Bates, Batt, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Brown, Costigan, Crisafulli, D'Ath, Dametto, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gerber, Grace, Hart, Hinchliffe, Hunt, Janetzki, Jones, Kelly, King, Krause, Langbroek, Lister, Lynham, Mander, McArdle, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Minnikin, Molhoek, O'Connor, Palaszczuk, Pease, Powell, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Robinson, Rowan, Ryan, Simpson, Trad, Watts, Whiting