



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Wednesday, 9 September 2020

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WEDNESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2020


 The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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


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

PRIVILEGE

Comments by Member for Mudgeeraba, Apology

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (9.31 am): I rise to correct the record regarding an interjection I made on 11 August about Craig Wallace. I apologise for inadvertently misleading the House which was certainly not my intention.

Speaker's Ruling, Operation of Parliament

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 15 July 2020, the member for a Kawana wrote to me drawing attention to a matter of privilege that he raised in the House on 17 June 2020. The member for Kawana's letter raised three main issues. Firstly, he flagged what he described as an increasing trend by the government in moving substantial amendments outside of the long title of the bills being debated without prior notice to the Business Committee which he argued results in the parliament not being able to properly discharge its responsibility to address issues contained in the bill without proper notice of the amendments or consideration by a committee.

Secondly, he argued that in continually bypassing parliamentary committees the government is offending section 26B of the Constitution of Queensland Act 2001. Thirdly, he contended that the limitation on parliamentary sitting hours as introduced in this term of parliament has resulted in a denial of opportunities of members to speak, to contribute to debates and to move amendments.

I have considered the member for Kawana's arguments and I have concluded that none of the three issues raised by the member for Kawana in his correspondence amount to an alleged breach of privilege. Notwithstanding this initial analysis, given the gravity of an alleged breach of the Constitution, I sought the advice of Mr Gim Del Villar QC. Mr Del Villar confirmed that, although moving substantial amendments after a bill had already been scrutinised by a committee might be regarded as contrary to the spirit of the Constitution, the practice did not in itself breach section 26B.

Accordingly, I have determined that the issues raised by the member for Kawana are not matters that should be referred to the Ethics Committee in accordance with the procedures for dealing with such complaints as outlined in chapters 43 and 34 of the standing orders. Therefore, I will not be referring the matters for further consideration of the House via the Ethics Committee.

Whilst these are not matters for the Ethics Committee as the guardian of the powers, privileges and immunities of the House and its members, I wish to affirm the important principle that members should be afforded the opportunity to contribute to parliamentary debate. Accordingly, I will undertake to raise these issues with the Committee of the Legislative Assembly to consider whether any changes to legislation, standing orders or sessional orders are warranted. I table the correspondence and include the advice from Mr Del Villar QC in relation to this matter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 15 July 2020, from the member for Kawana, Mr Jarrod Bleijie MP, to the Speaker, Hon. Curtis Pitt, regarding a matter of privilege [1571].

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 3 September 2020, from Mr Gim Del Villar QC to the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, regarding an opinion on alleged breaches of the Queensland Constitution [1572].

I seek leave to incorporate the ruling circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

SPEAKER'S RULING—MATTER OF PRIVILEGE RAISED BY THE MEMBER FOR KAWANA

On 15 July 2020, the Member for Kawana wrote to me drawing attention to a Matter of Privilege that he raised in the House on 17 June 2020.

The Member for Kawana's letter raised three (3) main issues.

Firstly, he flagged what he described as an increasing trend by the government in moving substantial amendments outside of the long title of the Bills being debated without prior notice to the Business Committee which he argued results in the Parliament not being able to properly discharge its responsibility to address issues contained in the Bill without proper notice of the amendments or consideration by a committee.

Secondly, he argued that continually by-passing Parliamentary Committees the government is offending section 26B of the Constitution of Queensland Act 2001.

Thirdly, he contended that the limitation on Parliamentary sitting hours as introduced in this term of parliament has resulted in a denial of opportunities of Members to speak, contribute to debates and move amendments. On 15 July 2020, the Member for Kawana wrote to Mr Speaker drawing attention to a Matter of Privilege that he raised in the House on 17 June 2020.

The issues raised by the Member for Kawana relate to the practice of Government Ministers moving substantial amendments to Bills at consideration in detail stage with limited notice, effectively by-passing the scrutiny of those amendment by portfolio committees, and the Leader of the House moving timeframes in the business program motion for the debate on bills which result in some members not being able to speak to the second reading question and in some cases little or no time spent by the House on consideration in detail.

In my view, the issues raised do not fall within the scope of complaints about the ethical conduct of particular members as detailed in Section 104C of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 (POQA).

The question, therefore, is whether the issues raised might amount to alleged breach of parliamentary privilege by the Government members.

Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice (22nd Edition p.75) states as follows—

When any of these rights and immunities is disregarded or attacked, the offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable under the law of Parliament. Each House also claims the right to punish as contempts, that is, actions which, while not breaches of any specific privilege, obstruct or impede it in the performance of its functions, or are offences against its authority or dignity, such as disobedience to its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members or its officers ...

The privileges or powers, rights and immunities are enshrined in section 9 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001 which establishes the Queensland Parliament's link with the powers of the House of Commons, as at the date of federation.

Section 9 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001 provides:

- (1) The powers, rights and immunities of the Legislative Assembly and its members and committees are—
 - (a) the powers, rights and immunities defined under an Act; and
 - (b) until defined under an Act—the powers, rights and immunities, by custom, statute or otherwise, of the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom and its members and committees at the establishment of the Commonwealth.

Note—

Date of establishment of the Commonwealth—1 January 1901.

- (2) In this section—
"rights" includes privileges.

Accordingly, when considering whether an issue of privilege arises in Queensland we need to have regard to the POQA, as well as the powers, rights and immunities of the House of Commons.

The privileges of the Queensland Parliament are fixed and cannot be extended or added to except by legislation.

Having considered the established privileges that might potentially be breached by the practices of Government Ministers as described by the Member for Kawana, I cannot find a breach of any of those powers rights and immunities.

In relation to the Member's first point, the House has determined the process for the Business Committee by agreeing to Sessional Order 2A establishing the Business Committee and its role in aiming to agree on how the House will deal with government business and Business Program Motion process (Sessional Order 2B) to set the government business program for any given sitting week.

In relation to Member's second argument, that because there have been numerous substantive amendments outside the long title of the Bill, these amendments required the scrutiny of the committee, and the amendments should have been in separate Bills requiring them to be scrutinised by a committee, reference should first be made to Section 26B of the Constitution of Queensland Act 2001 which reads as follows:

Requirement for proposed legislation to be considered by committees

- (1) The Legislative Assembly must ensure each Bill for an Act that is proposed for enactment is referred to a portfolio committee, or another committee of the Legislative Assembly, for examination by the committee.
- (2) The period of the referral must be at least 6 weeks from the date of the referral.

(3) This section does not prevent the Legislative Assembly, by ordinary majority, doing any of the following under the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly—

- (a) declaring a Bill to be an urgent Bill;
- (b) referring an urgent Bill to a committee for less than 6 weeks;
- (c) for a Bill declared to be an urgent Bill after it is referred to a committee—discharging the Bill from the committee less than 6 weeks after the referral;
- (d) deciding not to refer an urgent Bill to a committee before the Bill is passed by the Legislative Assembly.

Some statutory provisions dealing with parliamentary procedures are seen to be intra-mural, meaning that the procedure is to be observed by and solved within the walls of parliament. Some can be justiciable, meaning subject to review by the courts. Whether s.26B is justiciable depends on whether the section is viewed as a procedural provision governing the intra-mural activities of the Assembly or a constitutionally entrenched manner and form provision. Whilst there is restraint exercised by the courts in relation to matters falling within parliamentary privilege and the intramural provisions of parliament, the restraint does not extend to non-compliance with entrenched manner and form requirements for legislation.

It is the duty of a Speaker to intervene where there is a clear breach of a constitutional requirement. On 3 November 2020, Speaker Wellington (at ROP pp 4109-4110; and p 4150) ruled that in the absence of a message from the Governor, as required by section 68 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001, the Heavy Vehicle National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 13 September 2016, was out of order and will need to be discharged and withdrawn. A message was subsequently obtained, presented and the Bill reintroduced. However, in that case following the initial introduction of the Bill the Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel sought and obtained joint legal advice from Crown Law about the application of s.68 generally and its application in respect of the Bill specifically. Speaker Wellington's ruling was based on the advice.

While there appears to be no prima facie non-compliance with s.26B as amendments moved in Consideration in Detail are not bills in their own right, some of the amendments complained of are so extensive that they could arguably be bills in their own right.

There is nothing specifically stated in statute or the Standing or Sessional Orders that limit the number or nature (i.e. substantive versus minor) of amendments other than the requirement for leave for amendments outside the long title (SO 151). Of particular importance is that s.26B above does not reference amendments.

Again it might be argued that the practice of moving a substantial number of amendments, including outside the long title of the bill, during the consideration in detail stage effectively by-passing committee scrutiny may not be within the spirit of Section 26B of the Constitution of Queensland Act 2001. It could also be argued that the process is not transparent or accountable. However, it does not appear to offend or be in breach of any statutory provision.

The Leader of the House, who is also the Attorney-General and first law officer is well aware of the requirements of s.26B and, I would expect, be cognisant of its application.

In short, the evolving practice of introducing substantive amendments outside the long title of Bills at the Consideration in detail stage that have not been flagged at the Business Committee meeting for that sitting week is permissible under the Standing and Sessional Orders agreed to by the House. Ultimately the House agrees to this process by leave to move the amendments.

In relation to the Member's third point, while setting time limits for debate of bills can ultimately have a practical impact on an individual member's ability to speak on a Bill, I consider the fact the House determines the content of what is to be debated, and the time limits via the Business Program Motion, actually affirms the privilege of the House to exercise exclusive jurisdiction to control its own proceedings.

Accordingly, I cannot see that this practice offends any orders of the House nor impedes the freedom of debate that the House and its members enjoy.

Having considered all of the above I have concluded, that none of the three issues raised by the Member for Kawana in his correspondence amount to an alleged Breach of Privilege.

Notwithstanding this initial analysis, given the gravity of an alleged breach of the Constitution, I sought the advice of Mr Gim Del Villar QC. Mr Del Villar confirmed that although moving substantial amendments after a Bill had already been scrutinised by a committee might be regarded as contrary to the spirit of the Constitution, the practice did not in itself breach section 26B.

Mr Del Villar also opined that s.26B of the Constitution is not a manner and form provision, but rather a provision dealing with internal parliamentary procedure and hence is non-justiciable. Consequently, an Act passed in contravention of s.26B would not be invalid.

While confirming that there has not been a breach of the Constitution, Mr Del Villar did comment that if committees are to function in a way that allows for the scrutiny of proposed legislation, then it would be desirable to explore amending the Constitution.

Conclusion


In conclusion, I have determined that the issues raised by the Member for Kawana are not matters that should be referred to the Ethics Committee in accordance with the procedures for dealing with such complaints as outlined in Chapters 43 and 44 of the Standing Orders.

Therefore, I will not be referring the matters for the further consideration of the House via the Ethics Committee.

Whilst not matters for the Ethics Committee, as the guardian of the powers, privileges and immunities of the House and its members I affirm the important principle that members should be afforded the opportunity to contribute to Parliamentary debate.

Accordingly, I will undertake to raise these issues with the Committee of the Legislative Assembly (CLA) to consider whether any changes to Standing Orders or Sessional Orders are warranted.


Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 13 August 2020, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads wrote to me alleging that the member for Mudgeeraba deliberately misled the House on 11 August 2020. The matter relates to an interjection by the member for Mudgeeraba during question time in relation to a project upgrading the Gold Coast-Springbrook Road that appeared on the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program, QTRIP, in 2011-12. The member for Mudgeeraba said, 'I didn't forget. Craig Wallace cut it.' The minister contends that this is false because the project was commenced by the Labor Bligh government. However, it did not appear on the subsequent QTRIP in 2012 after the Newman government were elected.

I sought further information from the member for Mudgeeraba about the allegation made against her in accordance with standing order 269(5). I have considered the material put forward by both members and find that the minister relied on the QTRIP documents showing that the program existed under the Bligh government but did not exist under the subsequent Newman government. There was insufficient evidence put forward by the member for Mudgeeraba as a basis for her statement that Craig Wallace discontinued the project in question. However, I also note that this morning the member for Mudgeeraba has made an apology and withdrawal in the House. Therefore, I will not be referring the matter to the Ethics Committee. I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

Tabled paper: Bundle of correspondence relating to an alleged deliberate misleading of the House by the member for Mudgeeraba, Ms Ros Bates MP [[1573](#)].

Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Contempt of Parliament


 **Mr SPEAKER:** On 19 August 2020, the Attorney-General and Leader of the House wrote to me in relation to a contribution by the member for Everton and Deputy Leader of the Opposition during the sitting of the Legislative Assembly on 13 August 2020. The complaint relates to offensive comments and reflections on the chair.

The matter concerns interjections made by the member for Everton after a motion had been moved to recommit the Royalty Legislation Amendment Bill and comments commenced, but not completed, during the reconsideration of clauses of the bill. The member for Everton's comments were not completed because the Attorney-General and Leader of the House rose on a point of order and the member for Everton then withdrew his comments.

The member for Everton and others who joined with him during this matter were incorrect in their interjections and statements. However, I am also satisfied that, after the point of order taken by the Leader of the House, the Deputy Speaker corrected the member on the record and the member withdrew. Whilst reflection on the chair is generally a serious matter, given the matter was dealt with promptly and adequately in the House, I do not believe it warrants the further attention of the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS


Australian South Sea Islanders, Recognition

 **Mr SPEAKER:** This week marks the 20th anniversary of Queensland government recognition of Australian South Sea islanders as a distinct cultural group. This recognition acknowledged the outstanding contribution of Australian South Sea islanders to the development of our great state of Queensland.

The recognition of Australian South Sea islanders marked a turning point in the community's history. Today we have the first MP of South Sea islander descent, the member for Mirani, sitting in the chamber. I also wish to welcome Australian South Sea islander community members who are joining us in the public gallery today. To mark the 20th anniversary, both I and the Minister for Multicultural Affairs are co-hosting a morning tea with Australian South Sea islander community members on the River Deck straight after question time.

In addition, the Parliamentary Library has curated a display marking the 20th anniversary of the Queensland government recognition of Australian South Sea islanders as a distinct cultural group. This display can be found on the level 3 concourse of the annexe. The centrepiece of the display is the recognition statement which was endorsed 20 years ago. Further, Parliament House this week is lit in the colours of Australian South Sea islanders—gold, black, green and blue. I encourage all members to participate in the morning tea or visit the display on the level 3 concourse to mark this very important 20th anniversary of Australian South Sea islander recognition.

School Group Tour

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I wish to advise that we will be visited in the gallery this morning by students and teachers from St Ita's primary school in the electorate of South Brisbane.

PETITIONS

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

Junction Road, Clayfield

Mr Nicholls, from 16 petitioners, requesting the House to remove all parking on Junction Road west of Keith Street to Dawson Street to allow residents to safely enter Junction Road, Clayfield [[1574](#)].

Boonah-Rathdowney Road, Upgrade

Mr Krause, from 163, petitioners, requesting the House to upgrade Boonah-Rathdowney Road, in particular to double lanes from Musgrave Bridge to Maroon [[1575](#)].

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

Kirra, Designation as Suburb

Mrs Gerber, from 786 petitioners, requesting the House to designate Kirra as its own suburb in the state of Queensland [[1576](#), [1577](#)].

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

Creationism

From 329 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure that religious organisations preaching that a supreme being created the Earth about 6000 years ago not receive any State government assistance, exemptions, subsidies or funding [[1578](#)].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER

TABLING OF DOCUMENT (SO 32)


REPORT BY THE CLERK

The following paper was tabled by the Clerk pursuant to Schedule 2, Section 1 of the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly—

[1579](#) Published Indexed Thresholds to amounts contained in Schedule 2—Registers of Interests

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Coronavirus, Health Update


 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.39 am): This morning I have been briefed by Queensland's Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, and the Deputy Premier. I can confirm that today we have eight new cases of COVID-19 in Queensland. From the outset I want to assure Queenslanders that, although that number is our highest daily tally for some time, each of those people diagnosed is related to existing cases and seven of them were in quarantine at the time they were diagnosed.

This is not a time for alarm: this is a time for thanks that our testing system is so professional, that Queenslanders are so vigilant and that we have had remarkable success in containing this virus. Five of the cases reported today relate to the cluster at the Queensland Correctional Services Academy. They are each members of the same family from one household, and they were already in quarantine when they were diagnosed. A further three of those cases are related to the Ipswich Hospital cluster. Two of those cases are healthcare workers who were already in quarantine and a third is one of their children.

This brings the total number of active cases in Queensland to 29, after four Queenslanders recovered and were discharged from hospital. It brings the total number of COVID-19 cases reported in Queensland to 1,143. Queenslanders continue to step up and do their best to help us stop this virus in its tracks. In the past 24 hours, 12,075 samples were undertaken as Queenslanders step forward to get tested. I urge people to keep getting tested.


I want to congratulate and thank Queenslanders for their continuing good work in confronting this pandemic. Remember: if you have any symptoms, get tested and stay at home. Do not go to work. I urge everyone to remember to practise social distancing because we are not out of the woods yet, but if we stick together we will get through this together.

Gold Coast, Shark Fatality

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 am): This morning shark control contractors found a large tiger shark in nets off Greenmount. Further investigations will be conducted to discover if there is any link between it and the fatal attack off the beach late yesterday afternoon. I offer my deepest condolences to the friends and family of the man taken so tragically. As a precaution, beaches are closed between Burleigh and the border. I am advised that Greenmount has eight drum lines and a shark net off Coolangatta. The Minister for Fisheries will provide further details of our shark protection program in a moment. Police, the Coroner and our fisheries inspectors will investigate this tragedy.

There has never been an attack on this beach. Indeed, I am advised there have been no fatal attacks on Gold Coast beaches for 62 years. I firmly believe that our shark control program has been saving lives for generations. If improvements can be made then of course they should be, but the ultimate goal has to be to protect human life. I also believe that those who went to the aid of this man after he was attacked are heroes. Reports from the scene indicate that they include lifesavers, lifeguards, members of the Greenmount surf club and passers-by. Their courage to run into the surf moments after a shark attack is beyond admirable, and I think those people are worthy of nomination for bravery awards.

Manufacturing Industry

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.42 am): Our economic recovery plan outlines six key areas of focus: safeguarding our health, backing small business, building Queensland, growing regions, investing in skills and Making it for Queensland. Making it for Queensland means we will grow manufacturing across traditional and new industries, making new products in new ways. That is vital for creating jobs. Making things in our state has always been a priority for my government, which is why in 2016 we launched our Advanced Manufacturing 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan. That has led to key examples such as Rheinmetall's Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence, munitions manufacturing in Maryborough and unlocking land for domestic gas exploration because gas is needed for manufacturing.

Now we are stepping it up further. Some recent examples include \$145 million to drive new investments in renewable energy and new economy minerals which are so important for manufacturing. We want to deliver industrial zones and hydrogen hubs because that means more secure full-time manufacturing jobs. Motorhome builder Apollo will receive a \$10 million concessional loan to support more jobs in the manufacturing and tourism industries. A Rockhampton herbicide manufacturer has been awarded more than \$900,000 from round 3 of our \$46 million Made in Queensland grants program to increase local production. Today I can announce that in Darra a biopharmaceutical development and manufacturing company is looking to expand its workforce by 50 after receiving almost half a million dollars in Made in Queensland funding.

We have also recently announced more than \$2.5 million across seven Far North Queensland manufacturers to help them adopt new world-leading technologies and processes, support growth in the region and employ 45 workers combined. That is from our Manufacturing Hub Grant Program. Regional manufacturing hubs in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Gladstone ensure that manufacturing is spread throughout the state. We have also announced a \$50 million Making It for Queensland fund to support Queensland manufacturers make essential goods such as PPE, health consumables and devices. Today, as the world and the nation grapples with an uncertain economic situation, it has become more important than ever that we support local manufacturing and make sure we have what we need to create jobs.

Mr Hart: Billboard companies, of course.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sorry?


Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Cooper, I was on my feet. You are warned under the standing orders. Member for Burleigh, there was nothing provocative in the Premier's statement. You are warned under the standing orders.

Australian South Sea Islanders, Recognition

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.45 am): Parliament chronicles the milestones and memories of our state, and the parliamentary precinct stores many of the physical records and documents of these moments. Twenty years ago in this chamber the then premier, Peter Beattie, and opposition leader, Rob Borbidge, spoke in consensus to formally recognise Australian South Sea islander people as a distinct cultural group. The recognition statement is on display in the Parliamentary Annexe. Signed and dated September 2000, it says—

The Government acknowledges and regrets that Australian South Sea Islanders experienced unjust treatment and endured social and economic disadvantage, prejudice and racial discrimination.


It also says, 'The Queensland government is committed to ensuring that present and future generations of Australian South Sea islanders have equality of opportunity' in the life of our state. Later this morning we will celebrate this important 20th anniversary with members of Queensland's South Sea island communities. I acknowledge them in the public gallery today. Thank you for making the journey to parliament. May I also acknowledge the member for Mirani as a South Sea islander descendant, for whom I am sure this is a very moving anniversary.

Of the Australians who identify as having South Sea islander heritage almost three quarters call Queensland home, including: Mackay, Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns and Rockhampton. Mentioning Mackay of course brings to mind our late colleague and friend, Tim Mulherin. Tim's respect and commitment to the South Sea islander community was evident in his career during and after politics. In his maiden speech in 1995 Tim said—

Their dignity and humanity has sustained them in their long struggle for recognition and justice and has earned them the most profound respect of the Mackay community.

Government recognition five years after that speech did not erase the harm that was done to South Sea islanders in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but it was a crucial moment in righting that wrong. Our responsibility is to keep that moment fresh in our minds and to ensure that recognition remains. In recent years my government has proudly supported the formal registration of the Queensland United Australian South Sea Islander Council. Today we proclaim again that Australian South Sea islanders have contributed significantly to the development of Queensland. We celebrate their strength and resilience, looking to continue together in prosperity and harmony.

Coronavirus, Mental Health

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.47 am): Today we have eight new cases of COVID-19 in Queensland, all close contacts of identified cases. We now have 29 active cases out of 1,143 total cases so far. We conducted 12,075 tests in the last testing period, which is a wonderful effort from Queenslanders. Our contact tracers have been working through the night, and Queensland Health will have updates on contact tracing information as it comes to hand. St Edmund's College has been closed for at least 48 hours for cleaning and contact tracing. All parents have been contacted.


As part of our economic recovery plan we have invested \$1.2 billion in additional funding into our health system. It is because of our excellent health response to COVID-19 that we can get on with our economic recovery and get Queenslanders back to work, but our health response must encompass mental health as well. We know that many people all over the state have had their lives turned upside down since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. 2020 has not been the year we were expecting and I know many Queenslanders have been doing it tough, navigating more uncertainty than ever before. This has placed unprecedented pressure on families, and now more than ever we need to look after each other and our own mental wellbeing.

As we move ahead with Queensland's plan to unite and recover, our mental health is just as important as our physical health. I am pleased to say that Queensland Health recently launched the second phase of its mental wellbeing campaign called Dear Mind on Sunday, 30 August, targeting Queenslanders who have had their lives impacted by COVID-19. We know that positive mental wellbeing helps build resilience and allows us to better manage stressors in our lives. The campaign can currently be seen across TV, cinema, social media and digital channels over the coming months, and I know it will resonate strongly with Queenslanders.

People can visit the Dear Mind website which provides ideas and inspiration for incorporating mental wellbeing activities into their everyday lives, as well as links to wellbeing resources and support services. The first tranche of the campaign was released in January and was viewed by more than 1.8 million people on YouTube, and the website was visited more than 85,000 times. People who saw the campaign reported feeling more resilient, happier and more comfortable providing support to others than those who had not seen the campaign.


The Palaszczuk government has also committed \$46.5 million to support mental health services, with funds directed towards localised mental health community treatment and support services. On this side of the House, we acknowledge the importance of the mental wellbeing of Queenslanders which is why we built a new adolescent residential mental health facility after the Barrett centre was closed by the Newman government. It is why we have invested more to undo the damage wrought by the Newman era cuts to mental health services and NGOs. Tomorrow is R U OK? Day, a reminder to us all to check in on our mates. We cannot pretend there are not challenges ahead. However, our government is committed to giving people as much help and as many tools as possible to help navigate these tough times.

Gold Coast, Shark Fatality

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (9.51 am): Yesterday's shark incident was an absolute tragedy. Our hearts go out to the man's family and friends. This morning the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol and the Shark Control Program contractor were on site at first light. I am advised that a shark has been caught at the location on the Shark Control Program equipment this morning, as reported by the Premier. The location has had shark control equipment in place since 1968 and has eight drum lines and one net. These were checked yesterday morning, as they are on a regular basis.

This is the first fatality at this beach and the second at a Shark Control Program beach since the program began in 1962. The government remains committed to the program. The Shark Control Program has worked to mitigate the risk of shark attack since the program began at 86 of Queensland's most popular beaches from the Gold Coast to Cairns. I will be engaging with the Shark Control Program Scientific Working Group regarding this tragic incident. Again, I extend my deepest condolences to the man's family and friends.

Coronavirus, Economic Response

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (9.52 am): Because Queensland is closely and effectively managing the health impacts of COVID-19, our state is now well placed on our road towards economic recovery. A central element of our Queensland economic recovery plan is creating jobs and helping Queenslanders work together. We have taken active measures to support businesses and protect Queensland jobs through our \$1 billion Jobs Support Loans scheme, our targeted industry support for large and regionally significant businesses, and through major payroll and land tax relief initiatives. As it stands right now, we are putting more than \$469 million in payroll tax refunds directly into the bank accounts of Queensland businesses.


We are delivering our \$7 billion Unite and Recover economic recovery plan to create jobs, grow industry and build a stronger Queensland—a plan underpinned by our \$51.8 billion infrastructure commitment over the next four years. In addition to what is already the most significant COVID recovery package in the nation, on Monday I announced as part of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review an extension of tax relief measures worth almost a quarter of a billion dollars. This investment into Queensland business and the people they employ is designed to provide certainty to businesses, tenants and landlords.

Our \$249 million commitment will provide two additional months of payroll tax relief for small to medium sized businesses with annual Australian taxable wages of \$6.5 million or less. Businesses of all sizes already benefiting from our payroll tax deferral until January 2021 can now also take advantage of payment instalment options across 12 months, helping them to manage their operations.

Even though the Morrison coalition government does not make JobKeeper payment exempt from income tax, we are extending the payroll tax exemption on JobKeeper payments until 28 March in line with the continuation of JobKeeper. We are providing a further 25 per cent land tax rebate for eligible properties for the 2020-21 financial year to ensure ongoing support for both tenants and landlords. This significant package of extended tax relief will help ease pressure for thousands of Queensland businesses and will improve their cash flow in this trying time.


We must never forget that this virus has a human cost or that the numbers we report have a human face. When we talk about economic recovery, we are talking about the rebuilding of people's lives and the restoration of their hopes. There is an urgency in everything we are doing. Our fight against the virus is also a race against time, as each day lengthens the duress COVID-19 is inflicting. What we do know is that the effects of high-level lockdowns, such as those in place in Victoria, are devastating for small businesses. We also know that the best way of promoting the viability of small business is to open up the economy and that the only way to open up the economy is to contain the virus. These measures reaffirm our commitment to stand in partnership with the small business community and the many thousands of Queenslanders they employ.

Coronavirus, Medical Research

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Cooper—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Tourism and Innovation) (9.55 am): The Palaszczuk government has a strong plan for Queensland's economic recovery. Queensland's economic recovery plan clearly outlines our government's strategies to work with employers, businesses and industry to support our economy through this crisis. Our plan includes six priority areas, including safeguarding our health, and that is why we are backing the UQ vaccine here in Queensland.

Last month everyone will recall that we put the call-out for volunteers to take part in the next stage of human clinical trials. Today I am very pleased to announce to the House that almost 7,000 people put their hands up to take part in the clinical trials. Recently, UQ reported that pre-clinical animal trials conducted in the Netherlands had produced very promising results, and this week clinical trial experts at Nexus are currently analysing volunteers ahead of the next round of human clinical testing to begin on this group of volunteers next week. We hope to have the results back on these clinical trials by December. That means UQ could produce a vaccine by mid-2021. This would be a game changer for Queensland and has the potential to save millions of lives throughout the world. Given reports today of an adverse reaction to the Oxford coronavirus vaccine, the work being done here in Queensland is now more important than ever before. We will continue to support Queensland's world-leading researchers to develop a vaccine that could turn the tide in the fight against COVID-19.

Far North Queensland, School Infrastructure

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.57 am): Last week in Cairns it was my great pleasure to join you, Mr Speaker, and the member for Barron River, Minister Crawford, to see the great work being undertaken to improve many schools in Far North Queensland as part of our economic recovery plan in the regions. At the neighbouring Woree state and secondary schools, more than a million dollars is being spent to upgrade classrooms and training areas—while at the Smithfield State High School, more than \$20 million has been invested in a new performing arts and athlete development centre as well as a new STEM learning block. The \$12 million new multipurpose hall at Cairns State High School is progressing well and looks amazing. Importantly, these projects are supporting nearly 100 local jobs throughout construction.


This is just more firsthand evidence that the Palaszczuk government's record of investment in school infrastructure and education is unmatched. Since 2015, we have invested more than \$5.2 billion in school infrastructure, tripling our annual investment in school infrastructure between 2015 and 2020 from \$500 million to \$1.5 billion. In total, since 2015 we have built 2,067 new classrooms in Queensland schools, growing from 198 new classrooms in 2015 to 683 in 2019. Our record investment in school infrastructure has supported nearly 17,200 jobs across the five years of the Palaszczuk government. We know that by building and upgrading the schools of the future we are creating the jobs of today and providing a world-class education.

As our state implements recovery from the COVID-19 global health pandemic, our recovery plan continues our investment in school infrastructure supporting local jobs. When it comes to building the new schools, new classrooms and new facilities in schools, it is the Palaszczuk government that does it best. Since 2015 we have built and opened 13 new schools with another nine to be delivered in the next four years. Through the Renewing Our Schools program we are investing \$235 million to upgrade education infrastructure across the state, delivering 44 projects at 26 state schools including new and refurbished learning spaces, multipurpose halls and performing arts centres. This is on top of the \$200 million we invested through the Advancing Queensland Schools program to build 30 new school halls across the state, with all 30 projects now completed and being well used.

Our \$250 million 2020 Ready Program delivered additional classrooms at 61 state secondary schools to accommodate all students for the start of the 2020 school year. Of course, our signature \$477 million Cooler Cleaner Schools Program will air-condition every classroom, library and staffroom

in every state school in Queensland and we will put 190,000 solar panels on school rooftops to help offset the cost. Our recovery plan will continue to invest in our schools, creating a better future for our children and supporting many important jobs across the state.

Manufacturing Industry

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing) (10.00 am): There is no greater friend to the Queensland manufacturing sector than the Palaszczuk government. Our government has always known that it is critically important that we make things right here in Queensland. That is why in 2016 we launched our Queensland Advanced Manufacturing 10-Year Road Map and Action Plan, an action plan that sets a path forward for a bigger and better manufacturing industry in Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government is certainly supporting Queensland manufacturing to grow, to expand and to create more jobs for Queenslanders. As we know, global supply chains have been battered by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has reinforced this government's commitment to a vibrant and effective manufacturing sector to make the products that we need right here in Queensland. We have been doing that through programs like the \$46 million Made in Queensland initiative that supports small to medium size businesses and manufacturers to take their business to the next level.


Through our investment we are helping manufacturers maximise their potential, become more internationally competitive, expand their operations and employ more and more Queenslanders. Since 2017 we have supported 84 projects right across Queensland through this program. Of these projects, 66 have been completed thanks to \$25.6 million in grant funding. The funding has protected 3,400 existing jobs and helped to create more than 380 new jobs in manufacturing with more expected to come over the next five years.

We have also invested \$30 million in our regional manufacturing hubs in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Gladstone. These hubs were established to support the growth of regional manufacturing and help them take their business to the next level. Through the \$13.5 million Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program we have also helped regional businesses build advanced manufacturing capability through technology adoption, skills and training, and business development. Of those grants, 15 have been approved, providing financial support of over \$4.2 million for manufacturers to build their advanced manufacturing capabilities.

As part of our plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs, we have also announced a \$50 million Making it for Queensland Fund to support Queensland manufacturers make essential goods such as PPE, health consumables and devices. In an increasingly uncertain global environment where supply chains are certainly being broken, it is vital that as a state we have the capacity to produce those products locally, and building that capacity is exactly what this government is doing.

The Palaszczuk government has always supported Queensland manufacturers and workers. We will continue to focus on helping this vital industry to survive and also to grow.

State General Election

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (10.04 am): I am pleased to update the House regarding preparations for the 2020 state general election. The ECQ will significantly expand voting services during the two-week early voting period. More early voting centres, approximately 200 across the state, will be established throughout Queensland with early voting commencing on 19 October. Hours will be expanded until 9 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays of both weeks; and, in a first for a state election, early voting centres will also open on the Saturday a week before the ordinary election day.

The ECQ is encouraging Queenslanders to plan well ahead and with the extended hours of early voting, voters are asked to consider attending outside of peak times to assist with social distancing. For this election we are focusing on an election period rather than an election day.

The ECQ is expecting very high demand for postal voting and has already procured adequate stock, providing flexibility to adapt to varying public health circumstances should they arise. Today I can announce to the House that the ECQ will commence accepting postal vote applications from Monday, 14 September. I can advise the House that the ECQ will be accepting postal vote applications until 16 October, a period of five weeks, so there is more than adequate time for people to get their postal vote applications in prior to the election.


It is an unprecedented step to open postal vote applications prior to the issuing of the writs, but we live in unprecedented times. Opening applications early will ensure that those who want their ballots mailed to them or are unable to attend a polling place have plenty of time to apply. Of course, ballots

will not be mailed out to households until the close of nominations, so I encourage all members and candidates to remind people who do make applications early not to constantly ring saying, 'Where is my ballot?' because ballots will not be sent out until after nominations close. It may not be until four weeks after they apply.

Importantly, an application can be made in writing or online or by phone. However, the community should be aware that due to changes in the service model of Australia Post there may be some delays in the return of applications being made by post, meaning anyone who does plan on using Australia Post services should not leave the return of their application or their postal ballot till the last minute. On that basis, the ECQ is encouraging people who wish to apply for a postal vote to apply online, or they can apply via telephone.

We live in extraordinary times. The local government elections demonstrated that we can exercise our right to vote in a COVID-safe manner. With more time to plan, the ECQ are well equipped to deliver a COVID-safe election on 31 October 2020.

Water Infrastructure

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (10.07 am): Over the past three years the Palaszczuk government has delivered on water infrastructure and security for Queensland. Since 2017 we have committed \$1.2 billion toward infrastructure across this state, supporting almost 2,300 jobs in regional Queensland. This includes \$176 million for Rookwood Weir; \$410 million for the Haughton pipeline duplication project stages 1 and 2 in Townsville; sealing a \$24 million deal for the next stage of assessment for the proposed Hells Gates Dam; a \$16.5 million contribution to modernising the existing open channel irrigation scheme on the Atherton Tablelands; and \$13.6 million to kickstart the new Emu Swamp Dam. That is how you unite and recover: with an economic strategy and a \$50 billion infrastructure guarantee.

We now have an expert panel, making a 21st century investigation into a Bradfield scheme. I have spoken to all three members of the panel in the past week: Professor Ross Garnaut in Townsville, James Cook University—

Mrs Frecklington: What's changed since last sitting week?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members to my left.

Dr LYNHAM: The only people supporting their Bradfield scheme is One Nation.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will wait for the House to come to order. Members to my left will cease interjections. Minister, it would be helpful if you stick to the script.


Dr LYNHAM: I have spoken to all three members of the panel in the past week: Professor Ross Garnaut in Townsville; James Cook University Professor Allan Dale in Cairns; and Queensland Farmers' Federation chief executive officer Dr Georgina Davis here in Brisbane. Of course, there is already significant work underway on water storage in the north, the foundation of any project. There are three business cases underway or in hand: raising Burdekin Falls Dam, Hells Gates Dam and Big Rocks Weir.

This project has been around for more than 80 years in many iterations. The job for those eminent panel members is to apply 21st century science to this project and to report back to government. They will consider climate change, the impact on the Great Barrier Reef of diverting natural water flows, native title and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultural connections.

The panel's terms of reference include three key elements. They must consider the economic benefits to regional communities and agricultural production, especially in the light of COVID's impact. Further, they will consider opportunities for renewable energy generation, complementary hydro, hydrogen production opportunities and resources sector development. The panel will also take into account integration with complementary infrastructure including the CopperString project.

Projects like the Bradfield have the potential to support a new generation of farmers, landholders and regional communities, but they must be realistic, affordable and sustainable. Along with the rest of the world, Queenslanders face tough times ahead. The Palaszczuk Labor government will continue to make the right decisions on water infrastructure as we unite and recover.

Public Transport

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.11 am): It is Queenslanders who have led the nation on managing the health impacts of COVID-19. Thanks to their efforts, the Palaszczuk Labor government has been able to continue delivering Queensland's plan for economic recovery as we unite and recover. That includes getting on with a record \$24 billion transport and roads program, one that reflects the government's strong record on backing public transport. When this government was elected in 2015, we put public transport in the fast lane. On the Gold Coast we duplicated the heavy line between Helensvale and Coomera and built light rail stage 2, both in record time for Queensland's largest ever sporting event, the Commonwealth Games. We made train stations more accessible in Nambour, Newmarket, Dinmore, Graceville, Morayfield and Strathpine, with Fairfield, Yeronga, Rocklea, Salisbury, Moorooka and Yeerongpilly to come. Some 5,400 new commuter parks have been added and, thanks to the member for Maryborough, we brought train manufacturing back to the heritage city, supporting 250 local jobs and fixing trains built overseas by the LNP that were not compliant with disability standards.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: Members opposite do not like it, but they were incompetent. Working collaboratively with the federal government, we locked in funding for projects such as the Sunshine Coast rail duplication, Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3 and M1 upgrades as part of four out of five record transport and road budgets. We implemented the largest ever recruitment of drivers in our state's history following the cuts to driver training in 2014. We fully funded and started construction on Queensland's largest infrastructure project, the \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail. Queenslanders backed that investment with two record years of public transport patronage before the COVID crisis hit.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has not slowed down. As part of our COVID-safe public transport plan we have kept full services running, because we know how our essential workers and their families depend upon it. We have rolled out hand sanitiser at stations, ramped up cleaning and rolled out 1,000 extra bus and train services—and we never called for our borders to be opened 64 times! Today, there are more trains services running than ever before in Queensland. There are some 8,427 weekly services, 810 more than in 2015. That is nearly 10 per cent more than when we were first elected.


For the first time ever, Queenslanders will soon have a statewide smart ticketing system, making public transport more accessible. Wherever people live in Queensland they will have one system of payment. We are building three new train stations as part of Cross River Rail on the Gold Coast and another eight new train stations between Burleigh Heads and Broadbeach for stage 3 of the light rail to prevent gridlock on the Gold Coast and to create jobs.

To support Queensland manufacturing jobs over the next decade, another \$300 million worth of train upgrades and maintenance will be carried out at Downer's Maryborough rail hub. Shovels will soon hit the ground on the Sunshine Coast rail duplication, and there are even more station upgrades such as at Banyo, which I was happy to announce with the member for Nudgee yesterday.

While patronage on public transport is down at the moment as Queensland continues to manage the health impacts of COVID-19, Queenslanders can be assured that, when they return to the system, the Palaszczuk government and the thousands of workers who keep our public transport network running will have their backs. On 31 October Queenslanders have a clear choice: those opposite, who cut \$1.6 billion from Queensland transport and roads and ordered trains from overseas, or the Palaszczuk Labor government's economic plan that includes building better public transport, supporting the train manufacturing jobs of Queensland workers and backing public transport right across the state.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.15 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House notes and condemns the Palaszczuk Labor government's legacy of five years of economic failures, while being distracted by ongoing integrity issues, including:

- (a) having the worst unemployment rate in the nation before COVID-19, in every year since the state election and in the latest ABS labour force data released in July this year;
- (b) smashing the Queensland economy with nine new or increased job-destroying taxes, ripping almost \$4 billion out of the state economy and refusing to match the LNP's no new taxes guarantee over the next term;

- (c) currently having a record 234,000 Queenslanders out of work and on the jobless queue;
- (d) an infrastructure underspend of \$1.3 billion in the last financial year at a time when infrastructure spending should have been fast-tracked to stimulate the economy;
- (e) failing to provide economic leadership with three treasurers and three under treasurers in the last three years;
- (f) moving the budget to April this year to provide businesses and industry with certainty, but then refusing to release a full state budget to avoid scrutiny before this year's state election;
- (g) committing up to \$200 million of taxpayer funded support to bail out Virgin Airlines, while refusing to guarantee no Queensland job losses;
- (h) failing to rule out the member for South Brisbane returning to cabinet;
- (i) failure to build dams and ripping down Paradise Dam in the middle of a drought; and
- (j) multiple failures in the delivery of services that Queenslanders rely on.

Energy Generation



Mr KNUTH (Hill—KAP) (10.16 am): I give notice that I will move—

1. That this House acknowledges the vital role cheap coal-fired power plays in supporting the jobs of millions of Queenslanders now and for the next 50 years; and
2. That this House commits to providing Queenslanders with the cheapest electricity possible by ceasing costly renewable power mandates, subsidies and investment programs available to inefficient wind and solar generation to ensure coal and renewables compete on a level playing field.

Mr SPEAKER: Given that two notices of motion have been put forward this morning, I will consider both notices of motion and report back to the House.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Annual General Meeting



Mr SPEAKER: I remind members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Queensland branch annual general meeting today at 1.05 pm. I know that members look forward to this meeting all year, so I expect that we will see a fantastic turnout of members at that time.

Mr Mander: Will there be food?

Mr SPEAKER: Not in the chamber, member.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

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

Coronavirus, Personal Protective Equipment



Mrs FRECKLINGTON (10.18 am): My first question is to the Premier. Queensland's nurses and frontline workers are doing an incredible job keeping Queenslanders safe from COVID-19, but the fact that seven staff at Ipswich Hospital have now tested positive is a real cause for concern for staff and their union. Can the Premier guarantee that Queensland Health is providing fit-for-purpose PPE and adequate training on how to use this equipment to all frontline workers?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. Let me state from the outset that this morning I have had a conversation with Dr Young and with the Deputy Premier about the issues arising at the Ipswich Hospital. Dr Young has informed me that she is speaking with the CEO this morning to reassure them that we have adequate PPE, and we know we have adequate PPE because the Deputy Premier and I went to the stockpile in my electorate.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It was not the distribution centre; it was—

A government member interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, and it is always good to see the member for Kawana interject—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—because the member for Kawana was part of the government—

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Kawana, you are warned under the standing orders. Your comments will come through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Kawana was part of the government under Campbell Newman that cut nurses across the state—cut nurses, cut frontline staff, cut allied health officers and cut programs. My biggest fear is that that is what is going to happen if the LNP is elected in October.

Mrs D'Ath interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I take the Attorney-General's interjection, because the LNP has also been very good at attacking our Chief Health Officer. The advice that the Chief Health Officer has provided to the Deputy Premier and me has kept Queenslanders safe, and I thank Dr Young again publicly in this House for the extraordinary work that she has been doing night and day during this pandemic.

Dr Young has been preparing our hospitals for this pandemic for years. After we had SARS and MERS, she has been getting our hospitals ready, making sure that we had the PPE, making sure that we had the ventilators and making sure that our hospitals were prepared. To that extent, I also thank all of our contact tracers in this state. They are doing an extraordinary job making sure that all of the tracing happens. We will continue to monitor the situation and to provide support to our health staff right across our state but, as I said this morning, the people who have been diagnosed are in quarantine in their homes and we do not have concerns at this stage about any spread. We will continue to support our health staff and the record of this Labor government in this state has been to grow our health force in this state, not cut and sack as those opposite did.

(Time expired)

Queensland Border Closure, Exemptions

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My second question is also to the Premier. Mark, a 39-year-old Queensland resident, has been diagnosed with small cell cancer and his case is terminal. His four children, father and brother all live in New South Wales. They have been denied an exemption to visit Mark together. They have said that they may have had more luck if they were in the AFL or were the crew on a superyacht. Will the Premier show some consistency, compassion and common sense and allow this family to say goodbye to Mark all together?

Ms PALASZCZUK: What I can say is that, if Queenslanders had listened to the LNP when it asked for the borders to be opened 64 times, we may have been in the situation of Victoria.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, the Leader of the Opposition called for the borders to be opened and the consequences would have been diabolical for this state—absolutely diabolical for this state. Let me say very clearly that there is a unit to deal with exemptions and they are decided by the Chief Health Officer. They are not decided by politicians, and nor should they be. These are clinical decisions. They are decided by the clinicians who have the expertise to make those decisions.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, there is no clock running. Two minutes please. Thank you. Premier, please continue.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is tough on families right across Australia at the moment. We are in a world pandemic. No-one likes to see what is happening at the moment. Because of restrictions that are in place, some people cannot even go into hospital and see their loved ones. My uncle was recently diagnosed with lung cancer and I could not go and visit him in the hospital. It is tough. Everybody knows how tough it is at the moment and there are families who are going through incredibly hard times. Does the opposition not think that we do not know how hard it is, especially with aged care—when people are in aged-care facilities and cannot see their loved ones? This is called a world pandemic and unless we accept the advice of the Chief Health Officer—and let me say this—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members to my left, the Premier is being responsive to the question as it was asked. I ask that we hear the answer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The advice of the Chief Health Officer has stood Queensland in good stead and we would not be in the situation we are today if it was not for the advice of the Chief Health Officer. Under this government we will continue to accept and abide by her advice, but I do not know what the future holds. All of this could be at risk if at the end of October—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order and it is relevance under standing order 118(b). The Premier was directly asked about a father dying of cancer who is unable to see his kids and to show compassion and consistency—

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Please.

Mr BLEIJIE:—and the Premier is going way off the question asked in her political pointscoring.

Mr SPEAKER: Okay, you are now debating the point of order, member for Kawana. What is your point of order, Leader of the House?

Mrs D'ATH: In the Manager of Opposition Business taking that point of order, he is deliberately using that opportunity to repeat the question and debate the issue instead of simply drawing to your attention a point of order on relevance. I submit, Mr Speaker, that it is an abuse of standing orders to do so.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you for the suggestion, Leader of the House. I have heard the point of order. I believe there is no point of order. I believe the Premier is being relevant and I do not believe that it is in any way trying to subvert the standing orders. The Premier has the call. You have 32 seconds left.

Ms PALASZCZUK: If there are individual cases, we have set up a specialist care unit with a dedicated team. I have put in place a social worker as well because these are really tough, difficult times for families.

Mr Powell: Not for AFL.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No-one wants to keep families apart at this time—

Ms Bates: And no-one wants to die alone, either.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—but it is about—

Mr Powell interjected.

Ms Bates interjected.

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

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I reject what the member for Mudgeeraba said. It is offensive and I ask her to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier's time has expired.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Speaker, I find it offensive and I ask her to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Mudgeeraba did not reflect on the member while she was speaking. The member for Mudgeeraba made a remark, 'No-one wants to die alone.' There was no reflection personally on the individual member speaking. That could have applied to anything.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members. Whilst, member for Kawana, you are correct, there is a practice in the House of asking where there has been offence taken, even inadvertent, that that is withdrawn and I ask the member to withdraw.

Ms BATES: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you. I could go further and say that there are to be no interjections ever in the Queensland parliament, which would also be correct, but we allow those as well and the interjection was clearly taken.

Electricity Prices

Ms LAUGA: My question is to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier update the House on the latest good news for regional Queenslanders on their power bills and is she aware of any alternative approaches?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Keppel for the question. The member for Keppel is a very strong advocate for her local community. I know how concerned she is about cost-of-living pressures that families are experiencing during this time of COVID. In good news for regional Queensland, I can advise that from last week Ergon customers are starting to see a \$50 asset dividend being taken off their power bill. That is 626,000 regional households that will receive a dividend as owners of Ergon. What great news that is for Queensland and great news for regional Queensland.

Once again all of that is at risk at the end of October. It is all at risk because before the Newman government was elected they said that they were going to cut people's power bills, but instead they rose 43 per cent.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Chatsworth, I believe I heard some unparliamentary language. I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr MINNIKIN: I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: You are also warned under the standing orders for interjecting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You cannot trust the LNP. They say one thing before an election and then they do something completely different. They said they were going to lower the cost of electricity and then they increased electricity prices. They said they were going to introduce no new taxes and then they introduced taxes.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Glass House is warned under the standing orders.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I am sure you are disappointed, member.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Of course, we always know the LNP have a hidden agenda. They said that before that election, then they got into power and they had an idea. That idea was to sell off Queensland's assets.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Do you forget that? They all try to deny that, but we know that is what they did.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The LNP leader has \$23 billion worth of unfunded election commitments. I say to Queenslanders where is the money coming from? I know what they are going to be doing, they are going to be dusting off the plan—do members remember the Tim Nicholls' plan, the Strong Choices plan?—and selling off Queensland's assets.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, you will refer to members by their correct titles, please.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Clayfield had a plan to sell Queensland's assets. The member for Nanango was the assistant treasurer and had a plan to sell off the assets.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer can stand in this House—and I am looking forward to the debate between the shadow Treasurer and this Treasurer.

Mr Mander: I can't wait!

Ms PALASZCZUK: Bring it on!

Mr Mander: Let's have one every night!

Ms PALASZCZUK: Have it tonight!

Mr Mander: Every night!

Ms PALASZCZUK: Every night! We know that they cannot fund \$23 billion. You cannot trust them. They were not going to cut any public servants before the election, they came in and sacked 14,000. The LNP cannot be trusted with the state's finances.

Queensland Border Closure, Exemptions

Mr MANDER: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier explain the clear double standard of Victorian millionaires on the luxury superyacht *Lady Pamela* being officially allowed to stay in Queensland despite creatively breaching restrictions, but Queensland Jayne Brown's exemption from hotel quarantine was denied against her expert medical advice and she was forced to quarantine in an hotel room after life-saving brain surgery?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. In relation to the *Lady Pamela*, we know that what they did was unacceptable. When they entered Queensland waters, as Dr Young said, maritime crew boarded that vessel and I am advised that the skipper of *Lady Pamela* was issued a notice to appear on 4 September 2020 and is due to appear at the Southport court on 11 September. The alleged offence relates to false or misleading statements made to an emergency officer. Crew on board the *Lady Pamela* were also subject to enforcement action by New South Wales police for

offences committed in that jurisdiction. Those on board have completed hotel quarantine in Queensland and they are not considered a COVID risk. They have actually done their quarantine and they have paid for it.

Let me make it very clear that when it comes to individual cases—and I know what the LNP is doing, I can see it very clearly—they need to refer the individuals to the exemptions unit. I do not make these decisions. The Deputy Premier does not make these decisions. They are made by clinicians. Let me stand in this House and say very clearly that if the LNP had got its way or been in power the borders would have been open. I am under absolutely no illusion that Queensland could have been subject to a second wave—

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Broadwater is warned under the standing orders. You are not directing your comments through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Of course we know that that would have taken a huge economic toll on the Queensland economy. Those opposite called for the borders to be open 64 times. They had billboards calling for the borders to be open. I am under no illusion that that would have been a huge risk to Queensland and Queensland's response.

Mr Hunt interjected.

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

Ms PALASZCZUK: The way in which those opposite talk about our state Chief Health Officer is disgraceful. It is despicable. The cartoon that has been circulated by the LNP is a disgrace. It is a complete and utter disgrace. I will stand by the people of this state every single day in this House to back in the clear health advice that is being provided to me and the Deputy Premier from the Chief Health Officer. I think all of that is at risk at the end of October if the LNP is in office because who are they going to listen to? Who will they get their advice from? Who will they listen to and will they sack the Chief Health Officer?

Coronavirus, Economic Recovery

Ms PUGH: My question is to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Can the Premier update the House on the government's plan for Queensland's economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and is the Premier aware of any alternative approaches?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Mount Ommaney for the question. The member for Mount Ommaney is supporting small businesses in her electorate. It is great to see that in Queensland people can go out and support small businesses. We could not have a strong economy and our economy functioning if we did not have a response to the health crisis. Once again we are absolutely focused on that health response, that contact tracing, and making sure that we keep the virus under control. The greatest risk to that, as I said, and I will say it again and I will say it every single day, is the LNP and the Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Just so rude! So rude. Nasty. Rude. Arrogant. Out of touch. That is the opposition: absolutely arrogant and out of touch with what Queenslanders are thinking. The Leader of the Opposition, the leader of that pack, is the No. 1 culprit to put Queenslanders at risk.

Mrs Frecklington: Back to the LNP's plan!

Ms PALASZCZUK: Well, we would love to hear what the LNP plan is. I take that interjection. Here is our plan. It is very clear. I made sure that we circulated that to everyone yesterday. Let me say this: we know that the LNP does not have a plan. They are not saying where their commitments are being funded from. We do not know where the \$23 billion is going to be found.

Of course, the member for Southport has given the game away. On 27 August at the chamber of commerce breakfast he said—

The reason that I'm running again is that I've got some unfinished business, as does the LNP. In the two and a half short years that we were in government, we set about a very significant reform agenda for the state of Queensland to bring our finances back under control.

We know their unfinished business: cutting, sacking and selling. That is in the LNP's DNA. Their unfinished business is more sacking of public servants, more cuts and, of course, selling off our assets. The LNP are weak on policy. They are weak on reform. The LNP have no plan. The Leader of the Opposition has this week to stand up and detail where the \$23 billion is coming from.

(Time expired)

Queensland Border Closure, Exemptions

Ms BATES: My question is to the Premier. A journalist described the Premier's AFL party at the Gold Coast Mecure resort, stating—

You're talking about grandparents, babysitters, the girlfriend of a reporter, there's even suggestions a swimming coach has gone up there for the kids—this is out of control.

Where is the medical advice that says that it is okay to let celebrity Dannii Minogue or 400 Victorian AFL executives and hangers-on across the border but grieving family members cannot attend funerals and two-year-old Luella, who was recovering from open-heart surgery, was initially refused an exemption to quarantine at home?

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the Premier I will say that there is a lengthy preamble to the question. I will allow the question but I will also allow the Premier latitude in answering it. I give forewarning that future questions of such length may be ruled out of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I reject some of the premise of that question. I will say this very clearly: if there are individual cases we have set up a specialist care unit. Members of parliament or the public can refer to that unit to get specialist advice about exemptions. Other matters are covered by industry COVID plans that are signed off by the Chief Health Officer. Some of those industry plans are about our economy. It is about growing jobs. Our resources industry has a COVID industry plan.

Mr Mander interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will take the interjection. Obviously none of them will be watching or going to the AFL. The AFL could have gone to any other state. It could have gone to Western Australia, South Australia or New South Wales, but Queensland got it under a COVID safe plan. I am advised that the exact same rules would have applied if it had been won by another state. I expect everyone to act responsibly and to do the right thing. If people have individual cases, they should refer them to the clinicians to make a decision.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order before we move to another question. In relation to the question just asked, I understand that that question may have included naming a minor. I seek clarification as to whether that is against the standing orders and, if that is the case, I ask you to remove any reference to the minor's name in *Hansard*.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The standing orders relate to a minor who may be at risk under the child safety orders and not the naming of a minor in parliament in general. I have already given guidance in terms of the length of the question. I expect that future questions will be asked with that in mind.

Coronavirus, Aged-Care Facilities

Ms SCANLON: My question is of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the Palaszczuk government's plan for protecting Queenslanders in residential aged-care facilities from COVID-19 and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Gaven for her question and her ongoing advocacy for people in aged-care facilities. I will never forget the night more than a year ago when I arrived at Earle Haven and the emergency situation there. The member for Gaven was already there, making sure that our ambos had the coffee that they needed to get through what was a very long night. We know that the elderly are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 than other demographics and that is particularly so for those in aged-care facilities. We have seen that around the world and also in New South Wales and Victoria. That is why protecting them has been a key focus of our efforts.

We have two high-level expert advisory groups assisting us and the Chief Health Officer has issued a range of directions on RACFs to ensure that their residents are safe and that we are well prepared. So far we have seen three cases of staff from aged-care facilities test positive to COVID-19, but fortunately, thanks to their efforts and to our plans, we have not seen any residents contract the virus from those staff. That is very good news.

Before COVID-19, I spoke often in this House about how poorly regulated and funded the aged-care sector was. Of course, we heard all about that from the federal government's royal commission. Under COVID-19, that underfunding and under-regulation has been made more stark and with tragic consequences. In Victoria, we have seen 863 cases connected to aged-care facilities, 10 active outbreaks and 125 of the 683 lives lost have been from aged-care facilities.

In Queensland the state owns and runs 16 aged-care facilities where we take care of the most challenging older Queenslanders. They are the only aged-care facilities in the state that have mandatory minimum staff-to-patient ratios. Of course, we could not have done that if those opposite had had their way. They intended to close or sell each and every one of those facilities. You cannot cut \$23 billion of state government expenditure without cutting health. If they are going to cut health, the first place they will start—just like they did last time—will be to cut our state-run aged-care facilities. They wanted to close them then and they will close them again. Those are the only facilities with guaranteed staffing ratios at each level. They will be the first on the chopping block if those opposite win. The nurses and the residents will be the first to suffer so they can pay for their \$23 billion worth of unfunded promises.

(Time expired)

Townsville, Youth Crime

Mr LAST: My question without notice is to the Premier. It is reported that yesterday the member for Thuringowa finally realised that Townsville has a youth crime epidemic saying, 'It's time to do something about crime.' Why has the Premier ignored Townsville's youth crime problems for five years and does she accept that it is time to finally do something about youth crime in that city?

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe that the question has imputations in relation to the member for Thuringowa. I ask that the question be ruled out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not believe there is any imputation. There may be a point of view that the member for Burdekin has expressed, but I will not rule the question out of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Of course we want to do everything we can to tackle youth crime. We have announced a five-point plan. We are ensuring that we have extra police in Townsville. When I was there I had the opportunity to visit the police academy. Of course, the LNP have a secret plan to look at selling it off as well. We know that when they were last in office the LNP cut senior officer positions. That was absolutely part of their cuts plan.

Today I can advise that the police will complement their Operation Romeo Seville with a new targeted police operation in Townsville that will commence today. The State Flying Squad is heading to Townsville to support the new operation. Officers from the flying squad will support a dedicated team in a surge that will target recidivist offenders. I thank the police minister and the police commissioner for that. We have already delivered an extra 53 police to Townsville. More than 700 police officers are now permanently based in the Townsville district. The five-point action plan to target youth offenders is also producing results—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members to my left, the Premier is being responsive to the question as asked. You may not like the answer, but the Premier is providing a response.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Our co-responder teams, comprising police and youth justice staff, are making a difference with troubled young people. The targeted operation that I mentioned will be conducted for the duration of the school holidays. Police will then assess the situation and make further decisions about their operational response. This is how a modern police service works: responding swiftly to emerging issues to support our community. I thank the Police Commissioner and the police minister for acting so swiftly on this issue.

We are yet to hear a plan from the LNP about youth crime or crime in general. They have one plan, and that plan is to cut, sack and sell. They cut police. They wanted to sell off the Townsville Police Academy, from memory. They have no plan and they cannot be trusted.

QRIDA Loans

Ms LUI: My question is of the Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. Will the Treasurer update the House on how QRIDA loans are helping to support small business and is the Treasurer aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Cook for her question. The member for Cook represents one of the largest and most diverse electorates of any parliament in the Commonwealth. I thank her for her hard work, her ongoing support for small business and her genuine interest in and commitment to the Queensland economy.

I must say that I am absolutely flabbergasted. I cannot believe that two days after we released the Fiscal and Economic Review the member for Everton, the shadow Treasurer, and the members of the LNP are entirely out of puff when it comes to the Queensland economy. There has been not one question to the Treasurer—

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Mudgeeraba.

Mr Mander: We are doing the Treasurer a favour, saving him the embarrassment.

Mr DICK: If the member for Everton wants to go to the Maryborough train manufacturing facility or if he wants to go to the Stanwell Power Station, which they wanted to sell, or if he wants to go to a Virgin hangar with Virgin workers or if he wants to stand outside Jacaranda Place—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DICK: He was a cabinet minister in the government that shut the Barrett Adolescent Centre without a replacement, putting suffering onto families that was entirely needless. If he wants to defend—

Mr Mander: Rubbish.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection.

Mr Mander: Absolute garbage!

Mr DICK: When I said that there was unnecessary suffering put onto Queensland families he said, 'Absolute rubbish.' He should stand up and apologise to those families. I say to the shadow Treasurer that there are families that suffered, and I met them. The Premier met them. If it had not been for the Premier, their suffering would have been expanded.

Mr Mander: Politicising a tragedy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock.

Mr DICK: I again take the interjection.

Mr SPEAKER: Whilst you might be happy to take the interjection, I will ask the member for Everton to cease his interjections. I realise that there may have been some provocation, but you need to cease and desist.

Mr DICK: I will back our support of the Queensland economy every day of the week. I thank the member for Cook for taking the time to ask a question about it. The opposition claim that they want to fight the election on the economy, but two days after the fiscal and economic review was handed down the shadow Treasurer cannot even ask me a question in the House. Those opposite are unfit to lead. They are not ready and they have absolutely no ticker. They have no ticker for the fight. The LNP have no ticker and no capacity to ask questions on the economy. If they did, they would ask me a question but they will not. I know that they will be out the back writing a question now, but they are weak on the economy, they cannot be trusted and they certainly cannot lead Queensland.

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Everton, you are not directing your comments through the chair. You are warned under the standing orders, as is the member for Buderim for a similar offence.

North Stradbroke Island, Ferry

Dr ROBINSON: My question is to the Minister for State Development, Tourism and Innovation. Can the minister explain her ferry proposal to North Stradbroke Island claiming that tourists can get to Straddie in 40 minutes from Brisbane's CBD, a claim the Straddie Flyer owner has slammed as false advertising and 'a load of crock' and other experts say cannot be done?

Ms JONES: I thank the member for Oodgeroo for sticking with his plan to knock any investment we make to reboot the North Stradbroke Island community. If there is anything we do—investment on the island, investment on the one thing that everybody in the tourism industry has said—

Dr Robinson: You are the only person who believes it can be done.

Ms JONES: I should swear on a stack of Bibles, like the member for Everton. Can I be very clear about this: this is the one piece of infrastructure that the local community have said from day one will be a game changer—and the Lord Mayor of Brisbane has said this—in linking Brisbane to the bay.

Dr Robinson: You said 40 minutes.

Ms JONES: You are right. I was advised that it was 40 minutes; in fact, it is more likely to be an hour. I apologise for that. What I will not apologise for is being the only government in the history—

Mr Boothman: So you admit it.

Dr Robinson: You were wrong!

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

Ms JONES: I just admitted it. Why do you not admit that you do not have a plan? Why do you not admit that you were wrong for 64 times saying that we should have opened the border?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister, it would be helpful if you could put your comments through the chair.

Ms JONES: It would be very helpful if the Leader of the Opposition—

Dr Robinson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Oodgeroo, I had barely given the minister that advice. You are warned under the standing orders.

Ms JONES: What kind of local member complains about investment to get people to an island that he has said ever since he was elected was withering on a vine and needed more tourists? Here I am, as the Minister for Tourism, working with the private sector to deliver a \$5.5 million investment to get people to the Moreton Bay islands. Still they bag it. It just shows that those opposite have only one game plan, and that is to knock from the sidelines. When the Premier was strong in her leadership and protecting Queenslanders on the borders, what did they do? They just criticised from the sidelines. They contradicted. Some 64 times they called for the Premier to open the borders. I can tell you what, member for Oodgeroo, those in your community did not want the borders opened.

Dr ROBINSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. My question is about her fake fast ferry, not about other matters.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not think it is helpful to rise to a point of order and provide commentary, member, but you are correct regarding the matter of relevance. I ask the minister to come back to the question as asked.

Ms JONES: The member for Oodgeroo represents an area where tourism is vital to creating jobs. He might want to say that the infrastructure we have announced, worth \$5.5 million, is in fairyland, but I will invite him to the official opening. Hopefully he will no longer be the member for parliament for that area, but when we have the official opening of the pontoon in December I am very happy to invite him, whether he is the member for Oodgeroo or not.

What is extremely relevant about the ferry over to the Moreton Bay islands and coronavirus is that the communities on those islands were some of the most vocal about keeping the borders closed. Not only were they worried about their elderly residents and the traditional owners; they were also deeply worried about the tourism job impact if coronavirus ended up on Minjerribah, North Stradbroke Island. I know this because I listen to locals on the island. I do not run roughshod over them like the member for Oodgeroo.

Dr ROBINSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence at those remarks and ask that they be withdrawn.

Ms JONES: I withdraw.

Infrastructure

Mr POWER: My question is to the Minister for State Development, Tourism and Innovation. Will the minister update the House on the Palaszczuk government's strategy to rebuild Queensland's economy by investing in major infrastructure projects?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for Logan for his question. He has been a fierce advocate during his time in this parliament for getting new infrastructure delivered in his neck of the woods. We know that Yarrabilba is one of the fastest growing communities in Queensland. He has a very proud record of advocacy in that regard. When I was the minister for education he pretty much followed me everywhere until the building of the new high school for that community was brought forward—congratulations to you.

I mention that because I was very proud to join both the member for Logan and the Treasurer in Yarrabilba in July to announce, as part of our strong economic plan to deliver a strong economy for Queensland as we rebuild out of coronavirus, \$200 million for the Building Acceleration Fund. This is

something the Premier was told, through a number of stakeholder groups that she chaired with the Treasurer, by the business community and industry they wanted delivered as part of our strong economic plan.

I am very proud to say—this is news just in, Premier—that we have been inundated with applications. There have been 157 applications from the private sector to access our Building Acceleration Fund. In total this is more than \$1.3 billion worth of private sector investment where they want to partner with the state government to deliver new infrastructure at the very time we need it most. Now is the time to build the infrastructure we need to grow Queensland into the future.

When we contrast our strong economic plan for Queensland, clearly articulated by the Treasurer on Monday—no questions were asked of him by the opposition yesterday or today; maybe they might read it by Friday, but do not hold your breath, Treasurer—where we have a strong plan and worked with industry leaders to develop a plan and investment—

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, will you be tabling that?

Ms JONES: I can table it again. I know the Premier tabled it yesterday.

Mr SPEAKER: I will ask you to stop holding it up.

Ms JONES: I am a bit of fond of it.

Ms Palaszczuk: We all are.

Ms JONES: We all are. I take that interjection. In reality, the contrast between us, the government, and the Leader of the Opposition who is laughing right now and who called for the borders to be opened no less than 64 times—

Mrs Gerber interjected.

Ms JONES: And the member for Currumbin.

Honourable members interjected.

Ms JONES: That is right. She called for that 64 times. We only have to contrast her position with the position of the states that opened up their borders and have seen their economies contract. With the level 4 restrictions in Victoria right now they have lost more than \$5.4 billion a month in economic activity. That is while we are out there working with private sector. As I said, we have announced \$200 million for our Building Acceleration Fund. We have seen \$1.2 billion worth of infrastructure proposed by more than 157 applicants who want to get on with the job of rebuilding Queensland because of our strong economic plan.

(Time expired)

Coronavirus, Quarantine

Mr BLEIJIE: My question without notice is to the Premier. I table a piece written by Pippa Bradshaw about her experience of the Labor government's quarantine regime—something she describes as heartless and lacking basic human compassion and empathy and a story even Labor's Pat Condren described as gut-wrenching.

Tabled paper: Article from 9 News online, dated 4 September 2020, titled 'How a Nine reporter's double tragedies were made worse by Queensland's "deplorable" quarantine conditions' [[1580](#)].

Will the Premier apologise to Pippa and guarantee that no-one else will suffer the same heartless treatment?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. I have not read that article. As I have said very clearly, if people have individual cases they should be referred to the clinicians.

Renewable Energy

Mr MELLISH: My question is of the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. Will the minister update the House on Queensland's transition to renewable energy and is he aware of any alternatives?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for Aspley for the question. I know he has a keen interest in renewable energy. He knows that Queensland's renewable energy revolution is well underway. Over the past five years 41 large-scale renewable energy projects have been launched. That is around 6,500 jobs. Projects are going ahead and creating jobs. That is because we own our energy assets. They are actively investing in renewables. They will continue to power ahead, creating jobs and driving down power prices because of this government's policies.

Our economic strategy, unite and recover, provides half a billion dollars in a renewable energy fund. We are committing a further \$145 million to create renewable zones in North, Central and Southern Queensland. Together this massive investment pool and our policies will fuel jobs and investment right across this great state of ours.

What is the alternative? The alternative is an LNP shemozzle—an absolute shemozzle. To those opposite renewable energy is a mere fantasy. The member for Burdekin has finally won. The Nats have finally won—no more renewables. The Nats have won—no more renewable energy in this state.

The member for Callide is such a fan of renewables he is buying Facebook ads. Those ads call renewable energy a fantasy. It was the *Guardian* that revealed this insight into LNP energy policy. What is particularly interesting is who funded the research the member for Callide is using. Who funded that research? One Nation funded the research that the member for Callide is using. The member crossed the floor once. He will probably jump back a couple of rows and join the member for Mirani pretty soon, I am sure.

It is an absolute shambles over there. The member for Burleigh said in a recent online debate that Queensland did not need any more poles and wires. Where does the LNP stand on CopperString? Last time I checked that was one big long wire and lots of poles. The difference is clear. Over there it is an absolute shambles. It is a family barbecue from hell. The kids out back have gone feral. The old mad uncle from the bush has wandered off down the street. Over there looming on the left is the member for Broadwater. He is tying on the barbecue apron and is eyeing off the tongs.

(Time expired)

Coronavirus, Whitsundays

Mr COSTIGAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Will the minister explain why not all Queensland Health nurses were wearing gloves and complete PPE at the COVID-19 pop-up testing station in Airlie Beach as reported locally by 7News and if there is any link between the testing station and a potential breach last month at the Whitsunday Coast Airport?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for his question. I am unaware of those reports. I am also not aware of any link that he has inferred with the airport. I can advise that our health staff have all of the protective equipment they need to do their jobs. They are very well trained and highly specialised. I will not see anyone in this place criticise them for their efforts.

I understand that the clinic at Airlie Beach was contracted to a private provider. I am happy to seek advice about the practices that that provider uses and used at that clinic. I want to reassure the House that all of our staff have all of the equipment they need. I note that the opposition asked questions earlier of the Premier related to availability of protective equipment. I can advise the House that we have more than 100 million N95 masks in stock. I can also advise the House that at Ipswich Hospital, where clearly we have bolstered their protective equipment supply in addition to their normal supply, they have 8,000 additional surgical masks and 8,000 additional N95 masks.

This government will do everything it can and has done everything it can to make sure that our health staff have every single thing they need to keep themselves safe. We will continue to do so. It has come at a cost. We have invested \$250 million in bolstering our protective equipment stockpile. That is available to public hospital staff in the member for Whitsunday's electorate and indeed in all of our electorates.

As I said, I understood that the fever clinic that was stood up at Airlie Beach in response to the positive result in the UQ research sewage testing was contracted to a private provider. I would expect that they would have the same PPE procedures and standards as we have in our state run facilities and our state run pop-up fever clinics, but I am happy to contact them and ensure that that is the case.

Gold Coast, Transport Infrastructure

Mrs McMAHON: My question is of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Will the minister update the House on the Palaszczuk Labor government's plan for busting Gold Coast congestion and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for her interest in infrastructure and jobs on the Gold Coast and in her electorate. We know our record has been very strong in terms of infrastructure on the Gold Coast for roads and transport. We have had four M1 upgrades. We have secured the corridor and gazetted it

for the second M1. We have seen the heavy rail done between Helensvale and Coomera. We have seen light rail stage 2 completed and light rail stage 3 is happening. We invest in the Gold Coast. On the second M1, we have gazetted that corridor. We have secured it.

From those opposite we get more positions than an AFL team. Firstly, they blocked it when they were in government. Some of them want it to be 80 kilometres an hour; some of them want it to be 100 kilometres an hour. There are all sorts of positions. Let us be clear about what the LNP position is on the second M1. They want to build a tiny section of it—a 6.5-kilometre section—that will force an extra 60,000 cars a day on to the already congested Gold Coast Highway through the electorates of Theodore and Bonney, through the suburbs of Helensvale, Parkwood, Biggera Waters, Labrador and Southport. Good luck with the LNP. There will be 60,000 extra cars a day being dumped through your community under the LNP policy.

Advice from my department says, 'Increasing volumes of this magnitude would likely show gridlock, flow breakdown through the corridor, with excessive delays to travel times along the Gold Coast Highway and throughout the surrounding road network. The economic cost of such a scenario would be expected to exceed multibillions of dollars.' What a dog's breakfast of a policy from the LNP.

On the southern Gold Coast, the member for Burleigh wants the light rail to go inland via his dogleg design to prevent heavy rail going to the airport. The *Gold Coast Bulletin* today reports that he has backflipped. He is suddenly saying, 'Yes, there will be heavy rail to the airport.' What we want to know from the LNP is how are you going to get heavy rail to the airport? Are you going to widen the corridor to put light and heavy rail there and resume a lot of houses through west Burleigh, Elanora and Tugun? Are you going to have a new heavy rail corridor? If so, where is it going to go and who is going to get their house resumed?

Their policy is uncoordinated and disjointed. It is built out between Varsity Lakes and the airport. There is a heavy rail corridor there for heavy rail. That is our plan—light rail along the Gold Coast Highway and the M1 working together. Under the LNP, we do not know what their actual policy is. They should specify it. Are they going to resume houses along the corridor and widen it in terms of the heavy rail corridor that already exists? Are they going to have a new corridor and resume a lot more houses? How are they going to get heavy rail to the airport? It makes no sense whatsoever. They need to specify for the Gold Coast residents on the southern end how they are going to do it. How are they going to do it? It makes no sense whatsoever. It is only this government that has a coordinated transport policy for the southern Gold Coast.

(Time expired)

Coronavirus, Quarantine

Mrs GERBER: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to media reports that Hollywood actor Tom Hanks—one of the first people to be diagnosed with coronavirus—is back on the Gold Coast. Can the Premier advise whether Tom Hanks is undertaking the mandatory hotel quarantine or has he been given a special exemption like other celebrities?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Currumbin for the question. It was the member for Currumbin whom we viewed on television actually helping people cross the border when the border was closed!

Mrs Gerber: When you opened the borders.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Currumbin, I realise that you are new to this place, but you are warned under the standing orders. That is an unacceptable interjection not directed through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It was captured on footage. I remember viewing it.

Mr Ryan: I wonder if they had border passes. Did they have border passes?

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is right. Perhaps the member for Currumbin would like to explain to the House her actions. Perhaps the member for Currumbin would like to explain why she was ferrying people across the border.

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

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock.

A government member interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is right—because they had an open border policy.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, please resume your seat. What is your point of order?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, it is on relevance under standing order 118(b). The question was with respect to mandatory hotel quarantine for Tom Hanks, not what the Premier is speaking about or attacking the member for Currumbin on. She asked a legitimate serious question.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, I realise that you are putting your comments around the general issue, but I will need you to come back to the specific question, as asked.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The industry plan for COVID in relation to the screen industry is a plan that has been approved, just like there is for the resources industry, just like there is for the agricultural industry. Under that plan they have to stay in the place for two weeks just like everybody else. They will have random checks—that is my understanding—by police. They will have contacts by—

Ms Bates: They are quarantining at Versace—one rule for celebrities and another rule for sick people.

Mr Dick: It is jobs on the Gold Coast. It is jobs for your community.

Mrs Gerber: Roll out the red carpet.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let us make it very clear: the member for Currumbin and the member for Mudgeeraba are against the jobs that the screen industry is actually giving to the Gold Coast.

Ms Bates interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Well, that is what they are saying.

Mrs Gerber interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Everyone has to complete 14 days.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Currumbin, you were on a warning. You can leave the chamber for one hour.

Whereupon the honourable member for Currumbin withdrew from the chamber at 11.15 am.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Mudgeeraba will cease her interjections.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The film is supposed to bring in, from memory, over \$100 million to the local economy, to the Gold Coast economy—and also 900 jobs on the Gold Coast. It is interesting that the Gold Coast members are against jobs on the Gold Coast. I find that totally and utterly unbelievable.

Mr Dick: The highest job losses were on the southern Gold Coast when COVID hit.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is right—at a time when COVID had a huge impact on the Gold Coast and in Cairns. I put on the public record that I have had discussions with Mayor Tom Tate about how we can expand our studio capacity to have more productions in Queensland because other countries are shut down because of COVID. They are shut down because of COVID. Our measures that in place are making sure that Queenslanders are kept safe. It is about making sure that people get into jobs and that we can continue to recover.

Police Resources

Mr HARPER: My question is of the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services. Will the minister update the House on the number of police currently keeping Queenslanders safe?

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr RYAN: It is a record. We have over 12,000 police in our state and they are deployed right across the state. I thank the member for his question and for his interest because I know that he is a strong supporter of our police, like everyone on our side of the chamber.

Right across the state we have hundreds and hundreds of police doing a great job keeping the community safe—550 in Capricornia; almost 900 in the far north; more than a thousand on the Gold Coast; more than 700 in Townsville, an increase of over 100 since we have been elected and an increase of over 50 since the last election.

I note that the member for Thuringowa and his colleague are very supportive of not only the work the police does in Townsville but also the resourcing that our government provides the police with to do their job. On that, Townsville police have been doing an outstanding job working hard to keep their community safe. Whenever they notice a trend, whenever they notice offending, they step up. They surge their capability.


We have seen Operation Romeo Seville have good results—almost 800 offenders arrested on almost 3,000 charges. Just this morning I have been informed by the Queensland Police Service that they are stepping up again. They are going to launch another operation to be starting next Thursday. The State Flying Squad will be heading to Townsville. The State Flying Squad will be working with the district resources all through Townsville and it will be a very visible policing operation.

This policing operation will specifically target repeat youth offenders in hotspots, with a blitz on bail as well. This is all about our commitment to keeping Queensland safe. It builds on our five-point action plan which is delivering response. The co-responders are working well. Our blitzes on bail are working well. We have been successful with our appeals and the on-country programs have started. We are committed to keeping the community safe and we will back our police 100 per cent in doing it.

Mr SPEAKER: The period for question time has expired.

LIQUOR (ARTISAN LIQUOR) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing) (11.19 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Liquor Act 1992 to support and regulate the emerging craft beer and artisan spirits industries. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the State Development, Tourism, Innovation and Manufacturing Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Bill 2020 [[1581](#)].

Tabled paper: Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Bill 2020, explanatory notes [[1582](#)].

Tabled paper: Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights [[1583](#)].

I am pleased to introduce the Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Bill 2020. One could say I have been preparing for this all of my adult life. The primary objective of the bill is to make important changes to the Liquor Act 1992 to support Queensland craft brewers and artisan distillers by creating a new artisan liquor licence. The new licence is an important step in further developing the craft brewing and artisan distilling industries in Queensland whilst also ensuring compliance with harm minimisation measures and the responsible service of alcohol in Queensland.

This delivers on our government's commitment under the Queensland Craft Brewing Strategy to establish a new licence that better suits industry and reduces regulatory burdens. In turn, the licence will provide opportunities for increased market access, industry growth and the potential to generate new jobs. It also addresses recommendations in the Entrepreneurial Pipeline report commissioned by the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council. Importantly, the proposed licence will support ongoing business viability and job retention following disruption caused by COVID-19 trading restrictions.

Queensland is proudly home to approximately 90 independent craft brewers in Queensland, with the sector employing more than 1,700 people and contributing an estimated \$62 million annually to the Queensland economy. By 2020 it is anticipated that the industry's contribution to the state's economy will be well over \$100 million. Importantly, almost 25 per cent of Queensland's craft brewers are established in regional towns. Artisan distilling is also an emerging industry, with over 34 independent artisan distilleries now operating right across Queensland. Artisan distillers anticipate creating more than 106 new jobs over the next two years. This is particularly important for regional Queensland, as 38 per cent of distillers are also in regional Queensland. Passage of the bill will ensure this regionally diverse industry continues to grow, innovate and contribute to the state's economy over many years.

Currently, most independent brewers and distillers operate under a producer/wholesaler licence; however, authorisations under the existing license are not well suited to businesses and the needs of the artisan liquor industry, with many craft brewers having to seek a second liquor licence such as a restaurant or bar licence in order to offer other Queensland artisanal products to customers at their venues. To strengthen this industry into the future and to support Queensland small businesses more broadly, it is important that we reduce the regulatory burden and get the planning environment right. In establishing this licence we are streamlining regulation and providing these small Queensland operators with more opportunities to grow and expand their businesses.

Under the new licence, artisan producers will be allowed to sell Queensland artisanal liquor for on-premises consumption provided those sales do not exceed 30 per cent of their annual sales. This will allow licensees to operate taprooms and tasting rooms without a second licence, broaden the

appeal of their venues to more patrons, and introduce the ability to promote each other's products onsite. Licensees will also be able to sell takeaways of their own product and take orders for their own liquor online. Wholesale sales will also be permitted under this new licence type. The changes will give boutique producers more choice about how they run their own businesses. The new licence will promote access to new markets for Queensland artisan producers. Importantly, this will drive economic growth and job opportunities for this very exciting industry.

The bill also provides artisan producer licensees with the opportunity to promote their products directly to the public. Licensees may apply to attend promotional events such as farmers markets and sell samples and takeaways of their products. To strengthen harm minimisation, the bill introduces the ability to limit sample sizes by regulation or by licence condition if necessary. As a result of consultation with the industry, sample sizes of 150 millilitres of craft beer and 15 millilitres of artisanal spirits are proposed through separate regulation. Takeaways will be limited to a carton of beer or two bottles of spirits. Licensees may also apply for a permit to sell their liquor at commercial public events such as music festivals and sporting events, creating great opportunities for market access for these smaller businesses. The new licence will also remove the requirement on distillers that restricts retail sales to 2.5 per cent of their production. Further amendments will allow the holder of an artisan producer licence or an artisan spirits producer permit to take or receive orders at promotional events.

The proposed licence is consistent with the government's Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Policy review, as it will be subject to the same comprehensive and strict harm minimisation measures as other existing licence categories within the Liquor Act. Ordinary trading hours for on-premises consumption will be 10 am to midnight, with takeaway sales allowed between 10 am and 10 pm. Wholesale sale hours remain unchanged from the existing licence. Further, the bill limits on-premises extended trading hours to 1 am—in line with restaurants—and licensees will not be able to apply for extended trading hours to 2 am or 3 am in safe night precincts. This will keep the focus on small-batch liquor production and prevent boutique liquor venues from operating as hotels or nightclubs.

To ensure the concessions offered by the licence benefit genuine boutique producers, liquor production volume limits will apply. To be eligible for an artisan producer licence, the bill provides that a craft brewer must produce between 2,500 litres and five million litres of beer at the premises each year. For artisan distillers, production volumes must fall between 400 and 450,000 litres of spirits produced at the premises each year. The maximum limits will also apply to any companies that are related to the licensee; for example, a holding company or subsidiary.

To further ensure the new licence supports smaller independent Queensland businesses, licensees must not be more than 20 per cent owned by a large brewer or distiller. This definition is used and recommended by the Independent Brewers Association. If an artisan producer licensee grows beyond the maximum production volume or sells their business to a larger player, they will become ineligible for the licence. Specific recordkeeping obligations to notify of changes in corporate ownership and the amount of liquor being produced by companies which own a stake in the licensee will ensure that eligibility and criteria are complied with across the board.

The bill also contains transitional provisions that will encourage licensees to take up the new licence. Any conditions on the existing licence such as extended trading hour approvals may be carried over to the extent that they are allowed under the new artisan producer licence. The application fee of \$1,446 will be waived for existing wholesaler/producer licensees who take up the new licence during the current licence period. Applicants will be required to complete important harm minimisation obligations; however, the Commissioner for Liquor and Gaming may waive these requirements if the applicant has previously completed them for their premises.

Craft breweries and artisan distillers have been impacted significantly by COVID-19. Sales have dropped across the board close to 70 per cent and revenue and staff lost as taprooms and brew pubs close due to COVID-19 restrictions. The proposed liquor licence will bolster this unique and growing industry by creating access to new markets and generating jobs for Queenslanders.

Helping the industry develop these opportunities is critical, particularly as we emerge from the global COVID-19 pandemic. Importantly, the bill is balanced. It creates employment and investment opportunities throughout the state while ensuring harm minimisation measures are adhered to. Extensive consultation was undertaken with the industry, social health stakeholders and peak bodies representing commercial hotels and clubs throughout Queensland. I would like to thank all stakeholders for their efforts and I look forward to seeing the further development of this industry off the back of these important changes we are making today.

Finally, I would also like to thank the department for their work in developing the Queensland Craft Brewing Strategy, for their thorough and ongoing consultation with stakeholders and for getting the licence to the point today where we are delivering on this important commitment from the strategy. Their hard work is certainly appreciated. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. GJ BUTCHER (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing) (11.30 am): 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 State Development, Tourism, Innovation and Manufacturing Committee


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the State Development, Tourism, Innovation and Manufacturing Committee.

CRIMINAL CODE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (WAGE THEFT) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 8 September (see p. 2222), on motion of Ms Grace—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (11.30 am), continuing: Ms Small said that she did not know where to turn to or what she could do about her situation. She told the committee—

It is extremely important for these wage theft laws to go through for our hospitality workers who are already being underpaid, who are already on the lowest amount of pay that employers can put them on. We are struggling and we need this to go through to help us.

After hearing from workers like Tara, I am delighted that the committee has recommended that the bill be passed. Unfortunately, the LNP members of the committee decided to make a statement of reservation, which begs the question of how they intend to vote on this bill. Will they again vote against a bill that is about supporting and protecting Queensland workers and Queensland businesses doing the right thing—just as they did with our labour hire licensing laws and industrial manslaughter laws? They voted against establishing the parliamentary inquiry into wage theft, they failed to support the 17 recommendations of the committee to help combat wage theft and they did not support the recommendation of the parliamentary committee that the bill be passed. The facts are that they have no record of supporting improvements to the rights and entitlements of Queensland workers. Will this time be any different?

The committee made one other recommendation—that the conciliation process for fair work claims commenced under the Industrial Magistrates Court be mandatory, with employers and employees required to make ‘reasonable attempts’ at reaching agreement through that conciliation process. After careful consideration of this recommendation and the various policy and legal arguments advanced, the government has decided to retain the existing conciliation provisions in the bill. We recognise the many submissions made on this particular issue, and the government commits to monitoring and reviewing these provisions after six months of operation. I table our response to the committee report.

Tabled paper: Education, Employment and Small Business Committee: Report No. 35, 56th Parliament—Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill 2020, government response [[1584](#)].

I now turn to the two key features of the bill. The first is the criminalisation of wage theft. The Criminal Code as it currently stands comes down very hard on workers caught with their hands in the till, but there is no corresponding offence for unscrupulous bosses who intentionally steal from their workers or defraud them. The amendments we propose to make to the Criminal Code will rectify this current imbalance in the law. As young worker Declan Langlands told the committee—

I cannot take money from a till without being punished. Why can they take money from my wages without being punished?

Under the new laws, the maximum penalty for stealing by an employer will be the same as the current maximum penalty for 'stealing as a clerk or servant' under section 398 of the Criminal Code, which is 10 years imprisonment. To ensure that wage theft is captured, the bill amends the definition of 'stealing' in section 391 of the Criminal Code to provide that the offence occurs when an employer intentionally fails to pay the amount when it becomes payable, under an act, industrial instrument or agreement, to the employee or to the other person on behalf of the employee, with an intent to permanently deprive the person of the amount. The Criminal Code also currently includes a higher maximum penalty of 14 years jail for the offence of fraud where the employee is the offender. The bill will amend the Criminal Code to provide that, if an employer commits fraud against an employee, the maximum penalty will also be 14 years jail.

The change to make wage theft a criminal offence recognises that the current regulatory framework is not doing the job—something needs to change to stop rampant wage theft. Stronger penalty and deterrence measures are needed for those who commit wage theft, particularly where it is deliberate and systemic and part of an employer's business model. Employers who gave evidence to the wage theft inquiry recognised this. Allan Mahony from Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers said, 'We should see this as a crime.' It is rampant in that area and they know about it. The ones doing the right thing are being hurt by those who are doing the wrong thing. Andrew Bourke from Executive Security Group said—

There have to be criminal penalties ... if I put my hand in my staff member's pay packet, it is theft.

Once again, those who do the right thing are being undercut by those who are doing the wrong thing and get away with it. Amanda Wessel from Wessel Petroleum said the employers who commit wage theft—

... should go to jail because the person who steals the money is stealing for themselves out of the till. These guys are making other workers suffer.

This amendment will send a strong message to the community that wage theft is not acceptable. It is a crime and can be prosecuted as such. Can I make clear again that the criminal offence applies only to deliberate cases of wage theft. This is not about putting a small business owner who makes an honest mistake in jail. No one is arguing that—no-one.

The existing elements of the offences of stealing, fraud and falsification of records in the Criminal Code and the application of defences and excuses operate generally so that a person is not criminally responsible if they are acting honestly or without intent. Requiring intent to be proven means that an employer who has made a genuine mistake regarding an employee's entitlements can access the defence of honest claim of right under the Criminal Code. The criminalisation of wage theft provisions will commence on assent.

The second key feature of this bill is a simple, streamlined wage process for workers to recover their entitlements. This recognises that the first and main priority for workers who have been the victim of wage theft is to get back the money they are owed. My own daughter has been a victim of this. The process for doing this should be simple, quick and low cost. It is not at the moment. The wage theft inquiry found the current wage recovery processes through the courts are costly, complex and time consuming and deter workers from taking action to report and recover lost wages—so much so that around half of unpaid or underpaid workers opted not to even pursue a claim.

Adriaan Burgess, who appeared before the committee inquiry into the bill, really nailed it when he said—

We need a quicker way to get our wages back. It is not fair. We have bills to pay. We have rent to pay. It is hard enough with COVID. We really need a decision made by parliament to make it quicker for us to recover our wages.

The bill addresses this by providing for a new simple, quick and low-cost wage recovery process for all workers through the Industrial Magistrates Court, including access to the simplified small claims procedure in the Fair Work Act 2009. The Industrial Magistrates Court has been designed to be used by laypersons in a less prescriptive and informal manner. Upon the receipt of a wage recovery claim in the Industrial Magistrates Court, the Industrial Registrar may refer the matter to a member of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission for conciliation in the first instance. Conciliation provides an opportunity for parties to reach agreement or narrow the issues in dispute before a hearing. Information disclosed in conciliation will remain confidential, allowing parties to speak freely without fear of things said or done in conciliation potentially prejudicing a later hearing. If a claim is not resolved at conciliation, the claim will move to the Industrial Magistrates Court for hearing by an industrial magistrate.

For claims under \$20,000, Queensland workers under the Fair Work system will be able to access the small claims process under the Fair Work Act. This means the Industrial Magistrates Court is not bound by rules of evidence and procedures, allowing for proceedings to be conducted informally. To encourage low-cost resolution, legal representation will only be allowed with leave of the court. For claims above the \$20,000, the Industrial Magistrates Court will use the Industrial Relations (Tribunal) Rules 2011 to facilitate a prompt, simple and more cost-effective process for the hearing and resolution of a claim. These new wage recovery provisions will commence on a date to be proclaimed. I note the department advised the committee that it will be developing forms and guidance material to assist workers to pursue their wage recovery, including online resources with a step-by-step guide for completing necessary court forms.

I will also be moving an amendment during consideration in detail to the Industrial Relations Act 2016 to enable authorisation in writing by an employee for information to be shared between a state system employer and a Queensland registered industrial organisation. This will, for example, assist employees and their registered industrial organisation to efficiently identify the employee's correct classification and industrial instrument and assist in ensuring that the employee is receiving their lawful entitlements. Often workers do not even know under what agreement they are being paid and they do not know what classification they are under. Very little information is given to them and this will enable them to obtain that.

As Minister for Industrial Relations and a lifelong trade unionist, I am proud to stand in this House today to debate and advocate for this bill. The bill is about defending and supporting one of the most fundamental tenets of our industrial relations system, the right for a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. It continues the proud record of the Palaszczuk government in protecting and advancing the rights of Queensland workers. It is a long list and includes paid pandemic leave, the first in the country; nation-first labour hire licensing laws; nation-first paid domestic and family violence leave; industrial manslaughter laws, the first state in Australia to introduce them; portable long service leave for Community Services workers; restoring the rights of injured workers to access common law damages; ensuring workers with CWP, black lung and other work related lung disease receive their full and just entitlements; and presumptive workers compensation laws for firefighters with specified forms of cancer. I am proud to add to that list today a bill to make wage theft a criminal offence and create a simple, quick and low-cost wage recovery process for workers to get back what is owed to them. We have waited too long for the federal government to act. They have not acted. We will be acting while they sit on their hands.

Mrs Wilson: That is what we said in 2018. You could have acted earlier yourself.

Ms GRACE: I will take that interjection because at the end of the day those opposite are all about being soft on people who steal from workers.

Mrs Wilson: That is rubbish. You failed to include yourself in the scope.

Ms GRACE: It will be interesting to see how they vote on this bill. This matter is fundamentally in the federal jurisdiction.

Mrs Wilson interjected.

Ms GRACE: The member for Pumicestone does not even understand the industrial relations system. It largely falls under the federal jurisdiction. What we are doing here is filling a gap which the federal government have refused to do even though at the last election they promised to introduce wage theft as a criminal offence. The federal minister has sat on his hands and done nothing.

Our inquiry exposed the full extent of wage theft in this state and we are proud to be moving in that direction as soon as we have been able to. Unless the member for Pumicestone knows better, it is largely under the federal jurisdiction that all this is occurring, not under the state. The member for Pumicestone should get her facts right before she decides to interject. I will take the interjections from the member for Pumicestone, but I suggest she goes and studies her industrial relations laws and acts because she does not know what she is actually saying.

Ms Simpson: Pity about the public servants who didn't get paid in Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Member for Maroochydore, thank you.

Ms GRACE: I will take that interjection from the member for Maroochydore as well, because when it came to sacking those public servants, when it came to cutting, sacking and selling, they did not seem to mind very much at all.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I think we are moving—

Ms GRACE: I am taking the interjection from the member for Maroochydore.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat. I will have silence in the House, thank you. Minister and members, we are moving off the bill. Even the extent of standing order 139 will not cover the issue of the payroll situation.

Ms GRACE: We are moving to regulate an area that was promised by the federal government, who are still sitting on their hands doing nothing. Once again, this bill demonstrates that Labor and only Labor will deliver for Queensland workers who need it most, and those opposite are soft when it comes to these terrible crimes against workers in this state. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Kawana, those who are on a warning are the members for Cooper, Burleigh, Kawana, Chatsworth, Glass House, Broadwater, Nicklin, Buderim, Everton and Oodgeroo.

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (11.45 am): Let me start where the minister finished. She was advising the honourable member for Pumicestone that she should get some qualifications in industrial relations. Is the minister suggesting she should go and get a masters from Harvard perhaps, or would she be suggesting she gets some little 15-minute industrial relations trade union qualification and then pass it off as a masters? Is that what the minister is suggesting?

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I was pulled up for relevance and I ask the same in relation to the member—relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana and Minister, I have allowed a bit of leeway in this debate, but I think we are straying way outside of leeway, out towards Pluto somewhere. Please come back to the terms of the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: Almost two years ago the government completed an inquiry into issues around wage theft in Queensland. Now this minister would have us believe it is all the federal government's fault. Considering the minister wants to talk about who has been sitting on their hands, I ask: what has the minister been doing for five years while she has been the industrial relations minister? The explanatory notes state—

In the Report, the Committee handed down 17 recommendations to combat wage theft, of which six were for the Queensland Government to action, including two recommendations that require legislative amendments.

The objective of the Bill—

as outlined by the minister—

is to implement the underlying policy intent of Recommendation 8 (Simple, quick and low-cost wage recovery process for workers) and Recommendation 15 (Criminalisation of wage theft) of the Report.

From the outset I want to state clearly the LNP believe that no worker deserves to not get paid for work they do. They all deserve the proper wage entitlements that they are allowed under their particular job conditions and the award. No-one wants to see any worker being ripped off, and Queensland families deserve the financial security and the dignity of work, including nurses who were ripped off by the Labor government under the health payroll debacle years ago.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, that word is unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. The minister talked about the review and the inquiry that the government undertook. I recall the debate in the House at the time about that particular inquiry. I remember the LNP moved an amendment to the motion to set up that inquiry that resulted in this legislation. We moved an amendment that if the committee were serious about looking into wage theft then they should look at the health payroll debacle, and the government voted against that amendment. If we want to be serious and look at all wage theft, how about we look at all wage theft including that of the Queensland government regarding Queensland public servants.

Ms Grace: Get serious.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am serious. The minister interjects 'get serious'. I am, because the Queensland Health payroll debacle—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, you have made your contribution. The member for Kawana now has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is a serious matter. Thousands of nurses across Queensland were not paid and we moved an amendment to the motion regarding this inquiry to have that issue looked at. They were still receiving debt collection letters into this term of government—during the last five years. In her contribution, the minister talked about the inquiry that was set up—and I do remember the debate—but

she cannot have it all her way. She cannot sit in here and say it is okay for her to talk about the inquiry but we cannot talk about the amendment we wanted to move to her inquiry, because that is what happened: those opposite voted against looking into the Queensland government's dereliction of duty in terms of nurses' payroll.

Who could forget the recent situation involving the Commonwealth Games? They did not pay the security guards for the Commonwealth Games. Then the security guards brought action against the Queensland government to recover money that the Queensland government did not pay. This minister would have us believe that it is all the fault of the private sector's bad businesses and small businesses, yet the Labor government does not even pay its own employees. The first issue was the Health payroll debacle under Labor; it is still an issue to this day. Then they did not pay the security guards at the Commonwealth Games. More recently, they voted in this House to freeze the pay of these hardworking public servants that they now defend. Let us get serious, as the minister asked, and have a proper debate about all the issues. One cannot have a debate about these issues without looking at Labor's history in this regard—and it is poor.

This has never been more important given that, in terms of job security, a record number of Queenslanders are now on the jobless queue. At 8.8 per cent, under the Palaszczuk Labor government Queensland has the worst unemployment rate in the nation. We said at the time of the parliamentary inquiry that it was just a political stunt prior to the 2019 federal election. The fact that it has taken almost two years for these changes to come before the parliament proves that fact. As highlighted in the parliamentary committee inquiry into the issue of wage theft, the Palaszczuk Labor government attempted to use this issue to undermine the federal industrial relations system. As we said in the statement of reservation, the LNP attempted to include workers and contractors under direct control of the Queensland government. The Palaszczuk government voted down those sensible amendments that would have compelled the inquiry to investigate the ongoing Health payroll debacle, the underpayment of security guards and other contractors at the Commonwealth Games and the use of contractors in the Public Service—an issue, I might add, that has been consistently raised by the Together union.

This bill is more window-dressing from a desperate government that has lost touch with its traditional base, highlighted by the shockingly low primary vote at the last federal election for the Labor Party. I never thought I would agree with comments of the CFMMEU or of Michael Ravbar. Members who know me know that that is strong coming from me! I never thought I would see the day that I would say that, but recently—

Mr Nicholls: Maybe just repeat that?

Mr BLEIJIE: I will. Recently Michael Ravbar hit the nail on the head with his scathing assessment of the Palaszczuk Labor government failing to stand up for Queensland workers. In announcing the CFMMEU was withdrawing from Labor's Left faction, he said that it had become a protection racket for dud politicians like the member for South Brisbane. He said—

The leadership vacuum in the left has seen a once powerful voice for working Queenslanders atrophy to the point where today it is little more than a creche for party hacks ... The left factional leadership have consistently devoted far more energy to internal intrigues and power plays than driving policy platform that reflects both socially and economically progressive values.

In the process, the faction has become little more than a protection racket for dud members such as Jackie Trad, who as former deputy bears much of the blame for the failure to look after workers' interests even on major public projects such as Cross River Rail.

What about the amount of government advertising we see at the moment? I see a lot of CFMMEU advertising against Minister for State Development, Kate Jones, at the moment as well. Finally he said—

Quite simply, the so-called left faction is now merely an impotent and self-serving echo chamber for a cabal of Peel Street elite who have totally lost touch with their working class roots.

The Minister for Industrial Relations would have us believe today that Labor is the party for the workers—not according to the CFMMEU. It has also pulled their funding. In a media interview Michael Ravbar also said—

The Labor government has been walking away from its working class roots, ignoring the issues that affect the mining industry ... (and) construction workers and their families.

We're concerned the Labor party is focused on the inner-city elite, and not actually governing for all of Queensland ... we're not going to be a part of it.

Ms LINARD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Knowing this bill in depth, I really question how this is relevant to what we are debating in this bill. I ask you to rule on relevance.

Mr BLEIJIE: On the point of order, the long title amends the Industrial Relations Act. The CFMMEU is a registered organisation in Queensland. In response to the member's point of order, I put it to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that talking of industrial organisations, as the minister did in her contribution, is within the long title of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Member for Kawana, I just caution you not to stray from the long title of the bill or the content of the committee report and recommendations contained therein.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. While this minister might huff and puff and proclaim that Labor is the only party that will stand up for workers, I simply refer to the comments of her union comrades in the CFMMEU.

It should be remembered that the Bligh Labor government referred significant elements of our private industrial relations jurisdiction to the Commonwealth in 2009, as has been mentioned by the minister, a move the LNP opposed at the time. I was at the regional parliament. That bill was moved by current Treasurer Cameron Dick and supported by Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk and the Minister for Industrial Relations, Grace Grace. Apart from tuckshop workers, local government employees and Queensland government sector employees, they referred all industrial relations powers to the Commonwealth—

Ms Grace: No, you are wrong.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister just said that in her contribution. In the industrial relations section—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, this is the last occasion. If you have a concern about the member's contribution, please write to the Speaker on this issue.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. I quote from *Hansard* and the contribution of the current Minister for Industrial Relations in 2009. She said—

The national industrial relations system will provide Queensland employees with continuing decent wages and employment conditions. Workers have nothing to fear. The ability of Fair Work Australia to issue remedial take-home pay orders will ensure no employee suffers a loss of wages when moving to a modern award.

...

In conclusion, this bill strikes, in my view, the balance in establishing a national IR system but respects state rights at the same time. It is in the best interests of workers and business.

Now this minister will have us forget that she said that? Seriously! She says that I was misrepresenting. In 2009 she said 'a national IR system but respects state rights at the same time. It is in the best interests of workers and business.' The Labor government referred industrial relations power to the Commonwealth.

Ms Grace: Wrong.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. It was her speech.

Ms Grace: It was a small percentage of what was left over.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection—'a small percentage of the industrial relations system'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, this is the final time. I will put you on a warning next time.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister said to the member for Pumicestone that she might need a lesson in industrial relations. Maybe we should send the minister up to *Hansard* and get her to read her own comments from 2009. She did say in the interjection that a small part of the industrial relations system was referred. It was the entire private sector industrial relations bar tuckshop workers, local government employees and the Public Service. Every person working for a company or for a small business in Queensland is under an award under the federal industrial relations system. That is what they did back in 2009.

An honourable member: Just a small part.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. 'Just a small part' the minister said, but it was not. It was quite a large part in that every award, bar the three I mentioned, is covered by federal industrial relations. In fact, the minister said in her contribution that she blames the federal government for not acting and that that is why this parliament is considering wage theft legislation.

I note that the government is a little concerned and that the current Treasurer, the member for Woodridge, is concerned, because when I have raised these issues of industrial relations—he was the minister who introduced the bill to refer private sector industrial relations powers to the federal government—he basically denies it as well as this minister. He is living in denial that the Labor

government referred the powers and now it is regretting referring the powers and is trying to fix these issues. There are current laws in place and we have read stories where companies have been found guilty by federal government prosecutors of not paying their employees' entitlements.

Mr Nicholls: Fair Work Australia.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, Fair Work Australia. There have been big cases before Fair Work Commission, such as one involving a celebrity chef from *MasterChef*. All of these issues have been found out and they have been prosecuted by Fair Work Australia. I cannot accept the minister saying that nothing is happening at the federal level because the laws in place which Labor transferred because its Labor federal government wanted it to at the time—I think Rudd was the prime minister—

Mr Nicholls: First time around—Rudd and Swan.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the honourable member for Clayfield—Rudd and Swanny. They were the ones who wanted their Labor mates to transfer the powers and their Labor mates in Queensland did transfer those powers. In 2009 the minister's position was that everything will be fine under a national system, which the LNP opposed, and now she wants to attack the federal government because her friends are no longer the federal government. That is the reality. If it was a Labor federal government, she would still be spruiking how good the national IR system is. In fact, who could forget that it was Bill Shorten, the then industrial relations minister, who appointed all of the members to the Fair Work Commission to start with? They then whinged about members of the Fair Work Commission doing their job when in fact it was Labor that appointed the first Fair Work Commission anyway.

In relation to this bill, there are a wide range of criticisms from business groups, unions and legal stakeholders. Stakeholders raised concerns about the constitutionality of the new laws, the impact of complex award conditions on small businesses and the current state of the economy, whether conciliation needs to be compulsory as a low-cost option for mediating disputes between employers and workers, and the duplication in terms of provisions under the Fair Work Act and the Fair Work Ombudsman. Other stakeholders also opposed the introduction of criminal sanctions for a civil matter, which is the case at the moment. We note the comments from the department that—

The Queensland Government is confident about the validity of the provisions having regard to existing Commonwealth laws. If the Commonwealth introduces wage theft criminal laws, that will be a matter for the Government to consider at that time, having regard to the specific nature of the reforms and drafting of relevant provisions.

To provide certainty to businesses and workers, the minister should advise this parliament whether Crown Law advice was obtained in relation to the constitutional validity of these new laws and, if so, the advice should be publicly released. Crown Law advice has been released in this place for proper and open, transparent debate so that members can fully participate in the debate knowing that some of the stakeholders to the committee raised the issue of the validity of the said laws. I call on the minister to table that Crown Law advice to show that she, firstly, in fact sought the advice from Crown Law and, secondly—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: You are the only minister who has moved 300 amendments to her own piece of legislation—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members! Comments will come through the chair and squabbling across the chamber will cease.

Mr BLEIJIE: My apologies, Mr Deputy Speaker. In considering all of the submissions to the wage theft bill, when this inquiry was first announced two years ago by the minister, the government was looking at a separate offence under the Criminal Code which did concern me greatly. I now note that it has proceeded with an amendment to the definition of 'stealing' under the Criminal Code. That does relieve some of the concerns I had with respect to it being a completely separate offence and the Labor government administering that. However, in saying that, I note that the government is proceeding in amending the Criminal Code under the stealing offence by adding a subcategory of wage theft. The minister has confirmed that the government will be reviewing these provisions in six months. That is also acknowledged and appreciated because there is a lot of concern in the business community. I note that the National Retail Association put in a good submission, as did the CCIQ, with respect to this issue. In their submissions they say that there are civil laws in place that can deal with such matters but clearly the Queensland government considers that not to be the case, hence why it is introducing this amendment. I do believe that the review in six months would be good because there is quite a lot of concern in the business community.

I note that the minister has also indicated that it is not the intention to catch any businesses that are not deliberately doing the wrong thing. Many small business owners wake up every morning and worry about how they are going to open their business doors, particularly in this current climate, and put food on the table for their families. The last thing they need to be worrying about are the criminal penalties applicable because they may have made an honest mistake with respect to their employment conditions.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes. I take the interjection from the member for Clayfield. In its submission the CCIQ noted that having an award under the IR system is not just a simple process. It is incredibly complex. They are confusing. My own daughter has recently just changed jobs and she is now working in a pet shop which does not sell live animals; it believes in Adopt, Don't Shop—#adoptdontshop, which I always support. She has just gone through the whole process of looking up the awards for pay and conditions. It is incredibly confusing for businesses and for young people getting jobs—I note that the minister mentioned the hospitality industry in particular—but we do not want to get into a situation where honest mistakes by businesspeople mean that they are sent to jail. I note that the minister has indicated that that is not the intention of these laws, hence why the stealing offence that the government is amending puts in the word 'intentionally'. If people are deliberately doing the wrong thing, they should be held accountable to the laws. They are currently, I believe, satisfactorily being held to account. In the media we have seen cases of companies that have done the wrong thing and are being prosecuted through the federal bodies.

As I said earlier, the bill implements two of the six recommendations from the wage theft inquiry held almost two years ago. I ask the minister to provide in her response and throughout the debate an update on the other four recommendations that were for the state government to action as a result of that inquiry but are not contained in this bill. As I said, the review is a good idea, even though obviously we have an election on 31 October. I can say to the stakeholders who submitted to the inquiry that although the LNP is expressing real concern about the fundamentals of this legislation in terms of where it came from we will not block its passage today in the House on the basis that there will be a review of these laws in six months time. The government needs to work with the CCIQ, the National Retail Association, the unions and the bodies that submitted to the inquiry because, once the laws pass—and I note the minister said that the offence of stealing will be introduced upon assent by the Governor—we will be carefully watching to ensure that small businesses and businesses that are not intentionally doing the wrong thing are not caught up and prosecuted for these offences, because everyone can make mistakes. Even the Treasurer said that yesterday. Everyone can make mistakes.


Business is incredibly complex. The stress of business at the moment under the coronavirus restrictions is still applicable. It is incredibly difficult for business in Queensland and across Australia at the moment and this adds another level of challenge or worry for businesses. Some 99.9 per cent of businesses in Queensland do the right thing and they want to be doing the right thing but, as I have indicated, the industrial relations system at the federal level is still so complex for a lot of small businesses to get their heads around.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland indicated in its submission that it acknowledges that people do make honest mistakes and we do not want to see those people prosecuted for those honest mistakes. Businesses have struggled. We are hearing stories of businesses like builders—and there are some on the Sunshine Coast—that cannot get their workers to site because of the restrictions in place with respect to coronavirus and they cannot sign off on houses in New South Wales. This is causing real issues for Queenslanders.

We need every job we can get in Queensland. The building community, which has businesses and builders interstate, cannot get site workers because of the border restrictions and the quarantine that is required after that. We need to help these people. I have written to the health minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): You are straying a bit from the long title. I will bring you back to the long title.

Mr BLEIJIE: The LNP will not be opposing these changes. The fundamental point remains that Queensland workers are not best served by the Palaszczuk Labor government whose members only care about their own jobs. We will watch this bill. We will work with the stakeholders in this six-month review to identify if there are any changes that are required. We will listen with open ears to what the business community is saying. Businesses are suffering at the moment. We have seen an unemployment rate of over eight per cent. We have seen 72,000 people out of work. More will be out of work under the Palaszczuk Labor government. Business needs all the support it can get in Queensland and it will not get it from a Labor government. It will get support from an LNP government.

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (12.10 pm): I will start my remarks on this bill as I did in 2018 when tabling our committee's report into wage theft, because it was that report and its recommendations that are the genesis of the bill we are debating today: a fair day's pay for a fair day's work is an ideal deeply rooted in Australia's labour history and egalitarian values. To most it is an indisputable right that a worker is fairly and duly remunerated in accordance with their effort and the law. To most, but not to all. It is for that cohort, and only that cohort, of employers who intentionally exploit their workers for financial gain that much of this bill is directed. Not the ones who make genuine mistakes in regard to the calculation of allowances or pay rates and who fix that error in good faith as soon as it is identified.

The LNP opposition, through both of our inquiries, has consistently tried to muddy the waters in that regard. We are not talking about honest mistakes. This bill is for that cohort of employers who not only treat workers unfairly, by intentionally robbing them of their duly earned entitlements, but equally rob honest employers of a level playing field in the business. They undercut those businesses doing the right thing and create human misery for their employees.

In 2018 our committee inquiry received evidence from more than 100 witnesses and 360 survey respondents—Queenslanders wanting to tell their story of wage theft. Our report revealed that wage theft is costing Queensland workers over a billion dollars in lost wages and over a billion dollars in lost superannuation every year. Combined with an estimated \$100 million reduction in consumer spending and \$60 million in lost tax revenue, the overall economic loss could amount to almost \$2.5 billion stripped from the Queensland economy every year. These are not just numbers, these are real Queenslanders and Queensland families who are going without what they are duly entitled to, what they earned through the oldest of relationships between servant and master, worker and boss, where a worker's time—and there is nothing more precious—and their labour are given in exchange for the wages to which they are entitled. It takes both parties to that relationship to hold up their end of the bargain.


As part of our initial inquiry report we made 17 recommendations, six relating to the Queensland government, of which two required legislative change. Both are addressed in this bill: firstly, in respect of introducing a simple and low-cost wage recovery process for workers who have fallen victim to wage theft; and, secondly, by introducing a criminal offence for those engaging in intentional and deliberate wage theft. We have acted because that is what Labor governments do: they act where there is injustice to level the playing field; they stand for jobs and for workers and for a fair go. While the Minister for Industrial Relations, Grace Grace, and our government act decisively on wage theft, the federal government obfuscates. At the federal level the other 11 recommendations we made to improve the plight of workers in this state have been received with radio silence, as have been successive Senate, Productivity Commission and academic reports and recommendations into wage theft in this country.

What our committee heard over and over again in our initial inquiry is that affected workers feel powerless to reclaim their lost wages and entitlements and have been largely left alone to do so by an underresourced federal regulatory system. Workers are left alone in most cases to try to conciliate with employers to recoup their entitlements. Again I draw the distinction between that and cases of genuine error that are resolved between employer and employee respectfully. That is not what this bill is about.

The stories we heard publicly during the inquiry were heartbreaking. The ones we heard in private hearings often worse. Many of the most exploited workers are vulnerable, young, migrant workers or single parents who really need that job. Leaving workers who are already in an unequal power relationship to have to negotiate with the very employer who has withheld their legal entitlements or a percentage of it or docked their pay for customers not paying their bill or for accidental breakages on the job or the like is as fair, to my mind, as asking an employer to negotiate with an employee for the return of money or goods intentionally stolen from the till or their business. But that does not happen because an employee who intentionally steals from their place of business commits theft and is held to account under the criminal law of this state, and rightly so. An employee who is intentionally stolen from is asked to work it out themselves, to negotiate for some usually lesser sum than that which they are owed. That is not fair and that is not justice and that is not the employment relationship I want my two boys to experience when they enter the world of work.

Where there is a dispute over a worker's entitlements there should be a simple and low-cost recovery process available to assist. Where there is deliberate and intentional theft of a worker's entitlements—and intentionally and deliberately withholding something known to be legally owed to another is theft—there should be an appropriate deterrent and punishment and that deterrent and punishment should apply equally whether the dishonest party is the employee or employer. Theft is theft. To quote the Minister for Industrial Relations, this bill is for all Queensland workers who have

fallen victim to wage theft and unpaid or underpayment of wages. It is a bill about stepping in where a state and federal LNP government never will to protect and provide for Queensland workers. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (12.16 pm): From the antiquated caloric theory of value through to modern wage agreements and fair work provisions, the idea of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work has become entrenched in modern society, and rightly so. Each and every Queenslanders in the workplace deserves to be paid fairly for the work they complete. The LNP has and always will hold this belief and fight to ensure it is achieved. I do my part in continuing this legacy today by standing and making a contribution to the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill.

The objective of this bill is to implement the recommendations of the 2018 report, *A fair day's pay for a fair day's work? Exposing the true cost of wage theft in Queensland*. Simply put, the bill intends to criminalise wage theft through amendment of the Criminal Code Act redefining stealing to include wage theft as a criminal offence under the act. No worker deserves to be deliberately ripped off by their employer and it is this bill that intends to take responsibility for ensuring that those who deliberately seek to deceive or underpay their workers are punished for doing so. I will join my colleagues in the LNP in not opposing this bill. However, I make mention of some of the issues it caused amongst our stakeholders. Before I do so I would like to thank my fellow members of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, our committee secretariat and all the submitters to the bill for their contribution. My special mention goes to the member for Pumicestone whose assistance in completing a statement of reservation on the bill was invaluable.

As I mentioned, this bill drew a lot of attention from relevant stakeholders. In total, 27 respondents provided the committee with their opinion on the bill, including three individual submissions. Other stakeholders who commented on the bill included the Queensland Law Society, the Local Government Association of Queensland, the National Retail Association, the Australian Industry Group and numerous workers' unions. Perception of the bill amongst the submitters was mixed. Whilst many of the unions and employee representatives who completed submissions were widely supportive of the bill, employer representatives used their submissions to raise concerns with a few of the bill's shortcomings and discrepancies. No surprises there. This would not be a Labor government bill without some form of half job. That is what the Palaszczuk Labor government does best, after all.

The National Retail Association opened their concerns with the bill by questioning its legality. The association highlighted their concern that the laws introduced by this bill may be found unconstitutional and in conflict with the Commonwealth government's Fair Work Act 2009. That concern was shared by the Housing Industry Association and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland, which noted that a civil penalty regime for the punishment of wage underpayment already exists at the federal level and that this bill only serves to duplicate that arrangement. That assertion was supported by commentary on the progress of similar legislation recently passed in other jurisdictions. It is noted that in Victoria, the only jurisdiction in Australia to have criminalised wage theft, prominent academics—including Professor John Howe, the Director of the Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law at the University of Melbourne—have argued that the Victorian legislation is likely to 'face constitutional challenges based on inconsistency between State law and Commonwealth law'.

Given that concern, the LNP have no doubt that, while potentially stemming from some sense of decency, this bill is also a thinly veiled attempt to undermine the federal LNP government's industrial relations system. That was highlighted during the parliamentary committee inquiry into wage theft when the LNP's attempt to have the inquiry investigate the Palaszczuk government's ongoing health payroll debacle was voted down by this Labor government. The messaging here is clear: those opposite clearly wish to stand against wage theft—unless it is at their hands. The minister must provide stakeholders with an assurance that advice was sought for and provided by crown law experts before they can have certainty over the validity of these laws. If advice was indeed received it should be made publicly available.

Stakeholders also highlighted the complexity of existing workplace relations systems and pay regulations, and the impact this bill could have on businesses. In fact, studies from across Australia show up to 90 per cent of business payroll managers found wage rules complex. This bill and its criminality provisions cause even more fear for those businesses. The CCIQ and the Australian Industry Group were particularly vocal on this issue, declaring their belief that this bill is simply another complication for struggling small businesses and will not address the systemic difficulties within workplace relations and reduce incidents of wage underpayments. In fact, this was supported by the


department's assertion that the introduction of the bill will incur no further cost to government—no further cost because this is window dressing and the standard of criminalisation of wage theft is so hard that very few businesses will be caught.

While the LNP does not concur with the assertion that this bill is unneeded, the complaints raised by stakeholders are still worth mentioning if we are going to get the bill right. The CCIQ stated that, in their experience, the overwhelming majority of wage compliance issues stemmed from inadvertent errors caused by the complexities of the workplace relations system. A survey formulated and distributed to its members by the CCIQ found that 60 per cent of respondents identified interpreting and complying with modern awards and other workplace instruments as the most difficult area of workplace law. They further suggested that the criminalisation of the underpayment of wages could very well discourage employers from self-reporting underpayments and beginning constructive remedial action through a fear of criminal repercussions.

The Australian Industry Group shared those sentiments, highlighting that the arguments against introducing the criminalisation of wage theft are made more compelling in our current economic climate. The Australian Industry Group also questioned the benefit criminalisation and the subsequent criminal investigations into wage theft would have for those who have had wages stolen. They argued that while a criminal case to investigate wage theft is underway any civil action taken by the victim to recoup lost wages is likely to be pushed aside. They suggest that that may only further delay or even completely remove any chance of an underpaid worker receiving back pay. Finally, the Australian Industry Group argued that the introduction of this legislation could discourage struggling employers from engaging more staff. That is a concern that Queensland, currently suffering through record unemployment, is poorly placed to manage.

Fortunately, this bill's definition of stealing precludes many of those arguments. The withholding of an entitlement necessitates intention. That should instil some relief in those Queensland small business owners who are worried about the bill and is welcomed by the LNP. It serves as one of the reasons we will not oppose it.

I began this contribution by stating that the idea of fair day's pay for a fair day's work has rightly become an expectation in our society. That is the case and should forever remain so. The LNP will do all we can to make sure of that, which is why we will not be opposing the bill. As I have outlined, the bill is not perfect but it is a step in the right direction. It will not completely eliminate the underpayment of staff, but it will ensure that the dishonest few who fraudulently steal money from their staff are punished for their actions. We need to get this right and while this bill does not take us all the way it leaves us heading in the right direction.

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (12.26 pm): I rise to support the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill 2020. Firstly, I thank the minister and the government for bringing the bill before the House, because in my electorate this is a very big issue. The McKell Institute described wage theft in the following terms—

Wage theft can take a number of different forms but generally relates to employers deliberately not paying employees their full entitlements including superannuation, award and penalty rates, leave and other employee entitlements. Wage theft should be distinguished from accidental errors, where an employer makes a genuine one-off mistake in the provision of entitlements. Wage theft occurs when the employer knows, or should be expected to know, of the employees' rightful entitlements and yet does not afford the employee these full entitlements. Wage theft can also occur in less direct ways, such as through the termination of an enterprise bargaining agreement which may revert workers back towards a lower award wage.

I was a member of the committee that released the report titled *A fair day's pay for a fair day's work? Exposing the true cost of wage theft in Queensland*. Some of the things that that committee heard were pretty daunting and I know many people who come through my electorate office feel the same way. One person who gave evidence to the committee stated—

Working in excess of 100 hours some weeks. Never less than 60 hours. Only paid 40 hours and they make me put 40 hours on timesheet. Competition has up to four guys doing my job. My company just has me. Culture is suck it up and do it. Other staff have complained and either been fired shortly after or verbally harassed as having no commitment to the company.

I have heard that said many times by people who come to my office to complain about their wages. Many of those people have been told, 'You'll never get another job in this town.' I have heard that story in my office many times since 2015.

Another submitter to the committee stated—


For 12 months I was not paid my travel allowance (\$9 a day which is a lot of money as a third year apprentice). I was employed by a group training organisation. After contacting fair work I was told they couldn't do anything. The employer would not answer my calls or return emails. It wasn't until the electrical trades union had to get involved on my behalf was this issue resolved. I know I wasn't the only one but I was the only one to pursue the issue and receive a back pay.

That is why they do not like unions! We have heard those opposite talk about the unions that look after the business community, such as the CCIQ and so on. That is okay—we can talk about those—but we cannot talk about people who look after workers' entitlements and awards. I found it interesting to listen to speakers from the other side. We know it hurts our economy if a worker does not get their full rate of pay because that money is not spent in the community. We know that happens. I have had in my office people who have been told, 'We will only pay you so much an hour, but if you go on the dole that will lift your wage up a bit.' That is unfair, yet those opposite say that they are worried about small business.

We are not after the small businesses that genuinely make a mistake. We are after the companies that make this their business plan—it is in their business plan to rip workers off—or do not allow unions through the door, or if a staff member does speak up they are immediately sacked or told that they are not on the shift for the next week and every time they ring up they are not on the roster. This is good legislation, no matter what those on the other side say.

One of the interesting comments at the public hearing was from Mr Stephen Smith. He said that the wage theft was not significant. Over 450,000 workers have had their wages attacked in the last 12 months. Is that not significant? I think it is. Could you imagine if we had 450,000 workers go on strike? They would be tearing the house down, but it is okay for 450,000-odd workers not to get their full pay!

As part of the Palaszczuk government, I am very proud to be on the committee that examined this legislation. I thank the minister for standing up for workers in this great state. This is what a traditional Labor government does. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs WILSON** (Pumicestone—LNP) (12.30 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the debate of the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill 2020. Firstly, I acknowledge the work of our committee secretariat who produced this report, Hansard reporters and my fellow committee members. I also thank those who provided submissions and attended our public hearing on this bill.

This bill seeks to implement recommendations from a report of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee that was finalised at the end of 2018. This includes recommendation 8—a simple, quick and low-cost wage recovery process for workers—and recommendation 15—criminalisation of wage theft. I was part of the committee that undertook the wage theft inquiry, where we conducted consultation with stakeholders, including an online survey which received 360 responses, held 24 hearings across Queensland and received evidence from more than 100 witnesses. The inquiry uncovered that, by conservative estimates, over 437,000 Queensland workers were not receiving full wages and a resulting five per cent loss of income for these individuals would amount to an aggregate \$1.22 billion lost annually.

There are a few salient points to make about this inquiry. I know that the minister does not want me to make them, but I am going to because it was the Palaszczuk Labor government that limited and selected the scope of the original inquiry to ensure that it would not come under scrutiny for its appalling failures during the Health payroll debacle, which resulted in thousands of medical personnel either not paid or underpaid, as well as the underpayment of security guards and other contractors at the Commonwealth Games. There was absolutely no examination of the contractors used in the Public Service, despite this being an issue consistently raised by one of the unions, the Together union. Obviously they are not standing up for them.

Whilst I will not harp on the inadequacies of the past inquiry, I will state that the LNP believes that workers deserve to get paid for the work they do. No-one wants to see any worker being ripped off. If you are a worker or contractor under direct control of the Queensland government, you can expect the current Labor government to wash its hands over whether or not you are being paid at the correct rate or amount payable.

It has been almost two years since our committee tabled the report *A fair day's pay for a fair day's work? Exposing the true cost of wage theft in Queensland*. Some 17 recommendations were made of which six were to be directly actioned by the Palaszczuk Labor government. I would like to address recommendation 15 of the inquiry report. Currently in Queensland, while there is a specific criminal offence for employees who steal from their employers—stealing by a servant—there is no equivalent offence for an employer who steals from its employees. This bill seeks to criminalise wage theft and it does it by amending the definition of 'stealing' in the Criminal Code to provide—

- (h) an amount of an employee's unpaid wages (or other entitlements such as superannuation) is a thing capable of being stolen;

- (i) conversion of the unpaid amount to the offender's own use occurs when the amount is due to be paid to the employee (or to another person on the employee's behalf) under an Act, industrial instrument or agreement, but is not paid; and
- (j) the right of an employee (or another person) to receive payment in return for work performed is a form of special property.

An individual or corporation can be charged with stealing, with the department confirming that the offence can also be applied to a director or a senior officer of the corporation if it can be linked that they conspired or aided and abetted in the commission of this offence. The proposed amendments to the Criminal Code aim to reflect the serious nature of wage theft and signal parliament's intention to provide a deterrent to those employers who deliberately underpay and take advantage of their workers.

The criminalisation of wage theft that this bill proposes does not apply to unintentional conduct or honest mistakes. During the hearing, Mr Tony James, Acting Assistant Director-General of the Department of Industrial Relations, stated—

It is about deliberate and wilful egregious behaviour to deprive an employee of their entitlements. It is not aimed at an honest mistake which can occur in some cases with regard to the payment of wages. It is really very clearly directed at wilful or deliberate conduct.

Whilst many employers do the right thing by their employees, there are some out there that fail them. Our committee heard from people who have been blatantly ripped off by their employers. I express heartfelt sorrow to them for what they have experienced.

This amendment should have been brought before the House much sooner than the eleventh hour before a state election. If those opposite were serious about protecting workers they would have moved heaven and earth to get this through when the recommendations came back in 2018.

I want to briefly touch on the other part of the bill, which is to implement recommendation 8 of the inquiry report: a simple, quick and low-cost wage recovery process for workers. During the public hearing, witnesses raised issues about the presence of an opt-out method of compulsory conciliation, which is the key component to underpinning the recommendation to support workers undertaking the wage recovery process. The Queensland Law Society witness, Ms Bassingthwaight, said—

... in the society's view the presence of an opt-out method of compulsory conciliation significantly undermines the aims of this bill.

Additionally, the UWU agreed—

Making conciliation optional will risk employers subject to claims electing in greater numbers to have their matter heard and determined by a Court, which will slow the claims process down and make it more difficult and expensive for a worker and their representatives to prosecute.


However, the department noted that the bill's conciliation process aligns with the framework under the Fair Work Act and further highlighted that the policy intent of the conciliation process was to assist in a quick, low-cost process of wage recovery and suggested that parties who wished to engage in reasonable attempts at settlement would likely do so voluntarily, rather than progress through a formal court hearing.

The bill will additionally provide the Industrial Magistrates Court with the jurisdiction to hear fair work wage recovery matters as it has been designed to operate like the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, with less prescriptive and more informal rules to better facilitate the resolution of wage recovery matters in a timely, inexpensive and informal manner.

The Labor government needs to support employers due to the complexity of the award system. That is a view supported by the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. They suggest that before criminalisation is introduced government should 'ensure compliance is possible and can be assured'. They also said—

... all levels of government need to be helping small business through Australia's complex industrial relations system, not threatening further penalties if they unintentionally get it wrong.

I must say, it truly beggars belief that it has taken so long for the Labor government to get their act together to debate this bill just months out from the state election. When we hear so much from the Labor government about how it is the party that supports workers, we must seriously question its authenticity.

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (12.39 pm): Riveting. I rise to make my humble contribution to the vitally important Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill. Before I proceed, I want to acknowledge, as some of the other committee members have, the work that has been put into this by the minister. I think it is absolutely vital. It is essential. As we have heard from others on the other side of the House, it is needed. I am very pleased to be associated with this legislation because I fundamentally believe it is essential that we have it in place.

The objectives of the bill are to implement the underlying policy intent of committee recommendation 8 which is the simple, quick and low-cost wage recovery process for workers and recommendation 15 which is the criminalisation of wage theft. The bill seeks to provide Queensland workers who have fallen victim to wage theft and unpaid or underpayment of wages with a clear, quick and simplified way to recover their wages and to deter employers from engaging in intentional and deliberate wage theft, particularly those who engage in it as a business model, through criminalisation.

The bill follows a comprehensive inquiry conducted by the committee in 2018 into the incidence, forms and impacts of wage theft in Queensland and the effectiveness of the current regulatory framework at a state and federal level in dealing with wage theft or, more importantly, the ineffectiveness in dealing with wage theft. The committee made 17 recommendations in its wage theft report. Of the six relating to the Queensland government, recommendations 8 and 15 required legislative amendment and are fundamentally the genesis of this bill.

As part of the wage theft inquiry, the committee conducted consultation with stakeholders, including an online survey which received 360 responses. We conducted 24 hearings across Queensland and received evidence from more than 100 witnesses. I can tell members that the stories of some of those witnesses were compelling. Currently in Queensland, while there is a specific criminal offence for employees who steal from their employers, there is no equivalent offence for an employer who steals from their employees.

The committee found that wage theft is endemic across Queensland, affecting 437,000 workers and costing approximately \$1.2 billion in wages and \$1.1 billion in unpaid superannuation each year. The impact of that is absolutely significant. It would be felt in all quarters of the commercial activities of our community.


The committee heard accounts of wage theft as well as deliberate action by employers to frustrate employees' attempts to recover their entitlements. The committee found affected workers, especially temporary migrants and young people, are poorly informed about avenues for reclaiming their wages and that efforts to recover wages were made difficult or otherwise were unsupported by the under-resourced federal regulator, the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Concerns were raised of employees engaging in wage theft to lower their operating cost, increase profits and gain advantage over competitors with little fear of being caught—spineless. In some instances, the conduct of employers was of such a systematic nature it was included in their business model, as we have heard from other speakers. In addition to exploiting workers, these practices harm the 90-plus per cent of businesses that are complying with the legislation and doing the right thing. What have been clearly identified as contributing factors to wage theft are: unpaid hours or underpayment of hours; unpaid penalty rates; unreasonable deductions; unpaid superannuation; withholding entitlements; underpayment through intentionally misclassifying a worker, including the wrong award, wrong classification or sham contracting and the misuse of ABNs; and, finally, authorised deductions that have not been applied as agreed.

Submitters expressed contrasting views about whether wage theft in Queensland should be criminalisation and the extent of criminalisation. However, broad support was provided by unions and individual workers who provided evidence to the committee. I want to touch on the opposition to criminalisation. As members would expect, there were some submitters who did not support this. These included the CCIQ, the National Retail Association and the HIA. The reasons given were that a new offence would add to the complexity of the existing industrial relations system. If that is not a reason to drive change, I am going to eat my hat. This next reason is even better. Existing federal laws are sufficient. Obviously they are grossly, impressively and consistently inefficient. The last reason was that the criminalisation could lead to unintended consequences—so not paying fair wages will not lead to unintended consequences. There was not one legitimate argument put forward. The majority of people understand that this is the right thing to do.

It is concerning with regard to lot of those organisations that did not support this because they have members that are doing the right thing every single day. Those organisations are not representing their interests. The purpose of this legislation is to protect all workers from intention wage theft.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my fellow committee members, and in particular our chair, the ever hardworking member for Nudgee. I would also like to acknowledge the hard and diligent work of the committee secretariat. The measure of wealth in a civilised state is not the currency accumulated by the lucky few, but that state's ability in reducing the inequity. That is what we are doing here today. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (12.45 pm): I rise to make a contribution in the debate on the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill 2020. As a proud member of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, it was a pleasure to be involved in the committee hearings on this bill as well as the wage theft inquiry that we conducted in 2018. The report produced was titled *A fair day's pay for a fair day's work?* I had a bit of a chuckle to myself about this. Some people may not have worked for their father on the farm. Maybe I can talk to my father about wage theft at some stage.

This is a very serious issue that has been brought before the committee. During the inquiry we travelled throughout Queensland to listen firsthand to the stories of people who were against what the inquiry was considering but also businesses that gave sharp accounts of other businesses that had gained commercial leverage over their businesses because of their systematic business plans that robbed some of their workers of wages. We also talked to people who were caught up in everything from old enterprise bargaining agreements where they were being paid well below award wages all the way through to people who had lost super through unpaid super, unpaid overtime and holidays being withheld.


I believe it became apparent to the committee that there was a problem and something needed to be done to change this. When I first heard the term 'wage theft' it had prickles on it for me. Being someone who came from a small business background and having owned my own small business, I wondered what kind of small business owner would be intentionally trying to steal from their workers. As we went through our hearings it became apparent that there were people out there who had worked this into their business model and that the deliberate and systematic stealing of wages was something that they were profiteering from or gaining commercial advantage over competitors by.

What we are seeing today is a piece of legislation in the House that will make it a criminal offence for those intentionally undertaking these sorts of activities. It will be seen as stealing just like it is for anyone else. If an employer steals \$20 or \$30 out of till they are breaching the Criminal Code. If this legislation passes the House today, in the future if a business owner, boss or supervisor decides to do a similar thing to their employee their actions will be treated as stealing.

There were some issues raised with us even by some of the unions. They were worried about the opt-out provision related to conciliation between employers and employees. They wanted to see some more teeth in that regard. Unfortunately, that is not going to be included in this bill from what I see. Giving employers an opportunity to opt out in some cases may be the wrong thing, especially when we are trying to protect our most vulnerable employees—those people who do not usually have a voice and who can be, and most likely have been, bullied in their workplace.

Another point that was brought to my attention during the committee hearings was the intricacy of the award system and the difficulty that some employers have in trying to understand what it is that they are supposed to be paying particular employees. As a small business owner, I have been through that scenario myself. Awards can be quite complex. We had people from local government approach us during the committee hearings saying that, if the state and federal government could do more to help employers understand the award system better, that could perhaps stop the misclassification of an employee that can be seen as systematic or intentional wage theft.

The KAP supports this bill. We will be voting for it—rather, we will not be opposing the bill as it goes through the House. We believe that we are a party that stands up for Queensland workers. We believe that we are a party that has an unblemished record when it comes to sticking up for workers in Queensland. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the committee through this process—the secretariat, the chair, the deputy chair and my fellow committee members. I support this bill as it goes through the House.


 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (12.51 pm): It gives me great pleasure today to rise in support of the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill 2020. Every Queensland worker deserves a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Unfortunately, every year in our state more than 400,000 workers are underpaid by dishonest employers. Wage theft leaves our workers about \$1.2 billion out of pocket. Shortfalls in superannuation contribute to a further \$1.1 billion. That is more than \$2 billion withheld from Queensland workers, their families and their local communities. It comes in many forms—underpayment, unpaid penalty rates and entitlements, unauthorised deductions and the misuse of ABNs. It is clear that the current regulatory framework is not doing the job. Something needs to change to stop wage theft. Stronger penalty and deterrence measures are needed for those who commit wage theft. The deliberate theft of workers' legal entitlements not only hurts workers and their families but also the broader economy and those businesses doing the right thing.

The public inquiry showed that there is broad support for criminalisation from unions and also from employer organisations and employers who do do the right thing and have to compete with those who do not. As a government with a proven record of protecting the rights of Queensland workers, we are putting a stop to this. We are making wage theft a crime. While we continue to unite and recover, it is more important than ever that every dollar earned and owed ends up in the pockets of our Queensland workers. This is about providing Queenslanders with increased financial security during these uncertain times. It is also about assisting with the household budget, ensuring that correct entitlements are paid and protecting the rights of our workers.

We are committed to uniting and recovering, not cutting jobs and slashing productivity like the LNP before us. We are proudly delivering security and certainty for Queensland workers. The Queensland public expects that workers will get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. The changes proposed in this bill will rectify the fact that currently under the Criminal Code it is an aggravated offence for an employee who deliberately steals from their employer, but there is no reciprocal penalty for an employer who effectively deliberately 'steals' from their workers.

Employers who steal from their workers will now face the same penalties under the Criminal Code as workers who steal from their employers. This will send a strong message to the community that deliberate wage theft by employers is not acceptable—that it is, in fact, a crime. Maximum penalties under the Criminal Code for employers found guilty of wage theft are up to 10 years in prison for stealing or 14 years for fraud. Importantly, this new legislation will also support our workers with a simple, quick and low-cost wage recovery process for Queenslanders who are underpaid.

I would like to acknowledge the critical work of unions and their members in making this legislation a reality. As a unionist, it gives me great pride to be able to stand here today in this place and advocate for this bill, which will protect the everyday workers in the Bundamba community from unscrupulous employers. This legislation will ensure that the over 400,000 workers who are underpaid every year in Queensland will be paid each and every cent they are owed. It will ensure that the over \$2 billion that was once withheld from Queensland workers, families and communities ends up in the pockets of the people who have earned it and who can then spend it in our local economy as we unite and recover from coronavirus. It will ensure that every worker receives a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (12.55 pm): I support the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill. I would like to start by thanking the committee and all of those people who took the time to make submissions to the inquiry into this bill. I would also like to particularly thank the minister for the work that she has done in relation to this bill.

At the core of Labor's values is a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. It is certainly at the front and centre of those values. Our community is rightly outraged when people commit theft of any sort. We should be significantly outraged when employers intentionally set out to deceive and to take money from workers who have put in a fair day's pay. When we look at the damage that is done in terms of the superannuation losses, we should understand that the damage is intergenerational. What is now a few hundred dollars will be a significant amount of money in four years time and it will mean a very different retirement for that particular worker. Employers who deliberately set out to steal wages are the target of this particular legislation.

The people who are most likely to have their wages stolen are those people who are vulnerable workers. Stealing wages also wrecks workers' confidence in terms of seeking further employment and making further contributions to our society. I can certainly relate to this. Twenty or so years ago as a relatively new employee I was in an environment where I really wanted to work and I really needed the job. I was building towards something else and this was an important part of gaining experience. I was like many workers in that I was put in a situation where the staffing arrangements were poor. We had patients to care for who were very, very sick. If we simply left our posts, those patients would have been in life-threatening situations.


Knowing this and having opportunities to avoid this, the employer chose to simply continue to operate in the same manner—put those patients in vulnerable situations and put pressure on us as workers to do double shifts. That was fine. We often agreed to do those double shifts because we had a deep concern for our patients. What was not fine was that the employer then attempted to threaten us and to emotionally blackmail us and to use all sorts of other tricks to try to get us to give up the additional pay that we were entitled to under the award the very next day and the sleep break from having done those double shifts. Anybody who has done 16 hours straight in an intensive care unit and

does not think you need to go home and recuperate really needs to think quite seriously about that. When I questioned that practice, I was placed under immense strain and pressure from the employer. Thankfully, the Queensland nurses union stepped in and was able to provide support.

This legislation is also good for employers. The majority of our employers in this state are decent people. I will use a statistic from the member for Kawana: 99.9 per cent of employers—I do not know how true that is but I am basing it on what the member for Kawana has said—are trying to do the decent thing, the right thing, and I absolutely agree. I would think that those people want the ratbags and those people who are out there stealing from workers out of the industry and no longer employers. Why? Because they are gaining an unfair advantage over the workers and the employers who are doing the right thing.

I would think that all of the decent employers I have met—and in my time it has been the absolute and utter majority of employers—want to do the right thing. They have concerns—deep concerns—for their customers and they have deep concerns for their employees, so those people would not want ratbags in the industry stealing money from workers. With those few words, I would like to say that this bill is a really good step in the right direction. I commend the bill to the House.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (2.00 pm): I rise this afternoon to speak on the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill. First and foremost, the LNP believes that workers deserve to be paid for the work they do. No-one wants to see workers not being paid what they are owed, and Queenslanders deserve the dignity of having a job and being appropriately paid for the work they do. This is particularly important during this global pandemic where, under the Palaszczuk Labor government, Queensland has the highest rate of unemployment in the nation—higher even than Victoria.

The objectives of the bill are: to implement the underlying policy intent of the recommendations made in the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee's report *A fair day's pay for a fair day's work? Exposing the true cost of wage theft in Queensland*. There are two recommendations contained in the report that require legislative amendments to take effect; namely, recommendation 8, the introduction of a simple, quick and low-cost wage recovery process for workers, and recommendation 15 in relation to the criminalisation of wage theft.

The objectives of the bill are achieved by implementing the following legislative mechanisms: by enabling the prosecution of wage theft as stealing under the Criminal Code; by increasing the maximum penalties in the Criminal Code for the offences of stealing and fraud relating to wage theft; and by facilitating the Industrial Magistrates Court's jurisdiction for wage recovery matters, including small claims wage recovery procedures for matters of not more than \$20,000 under section 458 of the Commonwealth Fair Work Act.

Fundamental to any business's success is maintaining a balanced and respectful employment relationship. No-one wants to see money ripped from workers' pockets, especially where the conduct is deliberate and deceitful. Unlike those opposite, the LNP has a strong track record of preselecting small business people to enter the parliament. I am sure the members who have owned a business would agree that navigating their way around the various layers of legislation, awards and certified agreements is complex. Even the most successful businesspeople make mistakes. This extends to employment lawyers and HR staff, who every day are caught up in disputing complex employment law issues.

The bill seeks to amend the definition of stealing contained in section 391 of the Criminal Code. Proposed new section 391(6A) provides—

For stealing that is a failure to pay an employee, or another person on behalf of the employee, an amount payable to the employee or other person in relation to the performance of work by the employee—

(A) the amount is a thing that is capable of being stolen;

An amount payable to an employee or other person in relation to the performance of work by the employee is not defined in the bill, but it is intended to capture a broad range of payments and entitlements including, but not limited to: unpaid hours or underpayment of hours; unpaid penalty rates; unreasonable deductions; and withholding unpaid superannuation.

The amendment to this definition of stealing is welcomed by the LNP because the withholding of an entitlement necessitates there to be intent; in other words, the proof of dishonesty. Importantly, for an employer to be charged with the new offence the act must be fraudulent. This will hopefully provide some relief to the hundreds and thousands of business owners who, with the very best of intentions,

inadvertently pay an employee less than their prescribed entitlement due to complex award structures or administrative errors. We in the LNP do not want to see struggling businesses prosecuted for making honest mistakes, particularly in these complicated times.

I reiterate that the LNP will not oppose this bill, but an LNP government would monitor these laws to ensure they do not result in businesses being pursued for honest mistakes which they subsequently rectify. We have committed to this because in the LNP we work with stakeholders. Unlike the Palaszczuk Labor government, which does not consult, we in the LNP listen to what the business community is saying. The LNP does not oppose this bill, but we have several issues with the bill and it is my duty to raise these. First and foremost amongst these is the jurisdictional issue created by introducing legislation that could be inconsistent with the Commonwealth's Fair Work system, which could potentially result in these laws being deemed unconstitutional.

The federal Fair Work system was created by the Fair Work Act 2009 and covers the vast majority of private sector employees. The Fair Work system is more than adequately represented by the Morrison government and the federal Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations, the Hon. Christian Porter. Despite this, there is no mention of there being any consultation with the federal government on drafting this bill. Those workers in the minority who fall outside of the Fair Work Act are regulated by state industrial laws. These workers are those on which the Palaszczuk Labor government should focus its attention. State intervention into the federal employment law arena is a concern echoed by many stakeholders who made submissions on this bill, including the Housing Industry Association, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland and the National Retail Association, to name a few.

Queensland is not the only state in which this issue has been raised. In Victoria, academics Melissa Kennedy and Professor John Howe have strongly argued that the Victorian and New South Wales applications of wage theft are likely to 'face unconstitutional challenges based on inconsistency between state law and Commonwealth law.' As was highlighted in the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee's inquiry on the issue of wage theft, the Palaszczuk Labor government has attempted to use this issue to undermine the federal industrial relations system. As the LNP said in the statement of reservation—

The LNP attempted to include workers and contractors under direct control of the Queensland Government. The Palaszczuk Government voted down sensible amendments that would have compelled the inquiry to investigate Labor's on-going health payroll debacle, as well as the underpayment of security guards and other contractors at the Commonwealth Games and the use of contractors in the public service—an issue that has been consistently raised by the Together Union.


Labor voted this down because they do not want to be held accountable for their own wage theft from hardworking Queenslanders. Members should not forget that it was the Bligh Labor government that referred significant elements of our private sector industrial relations jurisdiction to the Commonwealth in 2009. This was a move that the LNP opposed at the time. That bill was moved by the current Treasurer, the member for Woodridge, and supported by the Premier and the Minister for Industrial Relations. Now this Labor government is attempting to undermine the federal IR system—one they were happy to be a part of in 2009. Why? Because Labor is no longer in power federally. I note the comments of the department as stated in the committee report—

The Queensland Government is confident about the validity of the provisions having regard to existing Commonwealth laws. If the Commonwealth introduces wage theft criminal laws, that will be a matter for the Government to consider at that time, having regard to the specific nature of the reforms and drafting of relevant provisions.

To provide certainty to businesses and workers the minister should advise whether Crown Law advice has been obtained in relation to the constitutional validity of these laws, and if so that advice should be publicly released.

Stakeholders also raised concerns about the impact of complex award conditions on small businesses; the current state of the economy; whether conciliation needs to be compulsory as a low-cost option for mediating disputes between employers and workers; and the duplication of provisions under the Fair Work Act and the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Again, the LNP believes that all workers deserve to be paid for the work they do. The Palaszczuk Labor government needs to show how its laws will not be struck down as unconstitutional. The LNP is the only party that Queenslanders can trust to build a stronger economy and get Queensland working again.

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport) (2.09 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill. This bill adds to this government's strong record

on delivering on the rights of working Queenslanders. It is a continuation of our commitment to businesses that do the right thing by their workers as well. We fundamentally believe that no business should have to compete with those that do not pay their workers properly.

I have seen wage theft firsthand. In the late nineties, I was advocating as an industry rep for some of the very few remaining Queenslanders working under conditions in this state akin to slavery. They were garment manufacturers who were forced to work out of their homes and out of their garages. Many of them were migrant workers from nations ravaged by war and poverty who often worked on piece rates. Many were forced to get other family members to help them, including their children, so they could earn enough money to pay rent and put food on the table. This was happening in communities right across Queensland.

We uncovered non-payment or underpayment of the correct hourly rate, unpaid penalty rates, unauthorised deductions from their pay, unpaid superannuation, withholding of entitlements and underpayment through sham contracting and the misuse of ABNs. All of these elements were rife then and they remain far too prevalent today. Labor understands that wage theft hurts workers and their families, and it is this Labor government that will make wage theft a crime. We are backing Queensland workers and we are backing Queensland businesses that do the right thing because they should not have to compete against those that do not.


It was Labor governments that stood up then to those exploiting outworkers here in our community in the clothing trade. It was Labor that introduced laws and codes of practice to make sure clothing workers got paid a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. It was Labor in Queensland that established ethical supplier rules in procurement. We know that standing up for workers is a struggle, and advocates of workers know that that struggle will always go on. The difference comes when they have the support of Labor governments behind them.

Our record is of backing a fair go for clothing outworkers, and I remind the House that the LNP came into this place in 2012 and repealed provisions that prevented abhorrent practices in the clothing trade in Queensland. On this side of the House, our record is clear on taking action to support workers. Our record is clear on our actions to support small business—whether it is our building industry fairness reforms that make it an offence to rip off subbies through the project trust account framework or our prompt payment reform that has seen over 315,000 invoices worth \$660 million paid promptly to Queensland businesses during the global pandemic. In our global history, workers and their employers have never needed the certainty of getting paid more than they do right now. We have heard that altogether wage theft strips \$2½ billion from the Queensland economy each year. That is money that would otherwise be flowing into our local economies through our local shops, bars, cafes and tourism experience operators.

Those opposite can come in here and say whatever they like, but Queenslanders know that actions speak louder than words when it comes to standing up for Queensland workers. Time and time again those opposite have come into this place and shown their true colours. When the Palaszczuk government passed its landmark security of payment reforms for Queensland tradies, those opposite sat silent. They chose to equivocate and then they went out and promised to the big end of town that they would repeal it as soon as they got the chance.

In 2012 the LNP voted to repeal the mandatory code of practice for outworkers. What they did was signal a green light to unscrupulous businesses that wage theft was okay. Members of the then LNP front bench stood with the member for Nanango and Campbell Newman to repeal protections designed to prevent slavery-like conditions in this state. It is no surprise that it is now this Labor government that is ending wage theft in Queensland because the LNP have never and will never take action to deliver well-paid, decent jobs for Queenslanders. In fact, their record and their words today demonstrate that they really do believe in protecting wage thieves.

We know the federal government's Fair Work system does not just let Queensland workers down; it is designed to enable it. It is this Labor government that will go into bat for those Queenslanders. Today we even the ledger. Again, on this side of the House we stand up for Queensland workers, and on this side of the House we stand up for Queensland businesses that do the right thing. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.15 pm): I rise to contribute to the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill 2020. The objectives of the bill are to implement the underlying policy intent of the recommendations made in the committee's report entitled *A fair day's pay for a fair day's work? Exposing the true cost of wage theft in Queensland* that was tabled on 16 November 2018. The two recommendations of the report that require legislative amendments are

as follows: recommendation 8, a simple, quick and low-cost wage recovery process for workers; and recommendation 15, the criminalisation of wage theft. I thank committee members from both sides of the House for their report as well as the many submitters who commented on the bill. There were some 27 submissions and I will come to them later in my contribution. In general, employee representatives were supportive of the bill while most of the employer representatives did not support the changes.

I wish to make it clear that the LNP believe that workers deserve to get paid for the work they do. No-one wants to see workers being ripped off. This has never been more important given that a record number of Queenslanders are on the jobless queue. At 8.8 per cent, Queensland has the worst unemployment rate in the nation. Even prior to COVID, under the Palaszczuk Labor government Queensland had the nation's highest unemployment, the most bankruptcies and the lowest business confidence. Anastacia Palaszczuk was the last Premier to announce an economic stimulus package and the first and only Premier to cancel her budget—which we still have not seen and this is our second-last sitting day. No budget means that Labor is flying blind through the biggest economic crisis in almost a century.

Queensland also continues to have the highest youth unemployment rate in the nation and the most long-term unemployed. It is clear that Labor just is not working for Queenslanders. It was highlighted in the parliamentary committee inquiry on the issue of wage theft that the Palaszczuk Labor government has attempted to use this issue to undermine the federal industrial relations system. We see that when we get into the submissions.

With the committee report, the LNP attempted to include workers and contractors under the direct control of the Queensland government. I am sure that past and present workers of Sunwater are interested in this because they have been inadvertently underpaid. I am sure the Health workers impacted by Labor's Health payroll debacle would be interested in this as well. The Palaszczuk Labor government voted down sensible amendments that would have compelled the inquiry to investigate Labor's ongoing Health payroll debacle as well as the underpayment of security guards and other contractors at the Commonwealth Games and the use of contractors in the Public Service—an issue which has constantly been raised by the Together union.

I will outline some concerns raised by the various industry groups. In particular, the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland stated that in their experience—

... an overwhelming majority of compliance cases are due to genuine and inadvertent errors in the payment of wages and other entitlements stemming from the inherent complexities of the workplace relations system.

It is difficult for employers. I often get phone calls from employers who ask, 'How do we work this out?' When they are in a remote area, they do not have a group to go to and they have to rely on that telephone support to make sure their workers are paid correctly. Many businesses want to make sure they get it right. The Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland continued—

Simply criminalising wage underpayment will not address the systemic difficulties within the workplace relations landscape and reduce the incidence of wage underpayments.

The Local Government Association of Queensland were not opposed to the legislation. They said they had no objections to the criminalisation of wage theft where that theft is caused by deliberate, wilful and systemic acts by unscrupulous employers, and they were generally supportive of any proposal to simplify processes for correcting wrongs. They claim there needs to be greater definition of wage theft because the award structure they operate under is complex, confusing and can be challenging to administer. In some cases, depending on the nature of the businesses that are operating or what they are responsible for, they could be administering various different awards.

The Australian Industry Group advised that the existing regulatory system provides an appropriate framework for addressing underpayment of employees' remuneration and applies appropriate sanctions to the small minority—and I think we should say that: the small minority—of employers who deliberately underpay their staff. Most of them do the right thing.

Mr Krause interjected.

Ms LEAHY: I take that interjection from the member for Scenic Rim. The arguments against introducing legislation exposing employers to criminal penalties for underpayment are even more compelling in the present economic circumstances where it is essential that no barriers are imposed on investment and employment. They stated that as the Commonwealth government's JobSeeker scheme is gradually phased out, the unemployment rate is likely to increase as employees currently working zero hours are included in the figure. In such an economic climate it would be inappropriate to introduce legislation that would further discourage employers from engaging more staff.

We read today allegations on the front page of the *Courier-Mail* that leaked emails have exposed that JobKeeper payments for a former staffer and Queensland Greens candidate for Clayfield were funnelled into the Maiwar Greens campaign account. Maybe the Labor government should be investigating the alleged wage theft in the Queensland Greens rather than increasing—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order, members.

Ms LEAHY: Thank for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. Maybe the Labor government should be investigating the alleged wage theft in the Queensland Greens rather than increasing the complexity and compliance for Queensland businesses. I doubt we will see—

Honourable members interjected.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members.

Ms LEAHY: I doubt we will see this Labor government investigate the Greens party's alleged wage theft complaint so close to an election; it might upset the preference flows. I also want to make mention of some instances of wage theft we have seen firsthand. I have here an article from the *Sydney Morning Herald* which says—

Mr Millar interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Gregory.

Ms LEAHY:—'Bill Shorten's AWU 'sold out' workers for \$300,000'. We have seen wage theft firsthand and, unfortunately, this has come from Bill Shorten.

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.22 pm): I rise to strongly support the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill 2020. I want to take the opportunity to applaud the government and, most importantly, the workers and their unions who have pushed this issue to the forefront. It has long been a sore injustice that the service station worker who pockets a chocolate bar faces a charge with a maximum penalty of imprisonment of five years—I think that is the current maximum. However, if that same worker in that same service station gets robbed by their boss of pay they have earned, that robbery is not even considered a crime.

It hardly needs repeating that wage theft, whether through direct underpayment, stinting on penalty rates, unpaid overtime, overcharging for accommodation or harsh deductions cost Queensland workers millions upon millions every year. We have heard already in this debate that wage theft in some form affects one in four Queensland workers. In my electorate of Maiwar there are thousands of casuals—young people and older folks—working in services, retail and hospitality who face a particularly sharp power imbalance, which means wage theft is easier for bosses to get away with. This bill will hopefully begin to shift that power imbalance. Of course, the best way to do that in the longer term is to build job security and for workers themselves to organise together in their own workplaces and with their unions.

The bill focuses on wilful, reckless or deliberate wage theft rather than accidental underpayment, as is appropriate for a criminal offence. It amends and expands the definition of stealing in the Criminal Code and provides that stealing includes a failure to pay an employee an amount payable to the employee in relation to the performance of work. That includes a wide range of conduct like unpaid hours or underpayment of hours; unpaid penalty rates; unreasonable deductions; unpaid superannuation; withholding entitlements; underpayment through intentionally misclassifying a worker, including wrong award, wrong classification, or by sham contracting and the misuse of ABNs; and authorised deductions that have not been applied as agreed.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order! Member for Maiwar, I will ask you to resume your seat. Under the provisions of the business program agreed to by the House and the time allocated for this stage of the bill having expired, the question is that the bill now be read a second time.


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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Under the provisions of the business program agreed to by the House and the time allocated for this stage of the bill having expired, I will now put all remaining questions. I call the minister to table the explanatory notes to her amendments and statement of compatibility with human rights.

 **Ms GRACE** (2.24 pm): I table the explanatory notes and the statement of compatibility with human rights to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill 2020, explanatory notes to Hon. Grace Grace's amendments [1585].

Tabled paper: Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Wage Theft) Amendment Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Grace Grace's amendments [1586].

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: In accordance with sessional order 2B, the House must now consider all remaining clauses, schedules and any amendments circulated by the minister in charge of the bill.

Question put—That the minister's amendments Nos 1 to 3, as circulated, be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

Amendments as circulated—

1 After clause 8

Page 6, after line 24—

insert—

8A Insertion of new ch 9, pt 1, div 6

Chapter 9, part 1—

insert—

Division 6 Providing employee information to registered employee organisations

354A Definition for division

In this division—

registered employee organisation means an employee organisation that is registered under chapter 12.

354B Authority to give information

- (1) An employee may authorise the employee's employer to give information about the employee to a registered employee organisation.
- (2) The authorisation may be given to the employer—
 - (a) directly by the employee; or
 - (b) by a registered employee organisation on behalf of the employee.
- (3) The authorisation—
 - (a) must be in writing and legible; and
 - (b) must state—
 - (i) the name of the employee; and
 - (ii) the name of the employee's employer; and
 - (iii) the information to which the authorisation applies; and
 - (iv) the name of the registered employee organisation that may request the information and to which the information must be given; and
 - (c) must be signed by the employee, including by electronic signature; and
 - (d) may be made electronically.
- (4) The authorisation has effect until the earliest of the following events happens—
 - (a) the authorisation is withdrawn by the employee;
 - (b) the employee's employment with the employer ends;
 - (c) there is a break in the employee's continuity of employment of longer than 3 months.
- (5) The employer must keep an authorisation given under this section at, or in a place where it can be accessed from, a workplace of the employer in Queensland.

Note—

This subsection is a civil penalty provision.

354C Requirement to give information

- (1) This section applies if—
 - (a) an employee has authorised an employer under section 354B to give information about the employee to a registered employee organisation; and
 - (b) the registered employee organisation gives the employer a written request for the information about the employee.
- (2) The employer must, within 15 business days after receiving the request, give the registered employee organisation—

- (a) the information requested to the extent it is held, or able to be accessed, by the employer; or
- (b) if some or all of the information requested can not be given because it is not held, or able to be accessed, by the employer or because subsection (3) applies—a notice identifying the information that can not be given and the reason it can not be given.

Note—

This subsection is a civil penalty provision.

- (3) Subsection (2)(a) does not apply if giving the information is inconsistent with an Act or law.
- (4) The information—
 - (a) must be given in writing and be legible; and
 - (b) may be given electronically.
- (5) If the employer gives information to the registered employee organisation under subsection (2)(a), the employer must notify the employee.
- (6) If the employee is employed in a department (the **first department**), the information required to be given to the registered employee organisation by the first department includes information that—
 - (a) is held by another department; and
 - (b) relates to the employee’s employment in the first department.
- (7) However, if the employee is employed in more than 1 department, the information required to be given by the department to which the request is given is limited to the information about the employee’s employment in that department.
- (8) In this section—

department includes a public service office.

354D Unlawful access

A person must not wilfully deceive or mislead an employer in order to gain access under this division to information about an employee.

Maximum penalty—40 penalty units.

2 After clause 15

Page 17, after line 29—

insert—

15A Amendment of sch 3 (Civil penalties)

Schedule 3—

insert—

Chapter 9—Records and wages			
s 354B(5) (Authority to give information)	(a) a person affected by the contravention	the commission	27 penalty units
	(b) an employee organisation of which a person mentioned in paragraph (a) is a member		
	(c) an inspector		
s 354C(2) (Requirement to give information)	(a) a person affected by the contravention	the commission	27 penalty units
	(b) an employee organisation of which a person mentioned in paragraph (a) is a member		
	(c) an inspector		

3 Clause 16 (Amendment of sch 5 (Dictionary))

Page 18, after line 9—

insert—

registered employee organisation, for chapter 9, part 1, division 6, see section 354A.

Question put—That clauses 1 to 21, as amended, stand part of the bill.

Motion agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 21, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.


Long Title

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

Motion agreed to.

SPEAKER'S RULING


Notices of Motion

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, this morning I was presented with two notices of motion for the private member's debate this evening, one from the Leader of the Opposition and one from the member for Hill. I have discussed the matter with both members. I have also been advised by the Clerk that, of the 32 private members' motions held on Wednesday evenings this parliament, all have been from the opposition. This is an unenviable position for me to be in. Matters of the House generally are worked out by non-government members. However, accordingly, I have decided that the motion proposed by the member for Hill is to be debated this evening. The Leader of the Opposition's notice will be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 16 July (see p. 1744).

Second Reading

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (2.26 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 builds on key measures taken by the Palaszczuk government since 2015 to restore fairness in public sector employment. Fairness remains central to the measures in this bill. This bill will ensure the Queensland public sector is a fair employer that is best positioned to be responsive to the community and meets the needs of government in a changing world. Without our Public Service employees, government would simply not exist.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Queensland public servants have proven just how crucial they are to delivering the infrastructure and services that our state needs. From our teachers developing online materials to support learning from home, to contact tracers tirelessly following up contacts to reduce the spread of the virus, to our health workers standing on the front line against the disease, our government employees are serving the people of Queensland every day. As we continue to deliver Queensland's plan to unite and recover from the global health pandemic, I want to take the opportunity to thank public servants for their tireless efforts and the resilience, initiative and innovation they have shown.

The bill was introduced on 16 July 2020 and was referred to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee. I note that the committee made two recommendations to parliament including that the bill be passed. I now table a copy of the government's response to the committee.

Tabled paper: Education, Employment and Small Business Committee: Report No. 34, 56th Parliament—Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, government response [[1587](#)].

I thank the committee members and the committee secretariat for their careful consideration of the bill. I commend the member for Nudgee, as chair of the committee, for ensuring the proposed legislation was properly scrutinised and considered.

I also thank those who contributed to the committee process through submissions and at public hearings. I am pleased to report that the committee found broad support for the introduction of the bill, particularly for those provisions which maximise employment security and promote permanency as the default basis for employment in the public sector.

It was pleasing to see that the committee also noted supportive feedback for the inclusion of a positive performance management framework and that there were no submissions that recommended the bill should not pass. The committee made one additional recommendation: that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet investigate an appropriate mechanism to further enhance fairness and

transparency in decision-making for conversion reviews. I can advise that this recommendation will be addressed through amendments to relevant policy directives and by an amendment to the bill that I will move today.

Together, these amendments will improve fairness and transparency by promoting accountability in decision-making and encouraging chief executives to actively track and review the number of deemed decisions within their agencies and the effectiveness of workforce and resource planning for conversion reviews. I also note that the government intends to move amendments during consideration in detail of the bill to ensure successful implementation and application of the bill. Before turning to these amendments, I will briefly outline the substantive elements and purpose of the bill.

The bill represents a significant milestone in delivering on the government's commitment to restore fairness in the public sector employment framework. It progresses the priority stage 1 public sector management reforms arising from recommendations of the independent review of Queensland's public sector employment laws conducted by Mr Peter Bridgman. The bill recognises that government, in the Westminster tradition, is founded on ministerial responsibility discharged through departments and other state entities.

The bill builds on this system of government, which has ministers who are responsible to the parliament and their electorate, to help ensure that they are supported by a responsive and inclusive Public Service. It recognises from the outset that public servants matter. The bill is aimed at ensuring that public servants can do their work competently, responsibly, responsively and apolitically. It also supports these employees by uplifting the employment relationship through a new positive performance management framework.

Reform priorities are progressed in two main areas: one, giving full effect to the government's commitment to maximise employment security in public sector employment; and, two, providing for positive performance management of public sector employees. I add that we can maximise this because they are still under the jurisdiction of the state system. There was an issues paper in December 2012 issued by the former minister for industrial relations, the member for Kawana, in which there was talk that the majority of the state system remain in Queensland. There was a hostile takeover of the IR system where 85 to 90 per cent of the private sector transferred to the federal system. Only 10 to 15 per cent of the unincorporated area was further transferred to the federal system. I say that because by maintaining our control of the state system we can introduce legislation that helps our public sector.

Maximising employment security is critical to ensuring the Public Service can endure political change, technological development and external crises. As the economic backdrop created by the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted, a permanent public sector workforce is critical to ensuring that Queensland is prepared to respond and recover from unprecedented external disasters.

Job security is also an integral feature of the Westminster system and allows public servants to perform their duties impartially and to provide frank and fearless advice. That is why this bill amends the Public Service Act 2008 to clearly state that permanent employment is the default basis for public sector employment and that other non-permanent forms of employment should only be used when ongoing employment is not viable or appropriate. This is in complete contrast to the casualisation that has happened under the federal system.

This bill also acknowledges that fairness in the Public Service is a lived experience. As submissions to the committee noted, there are examples of where a person has been engaged as a temporary employee over many years, rolling from project to project. Although workforce flexibility is an important component of ensuring service delivery, fairness in employment arrangements is critical. As submissions to the committee noted, it is critically important that our public servants feel that they have the certainty to be focused on the performance of their duties so that they can spend money, engage in the economy and have access to loans so they can plan their lives for themselves and their families and, of course, support the many businesses in the community.

That is why this bill further enshrines in legislation the rights of employees to have the status of their employment as fixed-term temporary employees and casual employees reviewed after two years of continuous service. It also introduces a right for public servants employed on a fixed-term temporary or casual basis to request a review of their employment status after 12 months. This new review right is designed to foster good workforce and resource planning practices by agencies and so that employees are provided with regular and systemic reviews of their employment status.

To assist departments in managing these obligations and to ensure flexibility and responsiveness to emerging demands, the bill also provides guidance and clear criteria for the employment of fixed-term temporary employees and casual employees. A consistent theme throughout the Bridgman review

is that public servants like and enjoy their jobs, respect their colleagues and want to do their best. The Bridgman review recognised that, in doing their best, public servants want to respond positively to the needs of their clients, the community and the government.

The review recommended that recognition of this should be the starting point for the management of public sector employees. That is why this bill introduces positive performance management principles. The principles will promote regular and constructive communication between managers and employees and ensure that they work together to support the government's productivity and quality of service delivery. This will ensure that good work is recognised and that public servants have feedback on how their efforts are contributing to Queensland and will help drive public sector capability development. These principles are supported by requirements to make a directive about how the principles will be applied. The bill ensures that chief executives need to ensure that this directive has been complied with before taking performance based disciplinary action.

Together, these amendments create a positive performance management framework to support managers and employees to work together to support optimal performance and to enable correction of performance and behavioural issues early through local action. In this way, we can ensure that Queensland has the most responsive, consistent and reliable Public Service possible to deliver services for Queenslanders.

Central to the key objectives of this bill to promote fairness in the employment relationship is accountability for decisions which affect employees. That is why this bill also transfers the jurisdiction for Public Service appeals, which are currently heard by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission under the Public Service Act 2008, to be heard under the Industrial Relations Act 2016. This is a measure which is widely supported and will mean that decisions in Public Service appeals will now be published. This will ensure transparency and increase consistency in Public Service appeal decisions and, over time, enhance the quality of employment related decision-making in the Public Service.

The remaining amendments of the bill support the central concept of restoring fairness in public sector employment laws. They will ensure that the Queensland Public Service is well placed to deliver responsive, consistent and reliable community service and high-quality governance of public services and strengthen the sector as a whole. They include provisions to appoint a special commissioner to provide advice to government to drive improvements in areas of public administration including addressing gender pay equity, promoting a diverse workforce and promoting effective and efficient government.

They also include amendments to citizenship requirements to ensure consistency with the Human Rights Act 2019 and the Queensland multicultural charter by ensuring a person who has permission to lawfully work in Australia can be employed as a public servant for as long as they have that permission.

Previously, I flagged that amendments would be moved during consideration in detail to provide for effective implementation of the bill and to respond to the second recommendation of the committee report. The first of these amendments are of a minor and technical nature and are necessary to clarify the intention of transitional arrangements for conversion of casual employees and provide for a fair and manageable transition to new employee rights and employer obligations. A minor and technical amendment is also necessary to clarify the administrative inquiry powers introduced by the bill.

The remaining amendments primarily relate to the committee's recommendation that an appropriate mechanism should be investigated to further enhance fairness and transparency in decision-making for conversion reviews where a chief executive does not make a conversion decision within 28 days and the request is taken to have been denied. The committee also noted that the Bridgman review noted that the deemed refusal is sensible and practical but that it could also operate as a perverse incentive for a decision not to be made and that the perversity of the incentive should be removed. In response to these concerns, policy changes will be made to the temporary, casual and higher duties directives which will enable the Public Service Commissioner to request agencies to report on the number of conversion requests which are deemed to be refusals because the required time frame was not met. These changes will improve fairness and transparency by promoting accountability in decision-making and encouraging chief executives to actively track and review the number of deemed decisions in their agency and the effectiveness of workplace and resource planning in respect of conversion reviews.


This will be supported by an amendment to the bill to require that in making a decision in a conversion review a chief executive must have regard to previous conversion review decisions made about the employee and the reasons for those decisions. This will include having regard to where a decision was not made in the required time frame and was taken to be a decision not to convert. The outcome of this consideration will be included in the notice required to be provided to an employee where a decision not to convert to permanency is made. In effect, this gives a bit of historical context for the worker—that is, if they are not being converted, why they were denied. It gives a bit of historical context in terms of transparency. Amendments are also proposed to be made to address issues identified in submissions to the committee to clarify the intent and application of provisions.

For the benefit of the House, I now outline amendments that I will be moving during consideration in detail. First, I turn to amendments to the right-of-entry provisions in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. These amendments aim to ensure the act is clear and continues to function effectively. The amendments improve the clarity of the provisions on the relationship between the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and the separate Electrical Safety Act 2002. The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 provides a framework to secure the health and safety of workers and workplaces. Part 7 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 covers the topic of workplace entry by workplace health and safety entry permit holders. By empowering worker representatives to enter workplaces to inquire into suspected contraventions of the health and safety laws, the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 establishes a means by which to quickly and effectively identify and rectify risks to workers and workplaces. This framework is not changing.

The amendment aims to make clear that parliament intends for the scope of health and safety laws for the purpose of right of entry to include electrical safety. This was always the intention. This is considered prudent to avoid any possible confusion given electrical safety matters are covered by a separate act. This is a technical amendment which reflects what was always the intention of the act. It has also been the intention of the health and safety laws to be whole and not to exclude from the concept of work health and safety a particular class of risks to workers, whether it be electrical risks, which are very high risk, or other kinds of risks. It was already a matter of practice that work health and safety entry permit holders exercise a right of entry on the basis of electrical safety matters, and this will remain. The amendments will ensure that the intent of workplace health and safety laws is clear, thereby ensuring there is no real or perceived gap in the scope and application of right-of-entry laws to electrical safety matters. A transitional provision will ensure that this applies to all relevant times since the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 commenced.

The second amendment I will be moving amends the Public Service Act 2008 to clarify and formalise the status of the Office of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor and the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor. In particular, the amendments provide the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor with chief executive powers under the Public Service Act 2008 consistent with other similarly established offices. Given that we have mining health and safety prosecutions now being combined, formalising these functions and powers ensures the status of the office and the role of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor are clear without the need for constantly maintaining alternative administrative measures such as a delegation of powers. I will also move amendments to the Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020 to clarify drafting of provisions which facilitate the introduction of a proposed new fire protection licensing framework and to clarify a key fire protection definition. This will uphold the integrity of the fire protection licensing framework and protect public safety.

As the Premier said when she introduced this bill, we want the Queensland Public Service to be an employer of choice and a leader in public administration. We want to ensure that we are making the right investments in public services to keep delivering for Queenslanders with a highly skilled Public Service. We want the Queensland Public Service to be empowered to be responsive, consistent and reliable and to visibly demonstrate a culture that values high ethical standards and behaviour. This is why this bill will be supported by a stage 2, which will further implement fairness and integrity in public sector employment through the development of a new act and new code of conduct for the Public Service. Together, these reforms will ensure a fair and responsive Public Service for all. I am honoured to be addressing this bill on behalf of the Premier. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (2.46 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. In September 2018 the Premier commissioned Peter Bridgman to conduct an independent review of Queensland's employment laws. Bridgman's report, titled *A fair and responsive Public Service for all*, made a total of 99 recommendations. The Bridgman review concluded there are significant problems in Queensland public sector employment laws. Bridgman

alerted the Premier to the state's fractured employment framework on 3 May 2019, but it has taken the Premier or this government almost 1½ years to address these issues. The bill aims to fix the significant problems and issues about employment laws and practices that have been formed and continue to manifest under the Palaszczuk Labor government.

The contents of the bill are to give effect to stage 1 of public sector management reforms which arise from the recommendations of the Bridgman review. The bill amends the Public Service Act 2008 and the Industrial Relations Act 2016, provides for appeals to be heard under the Industrial Relations Act instead of the Public Service Act by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to increase consistency in appeal decisions, establishes positive performance management principles to support managers and employees to work together to support optimal performance, clarifies the threshold for taking disciplinary action, and provides for new directives to guide disciplinary action and procedures, investigations and positive performance management.

To a large extent, what the bill achieves is reasonable and that is why the opposition will not be opposing the bill. The recommendations of the Bridgman review are fair and the response is relatively proportionate, but what is not fair or proportionate is when the government chose to tear up the industrial agreements and freeze the wages of frontline public servants before she took it upon herself to introduce this bill. However, that is exactly what the Premier and industrial relations minister did. They went to the extraordinary length to legislate over legally binding certified agreements. The decision is clearly one which is out of touch with the basic principles of employment law—something the bill aims to address. Labor rushed through these amendments by tacking them on to the Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill at the last minute with no committee scrutiny or input from stakeholders. This blindsiding practice by Labor is simply undemocratic. The Premier's decision to freeze public servants' wages was rightfully slammed by public servants and their unions.

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. This is a matter that was debated in this House not too long ago and I refer to its relevance to this legislation. Is he debating the same question again?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. With respect to the long title of the bill, this is an act to amend the Industrial Relations Act, the Public Interest Disclosure Act and the Public Service Act. In responding to the minister's point of order after she said in her contribution that this bill is about fairness in public sector employment, I would contend to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that wages that are generated from the Public Service Act are relevant to the long title of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Member for Kawana, I ask you to bring it back to the bill being debated, please.

Mr BLEIJIE: The bill establishes a special commissioner to provide advice to the minister about areas of public administration relating to the Public Service Act, such as gender pay equity and promoting a diverse workforce. The LNP questions the need for such a commissioner. It cannot be disputed that the Public Service already comprises hundreds of positions which focus on promoting a diverse workforce and it is therefore questioned why a high-paying position needs to be created to add an extra layer of bureaucracy.

I have to question why the Labor government is wasting taxpayers' money on a commissioner to promote the likes of gender identity, for instance, when the government has also launched an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2015-2020. The strategy states that it provides agencies with a point of reference for the development of diversity strategies, policies and guidelines to embed the principles of inclusion and diversity in their culture, systems and processes. If agencies are already developing diversity strategies then what is the point of a new commissioner? We have seen Labor governments over the years appoint commissioner after commissioner, set up office after office, and the objectives are never achieved. The Public Service are getting less support than they ordinarily would with these new commissioners and the bureaucracy which is always created under a Labor government.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is simply wasting more valuable money, which it cannot afford to lose, to promote an already diversified workplace. Why does the Premier not focus her attention on finding ways to stimulate Queensland's economy? I dare say it is because the Premier and the Labor government have no clue how to do that, which is why Queensland will soon be in over its head with \$100 billion worth of debt. Queensland's record debt level is an embarrassment and the Premier should be ashamed of the role she has played in it. People are losing their jobs and businesses are going bankrupt and all the Premier can think of doing is to appoint a diversity commissioner in the Public Service. It is clear that Labor's priorities are all wrong.

The bill also addresses the disciplinary system. It clarifies the threshold for taking disciplinary action and provides for new directives to guide disciplinary action and procedures, investigations and positive performance management. Specifically, clause 28 allows a public servant who is being disciplined to first ask the Public Service Commission to review a procedural aspect of the department's handling of the matter before the disciplinary matter is finalised. The LNP does not oppose these changes, but what I will raise issue with is the extraordinary length of time disciplinary matters take in the Public Service before finally being resolved. The message is clear: the longer disciplinary matters take to finalise, the more it costs Queensland taxpayers.

Take, for example, the issue last year of the investigation into former public trustee Peter Carne, who was suspended after serious allegations were made relating to misbehaviour. Carne was suspended on full pay for one year of his hefty \$300,000 a year salary. Prior to that there was the case of former chief scientist Suzanne Miller, who was caught out misusing \$75,000 of public funds for personal gain and suspended from duty. She had worked in her role for only six months of her three-year contract. During her court proceedings she stalled the proceedings 19 times claiming that she needed to find a notebook that had been seized by the CCC. When offered to go to the CCC to look for the notebook she declined, saying she did not feel comfortable with that. Thankfully, she was convicted of fraud and sent to prison.

The great issue with that case is that the suspension lasted 2.5 years despite the government's own policy which suggests suspensions without pay should occur when criminal charges have been laid and/or the matter is prevented from being finalised due to an external factor outside the agency's control. What is not clear is whether she was paid in full for the 2½ years she was suspended. The *Courier-Mail* suggested at the time that she was.

In an attempt to gain certainty the opposition submitted question on notice No. 26 on 4 February 2020 asking the Minister for Science to clarify the total length of time Ms Miller was suspended with pay, the total amount of income received by Ms Miller while suspended and whether at the time she transitioned to suspension without pay and why. The minister refused to answer. Surely the public has a right to know how much they paid for a fraudulent high-flying public servant who was not even working. Of course, this is expected from a government that prides itself on secrecy and attempts to pass laws to imprison journalists for reporting on allegations of corruption. It is no wonder that because of the Palaszczuk Labor government Queensland has being dubbed 'the secret state'.

I will address one of the amendments that is being moved by the minister, and as I have said in this place many times, it is quite frequent for this minister to move amendments to her own bills.

Ms Grace: He holds the record.

Mr BLEIJIE: It was 200 to 300 on the racing bill I think. I take the interjection the minister is about to make. It was not her bill at the time.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order! Stop debating across the chamber.

Mr BLEIJIE: She got handed the bill and just had to do it in the parliament. The explanatory notes—which I was handed a copy of as I jumped to my feet to speak, so I have not had an appropriate opportunity to fully read the amendments—state that one of the amendments being moved was inadvertently missed from a previous bill. For this Labor government that is—

Mr Minnikin: Par for the course.

Mr BLEIJIE:—par for the course. I take the interjection. There are also amendments to the right-of-entry provisions under the Work Health and Safety Act in terms of applying the same provisions of right of entry to the Electrical Safety Act. The CFMMEU has been found in continual contravention of the right-of-entry provisions of the work health and safety legislation at the federal level and many of the leaders of the union who have been taken to court because they have wrongfully entered a construction site have now set up another body registered in Queensland called the CFMEUQ. That body is designed to get around the federal right-of-entry provisions. It should be concerning, and it is concerning to the construction industry. I get scared when the Minister for Industrial Relations starts moving more amendments to workplace right-of-entry provisions under the Work Health and Safety Act and the Electrical Safety Act because the CFMMEU, which has been found many times to be in contravention of the legislation of the right-of-entry provisions, has now set up—

Mr Power: He's Labor! He loves the CFMMEU!

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. In my last speech I was quoting the CFMMEU for attacking the government and now I am attacking the CFMMEU. I am returning to form. I reflected on my lunch break at the commentary I made and I cannot let this last parliamentary sitting pass with the members opposite thinking that I was the new best friend of Michael Ravbar.

Mr Power: We know you are.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, no, no friend. The CFMMEU has now set up another body called the CFMEUQ, which is deliberately designed to get around the federal laws with respect to right of entry. Now they are going onto construction sites and holding up construction right across Queensland under the CFMEUQ brand, deliberately getting around those federal laws. If the minister is serious about business and COVID recovery, and she mentioned COVID recovery in her second reading speech, then give construction a go and give builders a go.

We know that when the CFMMEU gets involved in construction sites in Queensland on government jobs it adds about a 30 to 40 per cent increase in taxpayers' money. In its last, dying days the government should be investigating the CFMEUQ in the minister's own department and finding out if they are, in fact, breaching any of the federal laws under the new body, the CFMEUQ. I have seen correspondence from the minister's own department where they have explained to businesses the reason the CFMEUQ was set up and they cannot take action against them is that they are not now covered under the workplace right-of-entry laws under the federal legislation.

Ms Grace: That's right.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection: 'That's right.' It is wrong. The minister may think it is right, but it is actually wrong. When you have a union body in Queensland that is causing so much grief on construction sites and shutting down construction sites for industrial disputation and there is a federal law to stop that threatening and intimidating behaviour—people have been convicted under federal laws—and then the body goes around those laws by setting up a new body in Queensland, yes, Queenslanders should be concerned.

They are doing exactly what they did with the threatening behaviour on construction sites in Queensland—the intimidation that the CFMMEU is known for—and they are getting away with it because, first, the Queensland government allows them to do it and will not take action against them; secondly, we have seen many instances of this occurring; and, thirdly, there is a federal law that they are getting around. Do members remember when Sally McManus from the Australian Council of Trade Unions said that union members can breach laws if they do not like the laws? That is exactly what is happening in Queensland. The CFMEUQ is breaching federal industrial laws because they do not like them.

Ms Grace: They are federal laws—federal laws.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is it okay to breach federal laws? Is it okay to bully and intimidate construction companies and workers on work sites if it is a federal law and if they do not like the federal law they can register them in Queensland?

Ms Grace: They are federal laws.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, they are federal laws and they were breaching the federal laws. They have been convicted of breaching the federal laws, but now they are not. Now they are getting around it by establishing themselves as the CFMEUQ under the minister's watch. They are registered under this minister's watch in her own department.

Ms Grace: Federal laws.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, they are federal laws. Is the minister now saying that because the Corporations Law is a federal law that you can breach it in Queensland?

Ms Grace: They are federal laws.

Mr BLEIJIE: I know that they are federal laws. I said that they are federal laws and I said that they are breaching the federal laws, but they should be held accountable.

Mr POWER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. While the discussion of federal laws is interesting, it is not relevant to the bill.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Member for McConnel, I think you have made your point with your interjections. Member for Kawana, I think you understood the member for McConnel's interjections. I encourage you to continue with the debate on the bill, please.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am concerned about the amendment that is going to be moved by the Minister for Industrial Relations. As I have said, it sends shivers down my spine whenever this Minister for Industrial Relations mentions 'right-of-entry provisions' in amendments before this House.

As I have said, there are a lot of things in this legislation, such as the commissioner, that we think are more layers of bureaucracy being set up by the Labor government. That will not achieve anything other than costing Queenslanders a lot more money at a time when they can least afford it. I would much rather see the Queensland government investing the money that it will cost to set up a commissioner and a commissioner's office in assisting small businesses that are struggling with the coronavirus shutdown and restrictions. I would rather see money prioritised into the COVID recovery rather than—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am talking about the Special Commissioner. This is all about the legislation and I am saying that it is a waste of money. That is pretty relevant. I am saying that setting up the commissioner, which is what we are debating today, will be a waste of time. We have seen commissioners come and go under the Labor Party. In fact, who can forget that this week the Treasurer wound up the Productivity Commission? A former treasurer, the member for Mulgrave, set up the Productivity Commission separate from government, but then the independent Productivity Commission said some bad things about the government.

An opposition member: They were too independent.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection; they were too independent so now Treasurer Dick is taking them under his arm so that he can decide what they will do. I congratulate the member for Mulgrave for setting up the Productivity Commission independent of Treasury, but now of course it will be under Treasury and I am concerned about that. As we have seen, commissioners come and go under Labor. They have a way of saying that if there is an issue they will set up a commission. As I have said, every department has an obligation to have diversity in the workplace. They are already doing it. Every department is doing it. They do not need a commissioner to do it. This is about creating more jobs in the Public Service for Labor commissioners and things like that. It is ridiculous. The departments are already doing it and the money should be invested elsewhere.

As we have seen many times before, the Labor government is responding in the prism of an election to be held in less than 60 days. For example, in question time this morning they announced a rapid action squad that is on its way to Townsville to take care of youth crime issues. They are on the jet and heading straight up there today. They have not done anything on those issues for five years and all of a sudden, in the prism of an election, we have to get to it and get all this passed.


We support the legislation, although we say that there are things in the legislation that really will do nothing for the Public Service. As I said at the start, if the Labor government is serious about the Public Service, it should give frontline workers their pay increase. We supported hardworking Queensland public servants getting their proper pay, but the Labor government voted for a pay freeze. We voted against the pay freeze. We believe that our teachers, police, hardworking nurses and frontline workers deserve that pay. They had an industrial agreement to say that they were getting a pay increase, but Labor froze their pay. I am very proud that the Liberal National Party moved an amendment to freeze politicians' pay in that bill and I am also proud that we voted against the pay freeze for public servants. When public servants go to the election, they should ask the question: who is best placed to look after their interests: the Labor government that voted against their pay rise or the LNP that supported the pay rise for all of our frontline workers? I say to the Labor members that it is not too late to pass on the pay increase that hardworking public servants were due and that was negotiated.

In conclusion, I say that we are very concerned about the right-of-entry provisions. There should be a full investigation into the CFMEUQ, which is getting around federal laws. As the industrial relations minister says, they are federal laws, but that does not mean that you can break those laws. Currently there are CFMMEU officials in court because of those federal laws. At one point, 110 union officials from the CFMMEU were in federal courts because of breaches of the federal laws. Now it seems that under this Queensland industrial relations minister, because they are federal laws, you can breach them and it does not really matter.

Ms GRACE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member for Kawana, come back to the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: When dealing with the amendment circulated by the minister that talks about the right-of-entry provisions, the unions and registered organisations—including the CFMEUQ—have a right of entry. This will directly apply to the CFMEUQ in Queensland as a registered organisation under the industrial relations minister's office. They are the ones causing all the disruption, fear and intimidation on Queensland construction sites. It should stop, but it will not stop under the Labor Party. I can tell the House this: it will stop under an LNP government.

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (3.07 pm): I rise to support the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the important reforms contained in the bill. As we know, these reforms represent stage 1 of giving effect to the recommendations arising from the independent review of public sector employment laws by Peter Bridgman. The stage 1 reforms contained in the bill will be complemented by stage 2 of the public sector reforms to come, which will implement the remaining Bridgman review recommendations, including a new public service act and code of conduct.

At its core this bill is about maximising employment security and promoting permanency as the default basis of employment for the public sector. Permanency in the Public Service is a fundamental principle of Westminster government, particularly as it relates to the provision of frank and fearless advice to government. Our government values that frank and fearless advice just as we value the Public Service, from our frontline emergency service workers, police, paramedics and fireys who keep us safe at those most vulnerable times when Queenslanders need them most to our extraordinary health workers in frontline and supporting roles; our teachers and teacher aides—and I wish them a happy Teacher Aide Day for last week—and all education staff; our public transport planners, drivers and engineers; and our courts and corrective services workers who, along with the police, uphold justice in this state.

To all those public servants who work across the length and breadth of Queensland to deliver the services Queenslanders depend on, I say thank you. I acknowledge your service and contribution. Our government says thank you and acknowledges your contribution particularly during times of trial, such as the bushfires and floods that Queensland has experienced in successive years and now in 2020 in the face of a sustained global pandemic. Unlike those opposite, we know that you cannot cut and sack public servants, including from the front line, without all Queenslanders suffering. You cannot reduce the number of nurses and doctors in our hospitals, child safety workers in our community or the number of teachers in our schools without all Queenslanders suffering.

Mr Power: But they did. They sacked them.

Ms LINARD: They did indeed. Whether at a federal or state level, LNP governments do not discriminate. In fact, they are nothing if not consistent in their approach to the expendable nature of the Public Service, but that is not our approach. Where they cut, we invest; where they sack, we increase frontline workers; and where they sell, we maintain and value in public ownership great state assets and services that are so core to public service delivery in this state.

We want to ensure that Queensland has the most responsive, consistent and reliable Public Service possible. Restoring fairness in public sector employment has been a key commitment and priority of our government since we were elected in 2015. The bill before us today continues that important work and complements the recommendations of the Coaldrake review by progressing priorities in two main areas: firstly, giving full effect to the commitment to maximise employment security in public sector employment; and, secondly, providing for positive performance management of public sector employees.

The bill amends the language in the Public Service Act 2008 to state that permanent employment is the default basis for employment in the public sector and that other non-permanent forms of employment should only be used when ongoing employment is not viable or appropriate. The bill preserves the current requirement, based in directive, to review the status of employment for casual and temporary employees after two years of continuous service but, importantly, introduces a right for public servants employed on a temporary or casual basis to request a review of their employment status at 12 months. This is only fair. Employees should be provided with regular reviews and clear communication regarding the ongoing nature of their roles.


The bill will also introduce positive performance management principles to promote regular and constructive communication and to ensure that good work is recognised. As a former manager in the private sector and someone who holds a HR degree, I cannot emphasise enough how important it is that employees receive early feedback, constructive feedback and continuous feedback. It builds cohesion in the workplace, it lifts productivity and it drives development in the workplace. In this vein,

the bill also clearly delineates performance management and development from disciplinary and corrective action. They are not the same thing. While the former can very often be seen to reduce the need for the latter, they are at vastly different ends of a performance continuum.

The committee made two recommendations: that the bill be passed and that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet investigate an appropriate mechanism to provide fairness and transparency of the decision-making process to a person where the chief executive does not make a conversion decision within 28 days, pursuant to proposed new sections 149A and 149C of the Public Service Act 2008.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the deputy chair and members of my committee for their contributions during the inquiry hearings. I also thank all submitters to the inquiry and our hardworking secretariat, Erin and Annemarie.

We want the Queensland Public Service to be an employer of choice and a leader in public administration. As our Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, said when introducing this bill to the House, we want the Queensland Public Service to be empowered to be fair and responsive in order to deliver for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (3.13 pm): I stand today to offer my contribution to the debate on the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. In doing so, I would like to first offer my thanks to each and every member of the Public Service in Queensland, especially in these challenging times, for the wonderful work they do. That work often goes unnoticed and unrewarded, but our state simply would not be the same without it.

It is interesting that when we talk to members of the community there is generally a perception that 'public servant' describes a fat-cat bureaucrat sitting in their office. Of course, we know that the Public Service is also made up of many frontline workers including but not limited to police, fireys, ambos, teachers, teacher aides, nurses, truck drivers and cleaners. All of these workers keep our state functioning and do the true hard work putting the laws we pass in this House into practice. I thank them for everything they do.

This bill seeks to give effect to public sector management reforms arising from the May 2019 Bridgman review. The review, the first into public sector employment laws in Queensland since the late 1980s, found significant problems and made 99 recommendations aimed to ensure Queensland's Public Service remains fair, an employer of choice and a leader in public administration.

The bill intends to introduce recommended reforms through amendment of the Public Service Act 2008 and the Industrial Relations Act 2016. Changes made through the amendment of these acts include the establishment of a special commissioner for equity and diversity, clarification of Public Service disciplinary action procedures and other reforms across the width and breadth of public sector employment conditions.

One might question why this bill is only now fronting the House for debate nearly 18 months since the finalisation of the Bridgman report. Delays to important legislation have become commonplace under the Palaszczuk Labor government, and I question the motivation to bring forward the bill at the eleventh hour of this parliament. It is clear to many that this is an attempt to regain some support that they have lost—truly populist politics at its finest. What better way to try to win back support from unions and members who have recently abandoned the party than by hastily turning to a bill designed to butter up those whose patience has been stretched to the limit? I will say more on that shortly.

My thanks go to my fellow members of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, the committee secretariat and the submitters to the bill for their input. It is clear from their input that this bill was largely drafted for and by many of Queensland's unions, including the Together union, whose members hail primarily from within the ranks of Queensland's administrative Public Service.

As I mentioned earlier, debate on this bill has commenced nearly 18 months since the finalisation of the Bridgman report, from which its objectives stem. Given the importance of this long-awaited review into the Queensland Public Service employment laws and its scathing findings, the question has to be asked: why has it taken so long for this bill to front the House? Does the party founded by Queensland workers to represent them and fight for their rights no longer represent the modern-day equivalent of its founders? The CFMMEU seems to believe so.

Questions must also be raised over the bill's establishment of a special commissioner for equity and diversity. Diversity in the workplace is of critical importance. Studies have shown that, alongside improving the reputation of a workplace, increased diversity can also result in improved productivity and

creativity and reduced employee turnover. The research is clear, and the LNP supports diverse workplaces. Our concern is not with the proposed function of the commissioner but, instead, the need for one. The Queensland Public Service is already well diversified and resourced to ensure this trend is maintained.

The government's own Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2015-2020 contains inclusion and diversity targets which have been pursued right across Queensland's Public Service, and it is clear to me that there is no need in the Public Service for an additional high-paid administrative position designed to complete work that is already being done. This is nothing more than an exercise in self-promotion and an idiotic waste of Queensland taxpayers' money. This is simply more posturing to interest groups who must know that they are being misled. The work is already being undertaken. With our state's debt set to exceed \$100 billion, the last thing Queenslanders need is another meaningless waste of time, money and resources.

Another apparent waste of money that this bill may exaggerate is the money spent on Public Service disciplinary matters. While the LNP does not oppose clause 28 of this bill which allows a public servant subject to disciplinary action to request that the Public Service Commission review the department's handling of the matter, Queenslanders deserve assurance that these matters will not drag on at their expense. Too often we have seen high-profile disciplinary matters drag on and cost Queenslanders outrageous amounts. Take, for example, the case of former public trustee Peter Carne. Following serious allegations of misbehaviour, Mr Carne was suspended on full pay for over a year, with Queenslanders footing the cost of his six-figure salary.

There is another example. Who could forget the case of the Labor government's former chief scientist, incarcerated for fraudulently utilising public funds for personal gain—a crime committed only six months into a three-year contract? The former chief scientist was held on suspension with pay for more than two years. This is despite the government's own policy suggesting that when criminal charges are laid on a suspended public servant, the employee should be held on suspension without pay.

While few of Queensland's 232,000 public servants will ever be investigated, Queenslanders should not have to foot the cost of the drawn-out investigations of a few. We are all aware that the Palaszczuk Labor government has no qualms about using Queenslanders as cash cows for their irresponsible spending, but the LNP will not stand by and let this continue.

With union support at an all-time low, this bill is an attempt by a desperate government to consolidate support from the unions that are yet to abandon them. This bill makes sensible amendments to out-of-date employment laws and attempts to patch the wounds left by the government's recent freeze on public servants' pay—a move opposed by the LNP. Caught out ignoring basic principles of employment and contract law by freezing already signed and certified—

Ms GRACE: Madam Deputy Speaker, relevance—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Thank you, member for McConnel. I pre-empted what you were going to—

Ms GRACE: Point of order—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for McConnel. Member for Lockyer, can you come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr McDONALD: The Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is quite interesting. With Labor being abandoned by the CFMMEU and questioned by other unions over their irresponsible spending and less than transparent hiring practices, it is easy to see why this bill has been introduced. Those opposite need this bill to save face and try to mend the mistakes they have made. I am sure they hope it is not too late.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lockyer, can I ask you under standing order 118(b) to please come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr McDONALD: Fortunately, the LNP will not oppose this bill. Be assured however that we do not do this to win favour like those opposite. The LNP will not oppose this bill because it is the right thing to do. Queensland's public servants do an incredible job and it is beyond time that the laws which dictate their employment receive an update. While the Palaszczuk Labor government governs for their supporters and what is popular, a Deb Frecklington led LNP government will govern for all Queenslanders and what is right for them all.

Mr Krause interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Scenic Rim, if you are going to interject, return to your seat, please.

Mr SAUNDERS (Maryborough—ALP) (3.22 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Forgive me, but is there an election in the air? I cannot get over what I have been hearing in here for the last hour or so. Let's get in the TARDIS and go back to 2012—no public servant has anything to fear; nothing. What happened after 2012? In came the Newman government. Who sat at the table? The current leader of the LNP. By the way, there is still time to roll her before 31 October. That is what happened.

It really upsets me to sit here today and listen to the drivel—and that is all it is—coming from that side of the House about public servants. We hear them say that they respect public servants. Between 2012 and 2015, 14,000 public servants in Queensland were sacked. I will talk about a friend of mine, whom I have known for a long time, who worked in the Public Service.

Mr Powell interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member for Glass House, show some respect to the chair. You have been in this place long enough to understand that if you have a point of order on relevance you rise to your feet and do it with courtesy. You are warned under the standing orders.

Mr SAUNDERS: He was replaced during the Newman era. He went to work—

Mr WATTS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order in relation to the member's relevance to the long title of the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Toowoomba North. I am listening with intent and I will direct the member back to the long title of the bill if I see fit. Thank you for your guidance.

Mr SAUNDERS: I am talking about job security because the member for Lockyer opened this door. He spoke about how well they treated public servants, how they looked after public servants and how they valued public servants.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: That is what he said. He said he valued public servants. I am saying that they do not value them. This legislation values public servants. My friend was met at the front counter with his gear in a shoebox and told to go. I do not know whether anyone can remember—

Mr POWELL: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Lockyer was pulled up for relevance when talking about Public Service wages. Surely what the member for Maryborough is about to embark on yet again strays from the long title of the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Glass House, there is no need to include 'surely'. I am able to do my job, thank you. Member for Maryborough, be reminded of the long title of the bill.

Mr SAUNDERS: I take your guidance.

Ms Grace interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for McConnel, you have had your turn.

Mr SAUNDERS: Public servants are valued. I did not know that the CFMMEU looked after public servants. I have been around the union movement and the labour movement all my life and I have learnt something new today. I have learnt that the CFMMEU looks after public servants. There we are. I have learnt something from the member for Lockyer. I will take that away. You can always teach an old dog new tricks.

This bill looks after public servants. I agree with the member for Lockyer when he spoke about—and I hope he reminds his colleagues of this—the great work that public servants do in our community. Every time we hear those opposite talk about public servants to their media friends, they say that public servants are fat cats that sit in offices, get driven to work in limousines and have their coffee machines. That is their interpretation when they talk to their friends about public servants.

In fact, public servants are people like corrections officers. Public servants are keeping our community safe. They are the people who take blood in our hospitals. They are the school cleaners. They are the people who work in our hospitals and assist with the PTSS so people can travel to get medical help. They are the frontline public servants that those opposite cut and that they are saying we are now crawling up to. No, we are not.

What this traditional Labor government has always done since 2015 is respect public servants. It values the work that public servants do in our community. We look after public servants. They showed how well they looked after public servants. Before they interject, I will ask whether they remember the pooper scooper. Who remembers the former premier and the opposition leader talking about getting the pooper scooper out to get rid of public servants? We remember it and public servants remember it.

I was on the street in Maryborough last week when a senior public servant came to me and said that people are fearful of the election because if those opposite get in again their jobs could go. It is all about getting rid of public servants. We look after public servants and they come out and bash them. They go back to the community and say, 'Public servants are lazy and do not do anything. There are too many public servants. The Public Service bill has blown out.' That is what they are implying every time. This legislation values public servants. That is what we on this side of the House do. We value public servants. We love public servants.

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: I hear the carping from the other side. They are talking about the pay freeze. They only did what they did because they want to be popular. They want everyone to forget about 2012 to 2015. They want everyone to forget 2012 to 2015: 'Let's blank it out. Let's use white-out on it and forget that it ever happened. It never happened in Queensland.' Well, it did.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: I hear the member for Glass House.

Mr Power: He wanted to sell assets.

Mr SAUNDERS: He wanted to sell assets. We go back to this again.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Order! Members to my left and member for Logan, we shall start again. I call the member for Maryborough.

Mr SAUNDERS: We talk about what happened to public servants between 2012 and 2015. I have been brought up to understand that the Public Service should be able to give fear and frank advice to the government. We hear them talking about what is going on but we do not hear them talk about Michael Caltabiano. We do not hear about the former director-general of Transport. We do not hear them talk about him because he is on the backburner now. We do not know whether he is a member of their party anymore. He is gone.


When I talk to the public servants in my electorate, they are very happy with a Labor government. They are very happy that the respect for public servants has come back. They are more than happy that a Labor government has returned integrity to the Public Service.

One thing that we always notice with the LNP is that they talk tough—'We're going to do this and we're going to do that'—but leopards do not change their spots. If they get a chance to get on the treasury bench after 31 October, all I will say is: public servants beware, because they will cut, sack and sell. They will also try to privatise as much of the Public Service as they can. One thing they are good at—

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Maryborough, come back to the bill.

Mr SAUNDERS: I will, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will come back to the long title of the bill. Thank you for your guidance, once again. They are good at one thing: they are good at putting public money into private pockets. I commend the bill to the House. I thank the minister for looking after our public servants in Queensland.

 **Mrs WILSON** (Pumicestone—LNP) (3.31 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. Firstly, I acknowledge all of our hardworking public servants who many of us have—

Mr Power interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member—

Mrs WILSON: I was actually a public servant myself, so thank you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan—

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me. Member for Logan, you are warned under the standing orders. Member for Buderim, you are also warned under the standing orders. I had called for order twice.

Mrs WILSON: I would also like to acknowledge the work of our Hansard reporters, the committee secretariat who produced this report and my fellow committee members. I would also like to thank those who provided submissions and attended our public hearings for this bill.

This bill will implement recommendations from the Bridgman review, which was commissioned 'to ensure Queenslanders have the most responsive, consistent and reliable public service possible'. The review was finalised in May 2019 and concluded that there were significant problems in the Queensland public sector employment laws which led Mr Bridgman to make 99 recommendations.

This bill amends the Public Service Act 2008, the Industrial Relations Act 2016 and the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010 to drive more effective and consistent application of the existing commitment to maximise employment security by providing clear language that states that permanent employment is the default basis for public sector employment and that other non-permanent forms of employment should only be used when ongoing employment is not viable or appropriate; to provide for Public Service appeals which are currently heard under the PS Act by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to instead be heard under the IR Act to ensure transparency and increase consistency in appeal decisions; to establish positive performance management principles in the PS Act that will support managers and employees to work together to support optimal performance; clarify the threshold for taking disciplinary action; and to provide for new directives to guide disciplinary action and procedures, investigations and positive performance management.

For the party that is meant to be about workers, the only thing here on display is the Labor government putting workers and their rights in the low-priority pile. If the Palaszczuk Labor government truly cared to carry the Labor mantle then this bill would have been made a priority last year after the Bridgman report was handed down. All that is happening here is a clear election vote grab because Labor are running scared. They see the writing on the wall that Queenslanders no longer trust them. They know that Queenslanders are raising their sights high because they know the difference between genuine motive and deceptive political spin.

Even the CFMMEU has parted ways with Labor. As Mr Ravbar put it, the 'so-called' Left faction's leadership had devoted more time to internal matters than driving a policy platform for 'both socially and economically progressive values'. It must hurt those opposite as they feel the pain of the disgruntled Queensland voter population. The lag in getting this bill through the parliament is yet another example of putting Queensland workers on the low-priority list.

Whilst we will not be opposing this bill, there are a few issues that I will briefly highlight. The bill establishes a special commissioner to provide advice to the minister relating to areas of the Public Service Act including 'gender pay equity and promoting a diverse workforce'. To yet again add another layer of bureaucracy and another high-paying position does not make financial sense in the current economic climate. This is another example of how this Labor government wastes taxpayers' funds in Queensland, as if topping Queensland debt at a whopping \$102 billion was not enough.

Public Service workers employed on casual and fixed-term appointments have to wait a two-year period before they can request a conversion to permanent employment. This bill amends this and provides employees an opportunity after 12 months of continuous service to request the right to be converted, notwithstanding the fact that the chief executive has 28 days to decide on the conversion and, if the request is refused, provide a notice to the employee outlining the reasons for the decision.

If the chief executive does not make the decision within the 28 days, the chief executive is taken to have decided not to offer to convert the person's employment. For this reason our committee recommended that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet investigate an appropriate mechanism to provide fairness and transparency of the decision-making process to a person where the chief executive does not make a conversion decision within 28 days. I look forward to the minister moving these additional amendments which support the committee's recommendation during consideration in detail.

I would like to correct the record. The member for Nudgee said that we sacked frontline workers within Child Safety. You cannot say that. I want to ensure that—

Ms Linard: Do you want a copy of my speech?

Mrs WILSON: I am more than happy. The fact of the matter is that the LNP increased frontline child safety workers. Anything else that you say other than that is an outright lie.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Pumicestone, you have used unparliamentary language and I ask that you withdraw.

Mrs WILSON: I withdraw and I will use the word 'untruth'. In conclusion, our Public Service workers deserve better from their employer. Whilst for them this bill will go some way to ensuring that they have better job security in this ever-changing economy, it is also a slap in the face because it has taken until the eleventh hour for this government to finally make them a priority.

Mr PEGG (Stretton—ALP) (3.38 pm): I rise briefly to support this bill, which at its heart is about security of employment for our frontline public sector workers. They have done a fantastic job in challenging times. Like so many members, I have a lot of public servants in my electorate. Whether it is in our hospital system, whether it is protecting our border, whether it is all of the frontline public servants—indeed, all public servants have had a really challenging time and they have done a fantastic job in unprecedented circumstances.

We just heard from the member for Pumicestone. As I said, this bill is all about employment security of our public sector workers. The member for Pumicestone may want to deny reality, but those opposite sacked 14,000 public servants, including many frontline workers across many departments. She may want to deny reality, but the truth is the LNP did sack 14,000 public sector workers. That may make those opposite feel uncomfortable, but you just cannot deny the reality.

Mr Power: That's what they're going to do next time.

Mr PEGG: That is right. I take that interjection from the member for Logan. Of course, if we had an LNP government we would never see a bill like this being introduced, let alone passed. That is the reality. This bill needs to be seen in the context of what the Palaszczuk government has done to protect working Queenslanders—people who are hard at work in the hospital system, in education, protecting our borders and making sure that Queenslanders stay safe. We know what those opposite think about the borders. The member for Nanango adopted a 'me too' approach to the border after asking for it to be opened 64 times but—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member for Stretton, can we come back to the long title of the bill, please.

Mr PEGG: There are so many frontline public sector workers protecting our borders and doing a great job—

Mr Krause: Including the Rural Fire Service.

Mr PEGG: If the member for Scenic Rim and his friends had their way, those hardworking public servants who will be protected by this bill would not be there keeping Queenslanders safe. That is the reality. We have those hard working public sector workers on our border who will be—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba North, member for Scenic Rim and member for Sandgate, let's give the member on his feet a chance, please.

Mr PEGG: This is one of my last chances to make a contribution in this parliament, so I cannot blame those opposite for getting a bit excited. I was talking about our hardworking public sector workers on the border keeping us safe. I would say to those opposite that they should stick to the script from the member for Nanango. All of the Gold Coast MPs go off script, let alone all of the federal MPs are going off script. Stand with our hardworking public sector workers who are protecting our borders, keeping Queenslanders safe and making sure we do not have the kinds of outbreaks that have unfortunately been seen in Victoria and other places around the world. I pay tribute to our hardworking public sector workers, particularly those on the front line, in these unprecedented times. I think this is a really important bill for job security for public sector workers. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KNUTH (Hill—KAP) (3.42 pm): I rise to speak to the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill seeks to give full effect to the government's commitment to maximise employment security in public sector employment and provide positive performance management of public sector employees. I note there were nine submissions to the bill—four from unions that represent 200,000 members and workers in Queensland. This legislation arises as a result of the Bridgman review, which found there were significant problems with Queensland's public sector laws and practices that required resolution to ensure a fair, responsive and exclusive public sector. This bill helps address these concerns.

Public Service employees are often used as a political football by both major parties and their true meaning is often lost in the political bickering. The definition of public servant is 'an individual who works for the state and whose main duty is associated with the welfare of the public and society'. Their

duties include providing service to the public in the form of protection, administration or maintenance. The Public Service is one of the largest groups of employees in Queensland. Public servants are schoolteachers, bus drivers, ambulance officers, nurses and public officers. The list goes on and on.

I was employed by Queensland Rail as a public servant from 1983 to 2004, and I had the privilege of working on the Greenvale line—the Townsville to Mount Isa line—for 10 years. I worked on the Beenleigh to Ipswich line and the Ferny Grove, Pinkenba and Cleveland lines putting in new track, new sleepers and new rail—you name it. They were the best days of my life working with a workforce that included Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

I would like to bring to the attention of the House how important the Public Service is because I saw this firsthand when I worked out west. When a decision is made to close down a railway station, all of a sudden you do not have a stationmaster, you do not have an assistant and you do not have a porter. When you remove those jobs, all of a sudden the truck driver who used to pick up the goods at that railway station is gone too, but their children do not go to that school anymore either. The stationmaster's children do not go to that school anymore and the porter's children do not go to that school anymore. The next minute they close down the school, the next minute the corner store is closed, the next minute the pub is closed. The flow-on effects of the decision to get rid of three or four public servants has a massive impact on those communities.

The Public Service fulfils an unbelievable role. It provides jobs to those communities and it provides a public service. People in that category include doctors, nurses and ambulance officers. I want to honour our Public Service and the support they give to rural and regional Queensland, and I want to bring that to the attention of the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): I call the member for Logan. It is now your turn.



Mr POWER (Logan—ALP) (3.46 pm): Thank you for your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Turn on your microphone.

Mr POWER: Sorry, I thought I had. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr Watts: It was better before.

Mr POWER: Many have said that. We have listened to a number of speeches, and the Minister for Industrial Relations noticed there was a good deal of repetition from those on the other side. When I worked at universities tutoring and marking essays we were often encouraged to use CheatCheck software. You would feed essays through and see how much repetition there was with phrases and key words.

A government member: Phrases and key words, you say?

Mr POWER: Phrases and key words. If we were to use that software on the speeches of those opposite there would be a 'bing' sound. Bing! At that point I would have to—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, thank you for the entertainment. I am not sure it is called CheatCheck any longer. Can we come back to the bill, please.

Mr POWER: I may have used a euphemistic name for it. I am speaking directly to the bill because I am speaking about the contribution they made to the bill and reflecting to this House what they said—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, I have made the call. Can you come back to the long title of the bill, please.

Mr POWER: Indeed, I did. During their contributions they spoke directly and repetitiously about public servants. In his speech the member for Lockyer said—and this was almost exactly repeated by others verbatim—that some members of the public call public servants 'fat cat bureaucrats'. I wish to endorse the member for Lockyer when he spoke in support of our hardworking public servants, including nurses, teachers and others; however, I have never heard anyone in the Public Service call them 'fat cat bureaucrats'. Usually, as I said in relation to their repetitive speeches, that is a phrase used in the speeches of those opposite who attack the public servants who implement our laws.

The speeches of those opposite were incredibly repetitive but they had a few of the same talking points. I want to highlight the fact that in an earlier draft which was given to me in secret they were all to repeat a different phrase. They were to say, 'The Public Service has nothing to fear from the incoming LNP government.' Luckily, one of those eagle-eyed backbenchers spotted that draft and said, 'No, we can't say that again!' We know they said that last time. They went on to sack 14,000 workers after telling the Public Service they had nothing to fear.

We need to know that what they say here when they pretend to support public servants means they will actually go on to undermine the working conditions of public servants when they get into government. Public servants understand that because they know they were told they had nothing to fear, but under an LNP government they would have everything to fear. I have heard so often from those opposite how we have to reduce public servant numbers. They have no economic plan to actually pay for the promises they have made. We know they will go on to sack public servants.

I wish to stand up in support of this bill because it further strengthens our Public Service. This bill was to be referred to the Economics and Governance Committee but it was even more ably served by the education committee and the member for Nudgee who chairs it. This bill is all about creating quality jobs within the Public Service. We recognise the thousands of hard workers who help out Queenslanders every day. I want to recognise our nurses who are so central to the fight against COVID-19. They are public servants who wish to see permanency in their conditions and know that they have a safe and secure job. We have testing centres in the Logan Hospital and the Logan West Community Centre. Both of those institutions saw cuts from the LNP in the previous government. There was no job security given to those public servants—the very public servants who are keeping us safe during this pandemic.

The minister and I recently visited Logan Hospital and met with the cleaners, nurses and doctors. They all value what is in this bill in terms of the conditions, the way in which disputes are managed and improvements in their performance. Those workers were all cut under the LNP, as were the schoolteachers, teacher aides and cleaners. At the Yarrabilba State Secondary College, where we are building a new performing arts space, and the new school we are building in the Greenbank community, teacher numbers were cut to the point where classroom numbers began to increase because there was not that security and backing of the public servants.

We also know about the police. They deserve to have decent working conditions when they are out there on the front line dealing with Queenslanders who are at their absolute worst. We also know that they are out there keeping us safe. They deserve respect as public servants because they are on our borders keeping us safe. That is one thing they would not have to do under the LNP because we know that on 64 occasions they called for our borders to be free and open and for no-one to be there—

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


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member for Buderim, I think I can pre-empt your point of order. Member for Logan, I had asked other speakers to come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr POWER: When they attacked fat cat bureaucrats, they were often speaking about some of those people who did not necessarily deal with the public—such as the people in the TMR south coast region who design the very roads we travel on. Those engineers and designers working in those jobs deserve to be treated with decency and respect, and this is what this bill is about. I know that because they are working hard on the section from Rosia Road to Stoney Camp Road and the new Jimboomba bridge, which is fantastic.

Mr MICKELBERG: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order under relevance. I am not sure how local roads are of relevance to the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think that issue is a little more relevant than the border issue, but I thank the member for Buderim for his guidance. Member for Logan, I can see the relevance of that last point but I do remind you to come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr POWER: Thank you for your guidance. It is the real diversity of work that public servants are doing for us in all sorts of scales—whether they are workers in hospitals, teachers, police and even those road designers I spoke about. They all deserve respect. They do not need to be interrupted by those opposite as we are giving them compliments. Those opposite have no respect for them and do not support bills like this that give our hardworking public servants fairer working conditions.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (3.53 pm): I want to make a few comments in relation to the bill. In particular, I want to focus on the establishment of another commissioner by this government—the Special Commissioner for Equity and Diversity. I ask the minister to outline the cost of this appointment and the office that may be established along with it. A lot of public servants living in my electorate are concerned that this government is not supporting them sufficiently when it comes to providing them with the financial resources to allow them to do their job.

Ms Grace: Give me one example.

Mr KRAUSE: I will give you plenty of examples and I will get to that. This bill calls for the appointment of yet another commissioner to deal with the issues that are outlined in the bill, when so many thousand extra public servants have been appointed during this government's term in office to deal with those very matters. It is definitely of concern to people in my electorate that more money is being spent on that issue. In relation to police resources—and they are public servants—I have been told that shifts for Sunday operations at the Boonah Police Station have been cut from 112 per year to 37. That means there will be less than one shift per weekend—

Ms GRACE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I point to relevance to the bill.

Mr KRAUSE: You asked for an example, Minister, and that is an example.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member for McConnell, thank you for the point of order on relevance. I ask the member for Scenic Rim to resume.


Mr KRAUSE: When we talk about public servants who work in our hospitals, I can say that I have been approached by nurses and doctors at our local Beaudesert Hospital who say they do not have enough resources and are not supported by the government and the Public Service in doing their job. They are burning out and there is not enough coverage overnight for our doctors at Beaudesert Hospital.

I can talk about other public servants who are bus drivers who drive our children to school. We are seeing the squeeze on bus routes in the Scenic Rim, where routes are consolidated and made longer so kids spend more time on the bus and where bus operators are being told to do more with less funding. The money that they need in those services will be consumed by the appointment of another commissioner in addition to the thousands of public servants who have been added to the payroll by this government.

I have had DAF employees approach me. Members will recall that it emerged in recent weeks that DAF officers were told in an email to close the door so they did not have to serve members of the public at their DAF offices across the state. Boonah was one of the offices that was affected by that. I will give the minister plenty more examples of where her government is failing Queensland public servants and the people of Queensland because the minister does not allow public servants to do their job and actually serve the people of Queensland properly. This bill will achieve very little in actually increasing the quality of the Public Service when it comes to Queenslanders and their experience with the Queensland government.

There are also measures in the bill about disciplinary action and there is clarification about the threshold for taking disciplinary action. This is another issue that has been raised with me over the years by both people in the Public Service and people who have had to deal with the Public Service. I mention in particular the fisheries section within the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

There is an old saying that the fish rots from the head. When it comes to this government, the Premier never holds ministers accountable for their stuff-ups, mishaps and maladministration of government. They are never held accountable by the Premier. How can public servants be held accountable in a proper and efficient manner when things go wrong if ministers are not held accountable and actually lead by example in that respect? That is where it needs to start. There needs to be a culture change. The only way that change is going to occur here in Queensland is for the people of Queensland to get rid of this government and elect a new government at the upcoming election. We will get on with improving the Public Service through changing the culture and having more accountability and transparency in government.

 **Ms LEAHY (Warrego—LNP) (3.58 pm):** I rise to make a contribution on the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I note the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee examined the bill and I thank them for their efforts in doing so. I too wish to thank the public servants across Queensland, particularly those in my electorate, especially the teachers who have had a very disrupted year and the nurses who are at the front line doing a lot of the COVID testing. Even though there are no cases in my particular region, they are certainly conducting those tests. There is also a lot of activity going on with the department of agriculture staff at the front line because they are working very hard to make sure our seasonal workers can get through so that people can buy grapes, food and garlic in Woolworths and Coles across Queensland.

We heard earlier from members opposite about how they have looked after public servants. However, I want to specifically mention a public servant who is not being looked after by this Labor government. I received an email from a very caring member of the public about a police officer who has to man the border between South Australia and Queensland. It is a very remote area and that border

is manned between 8 am and 4 pm by the police officer from Thargomindah. His overnight accommodation is at the Ballera gas field. I am advised that the police have been absolutely fantastic on the border.

However, this caring member of the public was very concerned that they had not been given adequate resources by the Queensland state government. It is an hour drive each way from where they are accommodated at Ballera to the border checkpoint. They work an eight-hour shift on the border crossing checking the passes of people travelling from South Australia into Queensland and vice versa. Disappointingly, they are not even provided with a portaloos. All employees are supplied with toilets at their workplace, but this Queensland Labor government cannot give this officer a portaloos. There are not too many options out there; there are not a lot of trees on that border crossing. Unfortunately, the only option is a shovel. I would appeal to the government to see if something could be done to give these wonderful public servants, who are doing a very tough job out there on the border crossing between South Australia and Queensland, a portaloos. It would be very, very helpful to them. They deserve to have some decency in relation to the job they are doing in ensuring the checks and balances are done on the border.

I now move to the objectives. The policy objective of the bill is to give effect to the stage 1 public sector management reforms which arise from the recommendations of the review of the public sector employment laws done by Peter Bridgman, otherwise known as the Bridgman review, which was finalised in May 2019. The Bridgman review concluded that there are significant problems in the Queensland Public Service employment laws, which led to some 99 recommendations being made. The LNP does not oppose the bill. However, we do have some concerns, firstly, the time that it has taken for the bill to come before the House. It has been almost 1½ years since the Bridgman review was completed.

A second concern is in relation to the special commissioner for equity and diversity. The LNP favours diversity in the workplace and notes that the Public Service is already very diverse. The proposal to employ a special commissioner comes with concerns not because of the functions of the special commissioner but because this will add another layer to something that is already well resourced. The Public Service already comprises hundreds of positions which focus on promoting a diverse workforce. It, therefore, raises the question why a high-paying position needs to be created to add another layer of bureaucracy. A lot of these things are already happening. I am not sure why we need that additional duplication.

In addition, the government has also launched the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2015-2020, which includes inclusion and diversity targets. The strategy boasts about the current government's framework that drives inclusion and diversity, including the Public Service Commission, the QPS Inclusion Champions of Change and all agencies that are actively involved in championing inclusion and diversity.

While it is clear the Palaszczuk Labor government have a plan to promote an already diversified workplace, the same cannot be said about Labor's plan to stimulate Queensland's economy, which is expected to boil over into almost \$100 billion of debt, a debt level that we have not seen before in Queensland. It is not the cost of the commissioner alone that will cost taxpayers; it is the time and resources which will flow from any of the administrative inquiries. This is another example of where the Labor government's priorities are all wrong when it comes to the use of taxpayers' funds. A time when we actually have a recession in Queensland is a time when the government should be focusing on stimulating the economy and making sure jobs are there for people who are now unemployed.


In relation to disciplinary action, the LNP does not oppose clause 28, which allows a public servant who is being disciplined to first ask the Public Service Commission to review a procedural aspect of the department's handling of a matter before the discipline matter is finalised. However, the LNP does have concerns with the slow nature of disciplinary matters which ultimately comes at a cost to taxpayers. It is clear that the final decisions and outcomes arising from disciplinary matters within the Public Service take far too long.

For instance, last year former public trustee Peter Carne was suspended on full pay for one year—he was earning \$300,000 a year—after serious allegations were made relating to misbehaviour. Prior to that, the Labor government's former chief scientist, who misused \$75,000 of public funds for personal gain, was suspended from duty after working only six months of her three-year contract. Eventually, after stalling the proceedings 19 times, she was convicted of fraud and sent to prison. However, that suspension lasted for 2.5 years. I am aware of other public servants who have been suspended for longer than 2.5 years. In one case that I am aware of it actually persisted across two

governments, and this was despite the government's own policy which suggests suspensions without pay should occur when criminal charges have been laid and the matter is prevented from being finalised due to an external factor outside the agency's control.

These are just two high-profile examples of how disciplinary matters take too long to finalise. That costs Queensland taxpayers money. There needs to be a way in which these matters can be dealt with quickly. It is also better for the mental health of the individual facing the disciplinary matter if it is dealt with quickly because it enables them to get on with their life and make their decisions. With the Public Service consisting of over 223,000 employees it begs the question how many employees are now on full pay while their drawn-out investigations are taking place? I suggest to the government that there is probably quite a number of public servants who are actually in that position. I feel for them because they want to see some light at the end of the tunnel, not just a suspension, or 'gardening leave'.

What is worse is that the disciplinary matters are also set to take even longer since Labor has announced that disciplinary matters can now be put on hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, this means more money is wasted while employees who are being investigated for corruption or serious allegations are awaiting a decision to be made by the HR department. I can say that in the case of the public servants I know who have been suspended for two to three years, it does not do their mental health any good whatsoever to be in that situation. The sooner these things are resolved, the better it is for both sides.

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (4.06 pm): I rise to give my contribution on the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. Those of us on the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee went through the process of assessing this bill. During the public hearings we had the opportunity to speak to people like the Together union, the Queensland Council of Unions and the Queensland Teachers' Union. We also received submissions from the United Firefighters Union in Queensland, Queensland Nurses & Midwives' Union, United Workers Union and Australian Workers' Union.


The common denominator through all the submissions we saw throughout the committee process was that public servants are looking for some job security in their roles, and this helps the economy. People who have jobs and job security mean they buy houses and they settle down. This is especially important in the rural and regional areas of Queensland when public servants move into an area. Whether they are a teacher, a nurse or someone who works within the QPS, if they have a full-time job in an area or a region they might decide to put down roots there, which helps combat one of the biggest problems in regional Queensland of attracting people long term. We welcome these legislative changes. The KAP will support the bill as it makes passage through the parliament today because we want to make sure that Queenslanders have that job security.

I have brought up before that other industries in Queensland would like the same helping hand when it comes to making sure full-time employment is accessible, such as the mining industry, for example, with fly-in fly-out workers who are stuck in this continual merry-go-round of contract work. They would love a full-time job, just like the security provided in the Public Service that is being made possible through this legislation. We need to be doing more around that to not only ensure that Queenslanders employed by the state government are being looked after but also people throughout all of Queensland have the opportunity of gainful employment that enables them to purchase a house, buy a car or get a loan. It also gives them the security to decide to move to regional and rural Queensland and put down roots.

The policy objective of the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is to give effect to stage 1 of the public sector management reforms. The reforms arise from the recommendations from the independent review of public sector employment.

I hope that this legislation gives some hope to nurses, police officers and other frontline workers who have been working through this COVID pandemic in terms of security and knowing exactly where they stand so they can make life choices for the future. Having job security also means that, hopefully, we will not see a slashing of public servant roles if there is a change of state government and a change of policy. Making some of these jobs full-time will ensure that, if people are put off, they have support through redundancy packages and so on. Also, people currently employed as casuals will not be biting their nails in the lead-up to the 31 October election, wondering whether they will have a job afterwards.

The KAP will support this bill through the parliament. We are a party that works to protect IR rights within Queensland, not only public sector workers but also workers across Queensland.

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (4.11 pm), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions, regardless of how repetitive the contributions of members opposite were. I think a script made the rounds and the same points were made again and again. I thank them for their contributions to the debate. It is interesting that free thinking is certainly not important to those opposite.

I reinforce that the Palaszczuk government is committed to maximising job security for our public servants. I thank Peter Bridgman for his report. Those opposite referred to the delay in bringing this bill to the House. We brought this bill to the House in July. Since early this year we have been dealing with this little thing called a world health pandemic. Often I wonder what rock those opposite have been under. They talk about various things as if the pandemic is not happening here in Queensland. What about the remarkable way our Premier has handled it? In spite of all that, in July the Premier was able to introduce a bill regarding public servant job security—an absolutely unbelievable effort. Those opposite still complain about the time line of this bill. It is absolutely unbelievable that members opposite get up time and time again and repeat the same rubbish.

Unlike those opposite, we very much value our public servants in this state. We do not cut, sack and sell. This bill is about ensuring that does not happen again. This bill is about making sure that our public servants do not again hear guarantees that they have nothing to fear only to find, with a different incoming government, that 14,000 of them have lost their jobs. Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves for that disgusting history in Queensland.

This all started with the sacking of nurses in Townsville. Members opposite come in here crying crocodile tears about how much they care about public servants. The Premier has said it before: actions speak louder than words. Those crocodile tears and those words about how much they care for our hardworking public servants are not fooling anybody. They know exactly what they did. They will never forget. We will continue to remind them about their policies. They said that public servants had nothing to fear—starting with nurses in Townsville—and they sacked 14,000 of them.

Members opposite come in here with stories about public servants. I do not even know if half of the stories are true. I am sure they are made up. Every time we investigate something that is raised by those opposite, we find that it is exaggerated or incorrect. I have no doubt that what they raise here today is exactly the same.

Mr WATTS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I do not see this in the long title of the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Thank you for your guidance, member for Toowoomba North. I ask the member for McConnel to resume her speech.

Ms GRACE: I am actually responding to the issues raised by those opposite on which they asked me to comment. When it comes to the protection of the Public Service, we know that there is only one side of politics that those public servants can rely on—that is, a Palaszczuk Labor government.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms GRACE: I take the interjection of the member for Kawana. That is the wrong answer. That is not the answer that we get when we are out there in the real world.

The issues of accountability, decisions, appeals and disciplinary matters were raised time and time again in repeated speeches. This bill aims to address those issues. We want to put these measures in a professional jurisdiction under the Queensland Industrial Relations Act—I think that will be a big step forward—rather than in the Public Service Act. I know that we have the support of all stakeholders on that. It might seem like a very small thing, but it is a big step towards ensuring though those decisions are published. We will get decisions on appeals and can read them. Then they can be applied and, hopefully, we will get transparency, consistency and an ability to look at these things a lot sooner. We think this object of the bill will make a big difference.

A lot of questions were asked in relation to the special commissioner—what it will cost, what it will do and why we will have another bureaucrat. Once again, their words reveal their intention. There is not one public servant those opposite do not want to sack. This person is not even employed and already they want to sack them! The only people those opposite do not want to sack are themselves and those working for Clive Palmer. They would like to see a Palmer-Frecklington government in place, as many of them said. This is what we will get if the LNP is elected. Lord help us if it is.

The legislation is clear about the special commissioner's role. It is about gender equity. It is about a number of issues to do with promoting a diverse workforce. That is very important in the public sector. It is about promoting effective and efficient government. There is someone who will be responsible for

doing this. It is a recommendation of the Bridgman report that we certainly support. All members opposite can ask is, 'How much can we save when we come in and sack that person?' They are already doing it.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms GRACE: I take the interjection of the member for Kawana. The special commissioner will give special advice to drive improvements. We support that recommendation. We believe that, when it comes to gender equity, workforce diversity, efficiency and promoting an effective and efficient government services, it is an important role.

We have a Public Service that has been required to step up during COVID-19 in a number of ways, and it has stepped up. We have a gold star when it comes to contact tracing, when it comes to what we have done in health, when it comes to how we have managed our borders and when it comes to how we have managed education in this state. It was absolutely wonderful to see an effective and efficient Public Service, but we want to continue that progress. We think that a special commissioner who can provide that advice and generate gender equity is definitely a step in the right direction.

When it comes to health and safety entry permits, this is hilarious. We have a government that cannot control the CFMMEU federally under federal law and the member for Kawana wants me as a state industrial relations minister—who has no jurisdiction, I might add—to somehow control a union that is operating under federal laws. Thank goodness he is no longer the industrial relations minister! Time and time again in my speech I said that the changes to the health and safety right of entry have to be permit holders. Permit holders come under the federal jurisdiction. It is recognised under the state jurisdiction, and that is what the amendment clearly says.

If something is happening under federal law I have no jurisdiction, yet somehow the state industrial relations minister needs to correct what the Liberal Scott Morrison government is doing nothing about federally. If it were not so serious, it would be laughable! It is laughable because earlier today the member for Kawana was wrong about the transfer of the IR powers. He keeps harping on about it, but he does not understand the use of the corporations power and what happened then.

Let me get back to the bill before the House because if I continue to correct the errors of the member for Kawana I will be here all night and we will never finish because those errors are laughable and show an absolute appalling understanding of a portfolio that he once held—an absolutely appalling understanding—and he should be ashamed. He should hang his head in shame given some of the things that are said by those opposite and then repeated time and time again when the sheet goes around to everyone to deliver their speeches. It is absolutely unbelievable.

As I noted earlier today, the Palaszczuk government is committed to continuously improving the Queensland public sector—committed—and the way it delivers services to meet the needs of Queenslanders, and it has done an outstanding job particularly during COVID-19. That is why the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill seeks to progress the priority stage 1 public sector management reforms arising from recommendations of the Bridgman review, and the Premier has them ready in this House to be debated despite the unbelievable world health pandemic that we are facing. That is absolutely commendable on the part of our Premier—amazing! It will also ensure the Queensland Public Service is a fair employer that is best positioned to be responsive to the community and meet the needs of the government.

The recommendations of the Bridgman review and the contents of this bill will be subject to extensive consultation with Queensland government agencies and public sector unions through meetings and joint advisory committees. The amendments to be moved will make it fairer and correct a couple of anomalies. We look forward to supporting stage 2. Even though the Premier is heavy with thought with regard to COVID-19 and the world health pandemic, I know that she will give public servants the due consideration that they deserve despite the workload in relation to the pandemic. I commend the bill to the House.

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

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

Ms GRACE: I table the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, explanatory notes to Hon. Grace Grace's amendments [1588].

Tabled paper: Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Grace Grace's amendments [1589].

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): In accordance with sessional order 2B, the House must now consider clauses or all remaining clauses, schedules and any amendments circulated by the minister in charge of the bill. I note that the minister's amendments Nos 1, 28, 29 and 31 are outside the long title of the bill and therefore require leave of this House. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Question put—That the minister's amendments Nos 1 to 31, as circulated, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

Amendments as circulated—

1 After clause 1

Page 6, after line 5—

insert—

Part 1A Amendment of Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020

1A Act amended

This part amends the *Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020*.

Editor's note—

Legislation ultimately amended—

- *Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991*

1B Amendment of s 110A (Insertion of new s 30CA)

Section 110A, inserted section 30CA(3), from 'or maintenance' to 'mentioned in'—

omit, insert—

, maintenance, certification or inspection, including testing, of fire protection equipment mentioned in schedule 2,

2 Clause 29 (Insertion of new ch 3, pt 7)

Page 21, after line 21—

insert—

(5) In this section—

public service office see section 35.

3 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))

Page 31, line 12, 'uncertain'—

omit, insert—

unlikely

4 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))

Page 31, lines 14 to 16—

omit, insert—

employment relating to performing work for which funding is subject to change or is not expected to be renewed

5 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))

Page 33, after line 8—

insert—

(4A) For working out how long the person has been continuously employed in the department—

(a) all periods of authorised leave are to be included; and

- (b) the person is to be regarded as continuously employed even if there are periods during which the person is not employed in the department, if the periods of non-employment in the department total 6 weeks or less in the year occurring immediately before the time when the duration of the person's continuous employment is being worked out.
- 6 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 34, lines 3 to 10, from 'regard to'—
omit, insert—
regard to the genuine operational requirements of the department.
- 7 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 34, line 13, '(3)(b)'—
omit, insert—
(3)
- 8 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 34, line 18, after 'department'—
insert—
under section 149
- 9 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 35, lines 30 to 32—
omit, insert—
(5) In making the decision—
(a) section 149A(2) and (3) applies to the department's chief executive; and
(b) the department's chief executive must have regard to the reasons for each decision previously made, or taken to have been made, under this section or section 149A in relation to the person during the person's period of continuous employment.
- 10 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 36, line 9, 'extended.'—
omit, insert—
extended; and
- 11 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 36, after line 9—
insert—
(d) each decision previously made, or taken to have been made, under this section or section 149A in relation to the person during the person's period of continuous employment.
- 12 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 36, after line 17—
insert—
(7A) For working out how long the person has been continuously employed in the department—
(a) all periods of authorised leave are to be included; and
(b) the person is to be regarded as continuously employed even if there are periods during which the person is not employed in the department, if the periods of non-employment in the department total 12 weeks or less in the 2 years occurring immediately before the time when the duration of the person's continuous employment is being worked out.
- 13 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 36, after line 20—
insert—
(8A) The directive must provide for—
(a) the matters a department's chief executive must consider in deciding the hours of work to be offered in converting a person's employment under subsection (3)(b); and
(b) the circumstances in which a person may appeal against the decision about the hours of work offered in converting the person's employment.
- 14 Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 37, lines 12 to 16—
omit, insert—
(c) is eligible for appointment to the position at the higher classification level having regard to the merit principle.

- 15 **Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 37, after line 34—
insert—
(4A) In making the decision, the department's chief executive must have regard to—
(a) the genuine operational requirements of the department; and
(b) the reasons for each decision previously made, or taken to have been made, under this section in relation to the person during the person's continuous period of employment at the higher classification level.
- 16 **Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 38, line 10, 'extended.'—
omit, insert—
extended; and
- 17 **Clause 37 (Replacement of ch 5, pt 5 (General and temporary employees))**
Page 38, after line 10—
insert—
(d) each decision previously made, or taken to have been made, under this section in relation to the person during the person's continuous period of employment at the higher classification level.
- 18 **Clause 46 (Amendment of s 194 (Decisions against which appeals may be made))**
Page 42, lines 24 to 27—
omit, insert—
(e) a decision (each a **conversion decision**)—
(i) under section 149B not to convert the basis of employment of an employee; or
(ii) under section 149B to convert the basis of employment of an employee in a circumstance provided for under a directive made under section 149B(8A); or
(iii) under section 149C not to appoint an employee to a position at a higher classification level, if the employee has been seconded to or acting at the higher classification level for a continuous period of at least 2 years;
- 19 **Clause 47 (Amendment of s 195 (Decisions against which appeals can not be made))**
Page 43, line 14, after 'level'—
insert—
, if the employee has been seconded to or acting at the higher classification level for less than 2 years
- 20 **Clause 58 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 14)**
Page 46, line 11, after 'Transitional'—
insert—
and validation
- 21 **Clause 58 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 14)**
Page 47, line 1, after 'temporary'—
insert—
or casual
- 22 **Clause 58 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 14)**
Page 47, line 5, 'temporary'—
omit, insert—
relevant
- 23 **Clause 58 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 14)**
Page 47, lines 9 to 12, from 'temporary'—
omit, insert—
relevant employee for a period of at least 1 year but not more than 2 years; or
- 24 **Clause 58 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 14)**
Page 47, lines 15 to 18, from 'temporary'—
omit, insert—
relevant employee for a period of at least 1 year if the amending Act had not commenced.
- 25 **Clause 58 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 14)**
Page 47, line 35 to page 48, line 1, from 'temporary' to 'section 149'—
omit, insert—
relevant employee

26 **Clause 58 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 14)**

Page 48, lines 13 and 14—

omit, insert—

relevant employee means a person employed on a temporary or casual basis under section 147 or 148 as in force before the commencement.

27 **Clause 58 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 14)**

Page 48, after line 26—

insert—

294A Application of s 149B for existing temporary and casual employees

- (1) This section applies in relation to a person if—
 - (a) immediately before the commencement, the person was an employee employed on a temporary or casual basis in a department under former section 147 or 148; and
 - (b) the day that is the end of 2 years of continuous employment in the department by the person occurs on or after the commencement; and
 - (c) section 293 does not apply to the person, or the person does not ask for a decision under that section.
- (2) Section 149B applies in relation to the person.
- (3) For applying section 149B—
 - (a) a reference in section 149B to a fixed term temporary employee is taken to include a reference to the person; and
 - (b) the period for which the person was continuously employed on a temporary or casual basis under former section 147 or 148 is to be taken into account for working out the period for which the person has been continuously employed in the department; and
 - (c) if the person is employed on a casual basis, the required period is taken to be the later of—
 - (i) 4 months after the commencement; or
 - (ii) if a longer period for a particular class of employees of which the person is a member is agreed between the department's chief executive and an employee organisation for the class of employee, and approved by the commission chief executive—the longer period; or
 - (iii) the required period for the decision about the person under section 149B(9).
- (4) Subsection (5) applies if—
 - (a) the person is employed on a casual basis; and
 - (b) before the end of the required period mentioned in subsection (3)(c), the person would have become eligible for a review of the person's employment under former section 149A if the *Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020* had not commenced.
- (5) In addition to section 149B as applied under subsections (2) and (3), former section 149A and any directive made under that section continue to apply in relation to the person as if the *Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020* had not commenced.
- (6) In this section—

employee organisation see the *Industrial Relations Act 2016*, schedule 5.

former section 147 or 148 means section 147 or 148 as in force before the commencement.

former section 149A means section 149A as in force before the commencement.

28 **Clause 58 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 14)**

Page 52, after line 6—

insert—

301 Validation of particular acts or omissions of WHS prosecutor

- (1) This section applies to an act or omission of the WHS prosecutor, or a person performing a function or power of the WHS prosecutor under a purported delegation or subdelegation, before the commencement to the extent the act or omission would have been valid if amended schedule 1 were in force at the time of the act or omission.
- (2) The act or omission is taken to be, and to have always been, as valid as it would have been if amended schedule 1 were in force at the time of the act or omission.
- (3) In this section—

amended schedule 1 means schedule 1 as in force on the commencement.

WHS prosecutor see the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, schedule 2, section 25.

29 After clause 58

Page 52, before line 7—

*insert—***58A Amendment of sch 1 (Public service offices and their heads)**

Schedule 1—

*insert—*Office of the WHS Prosecutor under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* Work Health and Safety Prosecutor**30 Clause 59 (Amendment of sch 4 (Dictionary))**

Page 52, lines 20 to 23—

*omit, insert—***continuously employed**, in relation to a person employed in a department for a period, means the person is employed in the department—

- (a) continuously as a fixed term temporary employee for the period; or
- (b) as a casual employee on a regular and systematic basis during the period; or
- (c) continuously as an employee mentioned in subparagraphs (i) and (ii) for the period.

31 After clause 59

Page 53, after line 2—

*insert—***Part 5 Amendment of Work Health and Safety Act 2011****60 Act amended**This part amends the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.**61 Amendment of s 117 (Entry to inquire into suspected contraventions)**

Section 117(1), after 'this Act'—

*insert—*or the *Electrical Safety Act 2002***62 Amendment of s 118 (Rights that may be exercised while at workplace)**

Section 118(1), after 'this Act'—

*insert—*or the *Electrical Safety Act 2002***63 Amendment of s 120 (Entry to inspect employee records or information held by another person)**

Section 120(1), after 'this Act'—

*insert—*or the *Electrical Safety Act 2002***64 Amendment of s 132 (Consideration of application)**

Section 132(a), after 'this Act'—

*insert—*and the purpose of the *Electrical Safety Act 2002***65 Amendment of s 140 (Determination of application)**

Section 140(2)(a), after 'this Act'—

*insert—*and, if relevant, the purpose of the *Electrical Safety Act 2002***66 Insertion of new pt 16, div 7**

Part 16—

*insert—***Division 7 Transitional provision for Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020****325 Validation of entries in relation to electrical safety contraventions**

- (1) Subsections (2) and (3) apply to an entry to a workplace by a WHS entry permit holder, made before the commencement purportedly under section 117, to inquire into an electrical safety contravention.
- (2) The entry is taken to be, and always to have been, as lawful as it would have been had section 117(1) applied in relation to electrical safety contraventions at the time of the entry.

- (3) An exercise of a right under section 118 while at the workplace is taken to be, and always to have been, as lawful as the exercise of the right would have been had section 118(1) applied in relation to electrical safety contraventions at the time of the entry.
- (4) Subsection (5) applies to an entry to a workplace by a WHS entry permit holder, made before the commencement purportedly under section 120, to inspect or make copies of employee records or other documents relevant to an electrical safety contravention.
- (5) The entry is taken to be, and always to have been, as lawful as it would have been had section 120 applied in relation to electrical safety contraventions at the time of the entry.
- (6) In this section—
electrical safety contravention means a suspected contravention of the *Electrical Safety Act 2002* that occurred on or after 1 January 2012.

Question put—That clauses 1 to 59, as amended, stand part of the bill.

Motion agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 59, as amended, agreed to.


Third Reading

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (4.27 pm): I move the following amendments—

32 Long title

Long title, after 'amend'—
insert—

the *Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020,*

33 Long title

Long title, 'and the *Public Service Act 2008*'—
omit, insert—

, the *Public Service Act 2008* and the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*


Amendments agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.


COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Portfolio Committee, Referral of Auditor-General's Report

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.27 pm): I seek to advise the House of the determination made by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly at its meeting today. The committee has resolved, pursuant to standing order 194B, that the Auditor-General's report No. 2 of 2020-21, *Effectiveness of audit committees in state government entities*, be referred to the Economics and Governance Committee.

MOTION

Order of Business

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.28 pm): I move—

That government business orders of the day Nos 3 to 7 be postponed.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.


Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL


APPROPRIATION BILL

Appropriation (Parliament) Bill resumed from 8 September (see p. 2174) and Appropriation Bill resumed from 8 September (see p. 2178).

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (4.29 pm): I move—

That the bills be now read a second time.

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.29 pm): It took me by surprise. I thought we would see a little bit more from the Treasurer.

Mrs D'Ath: He only speaks once.

Mr MANDER: I apologise.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member for Everton, it took us both by surprise. My apologies. You have the floor.

Mr MANDER: I withdraw and apologise. I rise to address the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2020 and Appropriation Bill 2020 in this cognate debate. Yesterday the Treasurer declared both these bills urgent under standing order 137 and both have bypassed every consideration from the committee. The Treasurer is seeking an extra \$29.6 billion of Queensland taxpayers' money without going through the normal committee process.

Since becoming Treasurer—this may surprise members—the member for Woodridge has introduced four bills, all of which have been declared urgent. The Treasurer is so concerned, so anxious and so afraid of due process that he takes every possible measure to hide from scrutiny. There is no better example of this than the financial statement he released on Monday, the worst set of financial statements ever delivered by any government in Queensland's history. He said that he provided two years of forecast where the reality is he has only provided nine months to the end of this financial year.

He also said yesterday in the bill's first reading that the measures contained in the appropriation bills and the way in which they were introduced were necessary due to this time of crisis. Like his interview on 4BC yesterday, this statement is misleading. Even though he would not admit it on 4BC radio, the fact is that he was in cabinet in the so-called economic team of ministers when the Palaszczuk Labor government announced it would deliver a budget this year in April before the federal government and he was in cabinet when the Palaszczuk Labor government scrapped the budget for this year.

The reason that these appropriation bills are required to provide interim supply is because Labor has refused to deliver a 2020-21 budget before the state election and in time to ensure that there was adequate supply in the second half of this financial year. Instead of a 1,000-page budget, all Labor could deliver was a 41-page glossy brochure. Now the Palaszczuk Labor government is forcing parliament to legislate an extra \$28.6 billion of interim supply on the fly.

These appropriation bills also contain another admission of failure by the Treasurer. This, of course, is the \$1.114 billion he is seeking for unforeseen expenditure in the financial year 2019-20. There was \$1.114 billion worth of department budget blowouts he was incapable of managing, significantly more than any unforeseen expenditure amount under the prior LNP government. Before the Treasurer attempts to use coronavirus as an excuse we should all remember that it was only in April that his predecessor appropriated an extra \$3.181 billion for the coronavirus response and, notably, the Department of Health, which is the major department dealing with the coronavirus response, is not one of the 13 department budget blowouts, neither is the Department of Transport and Main Roads, confirming Labor's \$1.3 billion cut in infrastructure last financial year. So hopeless is the Palaszczuk Labor government that even with the nine new or increased taxes it has introduced on Queensland families it still cannot keep the forecasted budgets.

Since being elected the Palaszczuk Labor government has racked up more than \$5 billion worth of unforeseen expenditure: \$2.27 billion in the 2016-17 financial year; half a billion in the 2017-18 financial year; \$1.39 billion in the 2018-19 financial year; and now \$1.114 billion in the 2019-20 financial year. On average the amount is over seven times higher than the unforeseen expenditure under the previous LNP government, a clear indicator of Labor's consistent fiscal management failures.

In six years Labor has racked up a record \$102 billion of debt because it has lost control of spending. Every dollar that Labor wastes is a dollar that cannot be spent on the infrastructure a growing state desperately needs to stimulate the economy and create much needed jobs. That means that there is less money to get our hospitals working again, less money to build new and better roads, less money to spend on additional police resources and less money for our schools. We know from history that when Labor runs out of money it comes after yours with higher taxes and there is no better example of this than the 2019-20 budget which has resulted in this \$1.114 billion in unforeseen expenditure.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's 2019-20 budget was a bad budget for Queenslanders. It was a budget of higher taxes, more debt, less jobs and less infrastructure. The budget showed that Labor cut infrastructure spending before COVID-19 at a time when Queensland had the worst unemployment rate in the nation. In the 2019-20 budget the Palaszczuk Labor government was not borrowing to build, Labor was borrowing to cover its wasteful spending. It was also a budget of new taxes not announced at the last state election—another breach of trust for the people of Queensland. It was a budget that introduced new taxes, ripping \$1.25 billion from the state's economy. It plunged Queensland into more than \$90 billion of debt at the time and revealed almost 26,000 less jobs than forecast. Only the member for Woodridge could make these figures appear to look good.

The Treasurer's financial statement on Monday showed that Queensland has become, since that MYFER, \$18 million more in debt. We had Queensland's record worst \$8 billion deficit in this coming financial year and another record \$102 billion debt locked in, which will lead to 72,000 job losses over this financial year. The member for Woodridge has well and truly beaten the member for South Brisbane as Queensland's worst Treasurer on record. There is another record looming for the member for Woodridge: to potentially be the only Treasurer in Queensland's history not to deliver a budget. The \$1.2 billion in new taxes introduced in the 2019-20 financial year took Labor's new taxes to \$4 billion over nine new and increased taxes, all of which were not announced in the last election. Of concern, on Monday the ever evasive and defensive Treasurer failed to rule out even more taxes and tax hikes into the future—or was that just another mistake?

The 2019 estimates for the 2019-20 budget Appropriation Bill were dominated by the Palaszczuk Labor government's ongoing integrity crises. In the 30th year since the Fitzgerald inquiry report was published the Palaszczuk Labor government's integrity scandals raised serious questions about the government's openness, transparency, accountability and integrity that have engulfed the leadership of this government. This was, of course, the estimates where the member for South Brisbane's investment property scandal was uncovered, but also the fact that a \$267,500 taxpayer funded grant was given to a company in which the Premier's former chief of staff was a director and a major shareholder. I wonder how many Labor Party bosses are already in line to take a slice of the \$500 million taxpayer fund that the Treasurer announced on Monday. The accumulation of this budget and those Palaszczuk Labor government budgets before it drove Queensland to have the nation's highest unemployment, most bankruptcies and lowest business confidence before coronavirus.

For the second time this year Labor is forcing urgent appropriation bills through the Legislative Assembly. In April former treasurer Jackie Trad appropriated an extra \$3.181 billion to the 2019-20 financial year and a further \$1.615 billion for the 2020-21 financial year. The Palaszczuk Labor government is now seeking a blank cheque for another \$28 billion of Queensland taxpayers' money to spend with no economic plan. Labor's failure to produce a full budget before the election shows that they do not have an economic plan and they are hiding from scrutiny. This reckless fiscal management of taxpayers' money is a continuation of Labor's decision to spend \$200 million to buy a shareholding in Virgin Australia, which has not ruled out sacking thousands of Queensland workers.

Queenslanders do not know how much of the \$28 billion will be spent on buying back a coal terminal for four times the price that the former Beattie Labor government sold it for. That is 'Labornomics' if ever we have ever seen it. They do not know how much of the \$28 billion will be spent on Labor's election slush fund that the Treasurer announced on Monday. The government knows, but the Queensland taxpayers do not know. They do not know how much of that \$28 billion will be spent on apps for fat dogs, changing hospital names and ongoing IT bungles at the expense of funding new roads, rail lines and dams. Our economy is hurting like never before but Labor has no plan to drag Queensland's economy out of recession. Labor cannot be trusted to manage Queensland's economy or the state government's finances. They are incapable.

On Monday, the Treasurer broke the Palaszczuk Labor government's fiscal principles. The fiscal principle to reduce the general government debt-to-revenue ratio was broken as the debt-to-revenue ratio exploded from 63 per cent in the Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review to 108 per cent this

financial year—one fail. The fiscal principle to target net operating surpluses was broken as the Treasurer delivered a record \$5 billion operating deficit for the last financial year and forecast a record \$8 billion deficit for this financial year—the second failure of fiscal principles. The fiscal principle of a consistent capital program was broken as Labor cut over \$1.3 billion from the budgeted 2019-20 capital program, cutting infrastructure projects at the expense of Queensland jobs—the third fiscal principle to be broken. The fiscal principle to maintain competitive taxation was broken long ago when Labor introduced nine new or increased taxes, ripping \$4 billion from the Queensland economy and the Treasurer has failed to rule out introducing even more—the fourth fiscal principle to be broken. Finally, the fiscal principle to maintain the Public Service-to-population growth was shattered as population growth was forecast to increase at 1.25 per cent compared to Public Service growth at 2.2 per cent. How can we believe a word that the Labor government says when they cannot keep the fiscal principles that they have for running the economy?

Yesterday on 4BC, the Treasurer said that his misleading statement was entirely meaningless. Fundamentally, the Treasurer and the broader Palaszczuk Labor government have no issue with misleading Queenslanders and yesterday proved once again that he has no credibility. The government have broken Labor's fiscal principles and, as a result, Queensland had the worst unemployment rate, the worst state debt, the most bankruptcies and the lowest business confidence—all before coronavirus. Now the Palaszczuk Labor government is floundering at a time when Queensland needs economic leadership. Because Labor has no plan for the economy, another 72,000 Queenslanders will have lost their jobs by the end of this financial year, which is on top of a record 234,000 Queenslanders already out of work. Currently we have the highest unemployment rate in the country—higher than Victoria, which is in lockdown. It is clear that Labor is not working.

Time and time again, ministers of the Palaszczuk Labor government have shown a complete disdain for the state's finances, government integrity, accountability and transparency. Instead of apologising on 4BC yesterday for being caught out, the Treasurer should be apologising to the hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders who have lost their jobs because Labor cannot manage the economy.


Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stevens): Member for Everton, take your seat, please. Member for Logan, you are on a warning. I have already advised you about your interjections. Under standing order 253A, you will now withdraw from the chamber for one hour.

Whereupon the honourable member for Logan withdrew from the chamber at 4.44 pm.

Mr MANDER: As I was saying, those who deserve an apology are the hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders who have lost their jobs and who will lose their jobs over the next nine months because Labor cannot manage the economy. An LNP government will provide the economic leadership that Queensland is desperate for. The LNP has outlined a bold infrastructure plan that will provide a decade of jobs—not one or two years worth of jobs. Of course, we are talking about the new Bradfield scheme to harness the monsoonal rains of the north and making sure that we use the water for irrigation, for power supply and for creating jobs. We will build the second M1. We will create the Queensland dam company to build east of the Great Dividing Range the dams that have been talked about for years but that no-one has built. We will invest in South-East Queensland infrastructure with congestion-busting plans to make sure that we can get people and businesses moving again. We will make electricity affordable in the regions. Why should we have competition in Brisbane and the south-east corner when our friends, relatives, brothers and sisters in the regions do not? We have a bold plan and there is more to announce as we get closer to the election.

Unlike Labor, we will fund our promises and deliver on our fiscal principles. An LNP government will give Queenslanders a no-new-tax guarantee to give businesses the confidence to invest and to create jobs. The LNP will produce a full budget in the first 100 days, not Labor's constant smoke-and-mirror tricks and games that damage business certainty and hide the true state of the finances from the public. No budget before the state election means no economic plan for Queensland at a time when we have the worst unemployment rate. The LNP is the only party that has a plan to create a stronger economy and more secure jobs. We have an ambitious plan to stimulate the economy, create a decade of secure jobs and drag Queensland out of this recession. Our vision is to make Queensland the economic powerhouse of Australia once again, the best place to get a job, to get ahead and to raise a family.

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (4.47 pm): I rise in this House to support the appropriation bills for COVID-19, the Appropriation Bill 2020 and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2020. 2020 has been a year like no other. COVID-19 has impacted communities around the world. With the strong leadership of our Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, our government has led the health response, enabling us to manage the economic response and to unite and recover Queensland. Our strong health response has meant that we are able to have a stronger economy, recovering from the impacts of COVID going forward faster than anywhere else in Australia.

We are investing in future industries such as renewables and we are backing publicly owned infrastructure as we continue to create Queensland jobs. Our ongoing plan for economic recovery includes an additional \$1 billion for commercial business projects, building on the \$7 billion we have also announced. There is \$500 million for the Backing Queensland Businesses Investment Fund to support businesses and create jobs. There is \$500 million for the Renewable Energy Fund to increase public ownership of commercial renewable projects and support infrastructure. We are also providing \$249 million of COVID tax relief to Queensland small businesses in payroll tax waivers and exemptions, land tax rebates and rent relief.

Our Queensland government, under the careful stewardship of our Treasurer, is adopting the same approach to that of the federal Morrison government and other states by forecasting for two years rather than the usual four. That is prudent given the uncharted waters that economies across the nation and across the world continue to experience because of the uncertainties resulting from COVID. We know that when there is unprecedented disruption such as the coronavirus has delivered, and with the impacts that it is having on the private sector, governments must step in to help, which is exactly what our Palaszczuk government is doing. In the Redlands, not only now with COVID but also throughout my term, we have seen significant economic investment and the acceleration of projects. The Works for Queensland and COVID stimulus packages have benefited my region, with \$2.5 million for the Southern Moreton Bay Islands green sealing projects brought forward.

We have contributed an additional \$15 million to the duplication of Cleveland Redland Bay Road, taking that to \$60 million for the first stage; \$34.1 million to Southern Moreton Bay Islands ferry terminal upgrades; \$5 million to the Old Cleveland Road Gateway on-ramp upgrade; \$30 million to the Eastern Transitway on Old Cleveland Road that I had the good fortune to turn the first sod on; and \$19 million to the Beenleigh Redland Bay Road upgrade. There is so much work going on in the roads and infrastructure space out my way. That is exactly what good budgets deliver for their communities.

In the education space, we have accelerated the installation of air conditioning and solar in schools in the Redlands. We have seen Bay View get theirs underway. I know that Victoria Point State High School has its underway. At the high school, where we had seen not a lot of investment, we have invested \$1 million to upgrade the library and \$2 million for the hall expansion that is about to be completed next week. That has created fantastic jobs. We have the design work underway for the Thornlands State School administration refurbishment; \$500,000 for Macleay Island State School admin and library—that is about to get underway; and \$9 million in the Redland special school learning precinct. This school is close to my heart, and it is fantastic to see that level of investment in a new learning precinct.

We have had new classrooms delivered. Redland Bay took \$1.6 million just over Christmas. Bay View State School got \$700,000 worth of new classrooms. I also had the good fortune to open the new classrooms and flexible learning precinct at Cleveland State High School which was fantastic. A lot of my constituents' children attend that high school. There is lots of great work going on in the education space, not to mention the work at our TAFE. TAFE is absolutely going gangbusters in the Redlands. Our \$15 million upgrade will support more jobs in our area—nurses and the plumbing centre. They are looking spectacular and are not too far off being ready for opening. We have the free TAFE program that has been part of these budgets, covering the costs of apprenticeships and traineeships. This is so important to make sure we are positioned to create jobs of the future, particularly in these uncertain times.

Last week at Redland Hospital we committed \$62 million for work set to get underway for a new intensive care unit with a 32-bed ward. That is on top of last month's announcement of \$50 million for a new multistorey car park. That is fantastic news. It will create hundreds of jobs for our local area. Earlier this year we also opened the \$1.7 million emergency department expansion and new birthing suites. Last week we also committed, with the announcement of the intensive care unit, \$6 million for the business case, following on from the master plan, for a full expansion of the Redland Hospital into the future. We also have additional paramedics that are operating out in the Redlands, particularly across Macleay Island.

In terms of jobs and businesses, the QRIDA loans scheme as part of that COVID response has had a significant impact in the Redlands. Some \$22.6 million has gone to Redlands based businesses, which are supporting over 1,700 jobs in my local communities. Round 1 of the COVID small business grants saw \$2.5 million go across the Redlands local government area supporting businesses. That is what our government is about. We are about supporting businesses and making sure we create jobs for our communities.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work is another program I cannot talk enough about. We have spent over \$2 million in supporting our islands and mainland communities and leaving a legacy. That is really important for the community. Not only are we skilling Redlanders; we are also providing a legacy to community groups like the Redlands Rugby League Club.

At the Redlands Research Facility we have an \$8 million hydrogen pilot plant underway with QUT in partnership with international investors, and a new regional jobs committee which is doing great things out our way. We have put on more police, we have new equipment—barges and jet speedboats—and we have more fisheries patrol officers. These are all jobs for our community. We have more fire appliances. We have been investing in domestic violence crisis accommodation and additional DV support work. As members can see from what I have explained, we are investing in our economy, particularly in the Redlands. That is what it is all about in uncertain times like we are currently in with COVID.

I have said a number of times in this House that track record is so important. I proudly stand on our track record and the economic investment being made out in the Redlands. I take this opportunity to remind the House of the track record and lack of economic investment in the Redlands of those on the other side of the House during their decade of representation in the Redlands. There was no investment in roads or island infrastructure. The Anita Street intersection upgrade was cancelled under Campbell Newman and they were not looking to start upgrading Cleveland Redland Bay Road until 2025, another five years away. We did not have investment in Redland Hospital. The LNP closed the Wynnum Hospital and did not think about the capacity and the needs of Redland Hospital at that time—and on top of that they sacked doctors and nurses. There was little investment in our schools and they tried to close down our TAFE. That is absolutely shameful.

Not only did the LNP try to close down the TAFE but in a similar way that was nearly achieved with our Redlands Research Facility. I have had the pleasure of visiting that establishment many times over the nearly three years I have been in this job. I can tell members that it was brought to its knees. Larry, the now retired manager, spoke about the day they were all rounded up to be told that they no longer had a job and that that facility was going to be closed. That is absolutely shameful. With the investment of the Palaszczuk Labor government, that place is now going gangbusters. We are partnering to deliver the pilot hydrogen project with QUT and international investors. That will be that translational piece that takes it from academia, through testing and then up to places like Gladstone and Mackay where the sun shines beautifully. We also have agritech out there with UQ. They are looking at diseases. Amazing work is going on out there, and that place was nearly closed. We talk about track record. That track record is not one that would ever be in the best interests of my Redlands community and their future.


We heard today that the member for Southport spoke at a recent chamber of commerce event and said that the LNP has unfinished business. We know that they have \$25 billion in unfunded promises. They outlined no plan on how to fund these promises. We can only infer that their plan of unfinished business is that of cutting, sacking and selling. Leopards do not change their spots. We have seen no real economic plan from those on the other side of the House. If you were to describe it, you would probably say that it looks like a plan of pork-barrelling, perhaps, and an economic approach that is something akin to sprinkling pre-election promises like fairy dust here, there and everywhere.

Our Palaszczuk government's economic response to COVID has been swift, it has been comprehensive and it has been done with a focus on building projects and investing in infrastructure, creating jobs for Queenslanders. I do not like the term 'unprecedented', but we are absolutely in unprecedented times and uncharted waters economically—here in Queensland, in Australia and across the world. The work of the Treasurer and the Queensland Treasury in the most difficult of circumstances to rapidly mobilise and respond to this crisis has been nothing short of incredible.

Our plan will see Queensland continue to lead the nation in economic recovery. These appropriation bills position our Queensland government and the parliament to ensure supply through to June 2021. That will ensure we keep delivering as a parliament for the people of Queensland. I commend these bills to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stevens): Before calling the member for Burleigh, the House would like to recognise the visitation in the public gallery from the former member for Noosa who served the parliament for 11 years, the esteemed Mr Glen Elmes.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (4.58 pm): Welcome to Mr Elmes. The problem with the Labor Party is that when they do not like the history as it stands at the moment, they just go and rewrite it. I am glad that the member for Redlands mentioned pork-barrelling, because that whole speech basically outlined pork-barrelling in a Labor electorate. Millions and millions of dollars has obviously been spent in the electorate of Redlands. There is nothing being spent in my electorate of Burleigh. I am not sure what is happening in Mermaid Beach, but there is not a great deal being spent in Burleigh apart from the massive projects like light rail and the M1 upgrade—billions of dollars. There is none of the pork-barrelling type funding announcements being made in my patch.

The only reason we are discussing the Appropriation Bill on the second-last day of our sittings is that this government likes to hide things from the people of Queensland. They cancelled this year's budget after the former treasurer told us last year that she would deliver a budget in April. In April they apparently may well have had all the figures they needed even though the federal budget was not expected to be handed down by that time. In April they apparently would have had enough information to put a budget before the people of Queensland. It could have then been sent to committees, we could have run the estimates process and that would have allowed us to ask the difficult questions that they are now trying to dodge. Instead of that, they have scrapped the whole budget. They are not going to tell the people of Queensland just how much debt we are in. We quite simply cannot trust those opposite.

The member for Redlands mentioned the cut, sack, sell line that they keep going on about. The facts are that the LNP sold nothing. Who was it that sold Queensland assets? It was the Labor Party. The Premier of this state sat around that cabinet table.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hart, adjourned.

MOTION

Energy Generation

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (5.00 pm): I move—

1. That this House acknowledges the vital role cheap coal-fired power plays in supporting the jobs of millions of Queenslanders now and for the next 50 years; and
2. That this House commits to providing Queenslanders with the cheapest electricity possible by ceasing costly renewable power mandates, subsidies and investment programs available to inefficient wind and solar generation to ensure coal and renewables compete on a level playing field.

Queenslanders have long benefited from our abundant coal resources and cheap coal-fired power stations that have supported jobs for millions of Queenslanders over many decades. Despite all the rhetoric around the future of electricity supply and the obsession of both major parties to win votes in South-East Queensland, Queensland can and should continue to benefit from cheap coal-fired power for the next 50 years and beyond; that is, only if inefficient wind and solar are not continually given an unfair advantage through costly subsidies and investment programs that are paid for by Queenslanders.

The KAP motion states—

1. That this House acknowledges the vital role cheap coal-fired power plays in supporting the jobs of millions of Queenslanders now and for the next 50 years; and
2. That this House commits to providing Queenslanders with the cheapest electricity possible by ceasing costly renewable power mandates, subsidies and investment programs available to inefficient wind and solar generation to ensure coal and renewables compete on a level playing field.

I will say that again: to ensure coal and renewables compete on a level playing field.

We now have zero coal-fired power plants in North Queensland and electricity prices continue to go up. Collinsville was the last coal-fired power station in North Queensland. This station had five coal-powered steam turbines with a combined generation capacity of 190 megawatts of electricity; however, a solar power farm which was built on adjacent land in 2018 now generates only 42 megawatts of electricity. The Collinsville power station had families who lived, worked and sent their kids to school in Collinsville, and the generator saved hundreds of millions of dollars in lost transmission and kept electricity prices down.

While we contribute millions in subsidising renewable energy, it means less money going back to schools and hospitals. We have been duped here. We give millions in subsidies to these companies and are being told that renewables are cheaper. If that is the case, why are we subsidising these projects?


I want to make it very clear that KAP and I are not against renewable energy. I am for renewables—I have raised that in parliament numerous times—as long as renewables contribute back to the community, employ locals and are efficient, reliable, cost effective and do not cause massive increases in electricity bills. I was first brought up on the Tully River at Cardston Village. My father worked on the Kareeya Hydro Power Station and then later worked on the Collinsville power station. I have been exposed to both renewables and coal power all my life.

A renewables project that was approved but has since been pushed aside is the Tully Millstream Hydroelectric Scheme. It would have saved \$200 million in electricity generation losses. A tunnel had already been constructed. It would have powered 100,000 homes. I have also campaigned strongly for co-generation such as the South Johnstone and Tablelands bioenergy plants, which produce bagasse that will power 30,000 homes using waste products from sugar cane. This is a good project because it improves the cane supply agreement, money flows back to the community and the whole community benefits.

When we look at the massive wind farm and solar projects we see that they are subsidised by the taxpayer and profits go overseas. They do not go to hospitals, to schools and to the Ambulance Service. They go overseas. What happens? We are hit with a massive power bill. Many of these wind farm and solar projects are foreign owned and subsidised by the taxpayer. As I said, the profits go overseas. I have also been informed that the solar project in Collinsville and many other solar projects employ overseas labour. We say that we should stop subsidising and propping up renewables with hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer dollars and compare them on their merits.

In closing, I call out what the real policy of both major parties is on coal. When both major parties campaign in the south they are against coal, but when they travel to the regions they are for it. What is their position?

(Time expired)

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (5.06 pm): The Palaszczuk government will stand proudly on its record on energy in this state come 31 October. We have the energy trifecta: lowest average prices on the eastern seaboard, reliable supply and a planned transition to a renewable future. Our fleet of coal-fired generators, some of the youngest in the nation, complement the new investment we have seen in renewables over recent years: a fleet that we directed to lower power prices; a fleet that we expanded with Callide and Swanbank; a fleet that we fought tooth and nail to stop those opposite from privatising.

As we go into the election, let me remind the House that it is only a Palaszczuk government that will keep energy assets in Queensland hands. We have heard and will hear from other speakers about the role renewables have played in bringing down energy prices for Queensland energy users. In recent weeks the Queensland government has made a number of announcements that will see new renewable projects in this state—announcements such as our \$145 million renewable energy zone policy and our \$500 million Renewable Energy Fund announcement. There is almost \$16 million for CopperString to unlock the North West Minerals Province and renewable energy in North Queensland. These policies follow commitments we made to the people of Queensland at the last election. We have met those commitments by establishing CleanCo and providing money to allow them to build, own and operate renewable assets on behalf of the people of Queensland.

These policies and programs enable government owned corporations to enter into commercial agreements with private proponents. These will see the taxpayers of Queensland share in the benefits of the renewable energy boom, just as taxpayers have enjoyed the benefits of owning our existing fleet of coal-fired power stations. Repeatedly the market has said that there is no interest in private investment in coal-fired power in this state. To get any interest at all has required the federal government to offer that dirty word: subsidy. It is a subsidy of \$3.3 million to be precise, and that is just to get a feasibility study started. A power station on this scale will require billions of dollars to actually get it built.

The federal government has a track record though in delivering subsidies. The Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, has invested \$1.58 billion in 543 projects. The Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund has the ability to offer low-interest loans to projects, including renewables, in


Northern Australia. The Clean Energy Finance Corporation has \$10 billion to invest in renewable projects on a concessional basis. These are great programs and I welcome their investment in Queensland.

We know that the LNP are hopelessly divided on the Collinsville coalmine. Their inner-city MPs hate the project and actively undermine it at every opportunity. Regional LNP members actively want taxpayer funds to be used to build the coal-fired power station. It is the old Nats versus Libs divide. It is the city versus the bush. They are hopelessly divided on the Collinsville power station issue.

Let us not forget the member for Callide's paid advertisement relying on One Nation research, describing renewables as 'pure fantasy'. This is a party that simply does not have answers on the fundamentals. Who can forget how the LNP fractured and destroyed each other over national energy policy, which ended up with the disposal of a prime minister?

When they were in government, their only solution to complex energy issues was to push energy prices up by 43 per cent and to start privatising Queensland energy assets. That was their plan—a plan to not only cut, sack and sell but a plan that punished everyday mums and dads. Even the Queensland Productivity Commission stated that their plan for energy in this state now would see power prices rise for regional families or would increase tax bills.

As we go into the 2020 election, I respectfully ask the people of Queensland to remember their track record when they were last in government. Only the Palaszczuk government has the track record of delivering low prices, reliable power and a transition to a renewable future.

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (5.11 pm): I rise in support of the Katter Australian Party's motion that calls on the House to acknowledge the vital role cheap coal-fired power plays in supporting the jobs of millions of Queenslanders now and for the next 50 years and to commit to providing Queenslanders with the cheapest electricity possible by ceasing costly renewable power mandates, subsidies and investment programs available to inefficient wind and solar generation to ensure coal and renewables compete on a level playing field.

Mr Speaker, if you follow the National Electricity Market, as I do intently during the day, you will notice that during the middle of the day when wind and solar are producing at their best we are operating in a negative market. We have projects which are being subsidised not just by the state government but by energy users. Everyone who pays an energy bill in Queensland is subsidising these projects to operate in a negative market during the day. This not only gives an unfair advantage to people but also producers, like co-generation sugar mills, are saying, 'Hang on. We have to operate in a market where these projects are being subsidised, yet we have to pay to put our power back onto the grid because we cannot stop producing during the day.'

All we are asking for is a level playing field. Wind, solar and hydro projects are getting all the benefit from the subsidies for renewable energies, yet we have a project sitting in the middle of the Hinchinbrook electorate ready to go—the NQBE, the North Queensland Bio-Energy Corporation, project—which has no government backing. They have been offered a little bit of money to go towards the development of the project—about \$1 million was eartagged—but there is not a cent to go towards making sure that this project has longevity and the legs to get up. This shows that the state needs to get behind coal generation once again. If solar and wind are great, why are we subsidising it? We should be at least allowing coal-fired power stations to have the opportunity to enter the market—new ones as well as reinvigorating old ones like the old Collinsville power station.


The electricity grid needs dispatchable baseload power. Wind and solar cannot produce that. Some hydro plants that have solar and stored energy can work as dispatchable power, but to wind up solar in the middle of peak-hour load times—early in the morning when people are cooking breakfast or at night-time—just does not work. That is why you need coal-fired stations, gas-fired power stations and even projects such as the NQBE to get off the ground so that we have that dispatchable power to ensure that we have power when Queensland needs it the most.

When Queenslanders are talking about their electricity bill leading up to the state election, they should be aware that up to five to 10 per cent of their bill is going towards subsidies right now. People are subsidising rich people to put solar panels on their roof when poor people cannot afford to do that. I know that there are subsidies for people who own rental properties to help their renters, and I acknowledge that. At the end of the day, there are hardworking Australians who get up every morning who cannot afford to invest in solar on their roof. Should those people be subsidising us right now? I think not.

We need to acknowledge what the coal industry can do for Queensland and what it is currently doing. The coal industry is supporting 34,000 jobs across Queensland right now. The coal industry contributes \$52 million to the GSP—\$4.4 billion in royalties comes out of the coal industry every year. That is injected into the schools that we love, the roads, the hospitals and the amenities that we enjoy across the state.

Let us not stop there. Opening up the Galilee Basin is the primary objective of the KAP. Building a rail line into the Galilee Basin will allow us to get at least 100,000 million tonnes of coal per annum out of the Galilee Basin. That equates to half a billion dollars of royalties going straight to the state every year—that is, half a billion dollars going into schools, education, hospitals, the Public Service, roads to make sure that the state is running. Right now all of those areas need a hand.

(Time expired)

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (5.16 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the member for Hill and also to correct the record in relation to statements just made by my learned colleague and good friend the member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Dametto. In the electorate of Mount Ommaney—in my household and in many other households in my community—we have over 8,000 people who have solar on their rooftops. Most of them are not rich people. Most of them have made a choice that that is something they wanted to do.

They wanted to invest in their future and the future of Queensland, and they have made the decision to put solar on their rooftops. To say that only rich people can afford solar is not accurate. It is thanks to the investment of Labor governments over many successive years that solar has come down in price so much that it is now possible for many different families, groups and businesses right across Queensland to afford to put solar and other kinds of renewables into their businesses and into their households. That is something I am really proud of.

Under this Palaszczuk Labor government, we have set the goal of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030. This allows Queensland to continue achieving our energy trifecta—affordability, reliability and a smooth transition to renewables. We are tracking well to meet this goal. We are currently sitting at around 20 per cent after five years of continued investment by our government and support for the renewables industry.

We are doing this because, as the QCA has recognised in their pricing determinations, having a measured increase in renewable energy generation puts downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices. Over the past three years, Queenslanders know that power prices have decreased. In regional Queensland a household would have saved \$600 and a small business \$1,000. Our policies are working to drive down prices, unlike those opposite whose policies resulted in Queensland power bills going up 43 per cent.


Over the past five years under the Palaszczuk government 41 projects have been launched. This represents a \$7.8 billion investment in 7,900 megawatts of new generation, supporting more than 6,500 jobs for regional Queensland. One of the key planks of our renewable transition was the establishment of CleanCo. CleanCo has assets that employ Queenslanders from Barron Gorge in the far north to Swanbank in the south-east. Combined, CleanCo's current assets have a combined generating capacity of 1,120 megawatts.

In addition, they have a mandate for 1,000 megawatts of new renewable generation by 2025. They are well underway to achieving this mandate. Since their inception, CleanCo has supported two additional large-scale renewable energy projects. The first of those is Neoen's Western Downs Green Power Hub project. CleanCo has committed to purchasing 320 megawatts of new renewable energy generated by this project, which is approximately 22 kilometres south-east of Chinchilla. The purchase agreement by CleanCo gave this project the support it required to get off the ground. The project, which will include Australia's largest solar farm, is expected to generate up to 400 jobs and 400 megawatts of new renewable energy for Queensland. These jobs are more crucial than ever in regional Queensland in these tough economic times. Construction was to commence in July 2020 and generation is scheduled for the first quarter of 2022.

The second project is the MacIntyre Wind Farm. This is another project that is getting off the ground in the Southern Downs region. It is a renewable energy powerhouse. The MacIntyre Wind Farm Precinct is being delivered through a partnership between CleanCo and Acciona. CleanCo will build, own and operate its own wind farm of 18 turbines and invest in a further 400 megawatts through a

power purchase agreement resulting from the Queensland government's Renewables 400 initiative. Through these investments CleanCo will deliver up to 500 megawatts of new renewable energy for Queensland. Early works are expected to commence shortly, with construction to commence mid-2021. The entire project in the MacIntyre precinct will be operational by 2024.

The good news does not stop there. On Monday the Treasurer's budget update announced an additional \$500 million to foster more renewable energy projects and jobs. CleanCo will be eligible to apply for this fund to get even more Queenslanders working in renewable energy. Let's compare our record to that of the LNP. Under those opposite there was a renewable blackout. There was not one large-scale renewable project built in this state. For five years there was no progress towards our renewable energy target. We have the balance right, and I urge all members to vote against this motion.

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (5.21 pm): I would like to read the motion again because I think it is important to get the wording right and to get the point across. The motion states—

1. That this House acknowledges the vital role cheap coal-fired power plays in supporting the jobs of millions of Queenslanders now and for the next 50 years; and
2. That this House commits to providing Queenslanders with the cheapest electricity possible by ceasing costly renewable power mandates, subsidies and investment programs available to inefficient wind and solar generation to ensure coal and renewables compete on a level playing field.


I would like to pull that motion apart a bit and explain to the House why we moved this motion. We used wind and solar as examples there, but there are some excellent renewable projects. My father was a minister in this House when one of the first solar farms was built in Queensland up on Thursday Island. When we were kids we experimented at home with solar panels and a pump down the tank down the back. They play a good role in the grazing industry. They have a role to play, but this motion is about giving people clear visibility as to the costs of these things. If people like having environmental values that is a really honourable thing, but there is a cost associated with it.

Let's be clear about the cost that imposes on people and how it is distributed. Throughout regional Queensland a portion of our air-conditioning bills contributes to subsidies. There are all different sorts of subsidies that apply in all sorts of different ways to renewable energy. Whether that is through rooftop solar or larger renewable projects, the fact is that they are used for that. Coming up to this election a lot of the voting public are looking at this and saying, 'What's going on here?' They will be told, 'Renewables are cost-effective. They compete with coal now, so we should be building more of them.' Everyone thinks that sounds good, but do they compete on a level playing field with coal? If they do not, then you need to answer the people and say, 'Perhaps some of that cost is impacting on your power bill.' That is then clearly a choice for them to make with their eyes wide open.

Do not say, 'Actually, it's just as cheap, so that's why we're pumping all of this money into it and that's why we won't build another coal-fired power station. We're still doing all this other stuff because it's just as cheap.' Is it? Is it as cheap? If it is as you say, then it should not need the subsidies. It should stand on its own two feet. I am sure there are areas in the market where it can, and that is great. What we would like to do is shine some clarity on this issue. Let's not walk away from the fact that it is firmly established out there—you can kid yourselves in the House here—in the regions, more to the point. In North Queensland they are asking, 'When did people start hating coal? When did this all start happening?' It happened with the Carmichael mine, and it all turned political and everyone said, 'Let's just start hating on coal.'

Let me tell you a little bit about coal, because it plays an important part in our economy and I think it will in the future: \$3.8 billion in wages; \$4.4 billion in royalties last year; 0.1 per cent of Queensland's land mass; in 2018-19, \$52.5 billion gross regional product; over the whole of Queensland it was 15 per cent of the total GDP; 11 per cent of employment. They are pretty big numbers, and bear in mind the impact of coronavirus on the hospitality and tourism sectors. Agriculture and mining are a fundamental part of our economy, and I can tell you that they have not been doing too well out there. They feel like the government has been their enemy for so many years. Go out there and try and start a coalmine or water project from scratch—it is not very easy.

We are trying to say, 'Let these things run on their own steam.' A coal-fired power station relies on the support of the people, and it will not have the support of the people if you keep muddying the waters and saying, 'Actually, it costs the same so we're going to build all this.' Does it cost the same? That is the question for this House to answer, because it will impact on the way this matter is discussed by the public. This government needs to give people out there in voter land a clear decision on whether you are for coal or you are not. If you are happy to produce coal in this state you will not mind those subsidies being dropped and seeing it run on its own steam. That is a question for voters, and people here should be judged on where they stand on coal in Queensland.

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing) (5.26 pm): I rise to oppose the motion tonight and to acknowledge the vital role that the Gladstone Power Station plays in Queensland, supporting hundreds of jobs for local workers in my community. Any further investment in a new coal-fired power station in Collinsville will put the jobs of all of those workers at the Gladstone Power Station at risk. I have stood on the grass at the Gladstone Power Station with those workers who turn up every day to maintain and operate the plant. I can tell you right now the thing that I do not want to see is the federal government telling lies to the people of Queensland about the value—

Mr SPEAKER: Member, you will need to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr BUTCHER: I withdraw. The last thing I want to see is the federal government building new power stations that we know do not stack up, that are not needed and will cost the jobs of those workers I stood with in front of that power station last year. I will fight every day of the week for those workers.

The Palaszczuk government also has a strong record in supporting and advancing our vital resources sector. On this side of the House we understand that job-creating resource projects support economic growth in this state, particularly in regional Queensland. That is why since coming to office our government has supported more than \$20 billion worth of investment in resource projects, generating more than 7,000 jobs in centres like Mackay and in the regional mining towns of Moranbah, Middlemount, Clermont and Dysart—all in the Bowen Basin.


Mr Boyce: How did you go at the federal election?

Mr BUTCHER: I will not take that interjection from the member for Callide because he has some weird ideas for this state and I do not want any part of any of it.

Regional cities like Gladstone, Rockhampton, Townsville and Mount Isa would be unrecognisable without the jobs created by a strong resource sector in Queensland. Last month I declared Stanmore Coal's Isaac Downs project a prescribed project, allowing the Coordinator-General, Ms Toni Power—the female Toni Power—to work with Stanmore to secure project approvals in a timely manner. The construction phase of the project is set to create 250 jobs, with a further 300 jobs expected when the mine becomes operational.

We are also supporting the development of new mines through the Coordinator-General who is helping to progress these projects: the \$1 billion Winchester South mine, with 500 construction jobs and 450 ongoing operational jobs; the \$1 billion Pembroke Resources Olive Downs project, with 500 construction jobs and 1,000 ongoing operational jobs; and the \$1.5 billion Valeria project, with 1,400 construction jobs and 950 ongoing operational jobs. Every time the LNP federally stand up and every time the crazies from Callide start to talk, we can say that we are the ones who are delivering projects in the coal industry here in Queensland. The Palaszczuk government is also supporting the \$1.5 billion Australian Mines Sconi project for North Queensland through our Jobs and Regional Growth Fund. The new mine near Greenvale will extract cobalt, nickel and scandium oxide and create 500 construction jobs and almost 300 jobs during operation.

Although Labor understands how critical the resource sector is to Queensland's economy, not everyone in this chamber has the same view—and we can hear loud and clear who they are. I am not talking about the member for Maiwar—well, not just yet. I am talking about the member for Nanango. The Leader of the Opposition is no friend of the resource sector. She once described having a coalmine in her own electorate as 'ludicrous'. However, she will stand up in Townsville or Mackay and claim she supports regional Queenslanders working in the resources sector. It seems to be a pattern of behaviour for the member to say one thing in one place and then do the opposite somewhere else. She claims support for the resource sector in regional Queensland but then what does she do in Brisbane? That is right. She does a preference deal with the Greens—the same party that wants to ban coalmining and increase royalties by 2.5 per cent and eight times the current rate. You do not need an economics degree to realise this would cripple the industry and lead to job losses right throughout regional Queensland. The LNP's partnership with the Greens would tear the heart out of the resources industry here in Queensland. It is time for the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP in Queensland parliament to stand up for regional Queenslanders working in the resources sector and tell them the truth.

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (5.31 pm): There are very few renewables in this country or any country without the use of coal. Australia's energy market is a shambles. More than \$60 billion has been frittered away on wind and solar projects that rely entirely on generous government grants and other support measures to survive. Since 2017 there has been over \$3.2 billion invested in

Queensland's renewables sector, while government subsidies for renewable energy schemes—such as rooftop solar panels and wind farms—have been estimated to cost electricity consumers up to \$21.6 billion in 2020.

According to a report commissioned by One Nation and carried out by Dr Alan Moran—which we are very proud of and which Mr Boyce has already spoken about—the true financial burden of these policies on households and industry is shocking. These hidden costs have been driving up the cost of living across the board, including electricity, food, water and transport. Dr Moran's report states that the total annual cost to households has been in the order of \$13 billion, or some \$1,300 per household.

Another report carried out by Principal Economics calculated that there will have been an opportunity cost—money that could have been invested elsewhere—to Queenslanders of somewhere between \$34 billion and \$36 billion in 2020-21. These are the additional costs paid by energy consumers—the households, domestic firms and exporters, such as the mining and agricultural sectors. For too long, Australians and Queenslanders have been kept in the dark regarding the true cost of climate policies that lay behind the spiralling cost-of-living expenses we are forced to deal with on a daily basis. Today we are in the middle of a power-pricing and supply calamity which has had a disastrous consequence on businesses, agriculture, households and industries like manufacturing and minerals processing.


The government's primary vehicle for implementing its climate ambitions, headlined by a renewable energy target of 50 per cent by 2030, is the new government owned renewable generator CleanCo. CleanCo was given \$250 million by the Queensland government and we are told it will be building a gigawatt of new renewable generation by 2025. The *Australian Financial Review* reported late last year that the Palaszczuk government has decided to bring forward the closure date of the 700 megawatt Callide B Power Station by a decade to 2028.

As wind and solar penetration into Queensland increases, costs increase and the whole power grid in Queensland is struggling to cope with the flood of renewable power that is deluging its system. The new wind farm in my electorate of Mirani has 159 turbines and will cost our state close to \$120 million each year to subsidise. The Australian Energy Market Operator, the AEMO, issued its first warnings back in March, saying that the output from renewable companies was causing massive instability and power transmission loss across the grid.

The system is a total mess across the sector. There is frustration and tension building between renewable developers, transmission grid owners, market operators and not least the public. The AEMO recently declared the North Queensland and Central Queensland regions as a designated 'system strength gap'. They have set a deadline of 31 August 2021 for Powerlink to carry out an investigation and ensure that the necessary system strength services are put in place to address the faults. They also issued notices to more than a dozen Queensland solar and wind companies—most in the central and north region—saying that, if they did not significantly curtail their output, they risked having it slashed to zero. This tells us what the government and media will not. All these renewables are 100 per cent reliant on the fast-diminishing number of baseload power facilities in this state that are still powered by coal or gas.

Without reliable and affordable power, Australia's energy-hungry industries are doomed. Farmers are going broke, and butchers and pubs are closing. We are seeing everything going the wrong way. We should also be using some of the night-time power for staging up water, charging batteries and doing hydro dams. That would make coal so much easier and so much better. I am all for renewables. I can work with that—solar panels have their own place—but we need to get the true cost of what it actually costs us. We need to compare it in this House. We also need to know where everyone in the House sits on this. In one place they are eating coal on their Cornflakes, but in the next place they go to they do not want to know anything about it.

We have a lot of people relying on coal. Renewables are relying on coal. The whole state relies on coal—the mining industry, the farming industry and everything else that runs in this. We know this from what is happening in COVID. We need to make sure that at the election everyone in Queensland knows what both major parties stand for. The parties need to stand by what needs to be done for Queensland's future—that is backing the coal industry, backing coal-fired power and making sure our agricultural sector is safe in this state.

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (5.36 pm): I rise to speak against this motion tonight. The motion asks the House to acknowledge the vital role cheap coal-fired power plays in jobs and asks the House to commit to providing the cheapest electricity by ceasing costly renewable power mandates, subsidies and investment programs for wind and solar. I have been listening carefully to what the crossbench

members have been saying but I really want to hear what the LNP have to say about this. This is one of the great tragedies of this week—that we will not hear what the LNP have to say on this matter. Where are the LNP on this? I want to hear especially what their old Nationals wing have to say on this particular motion.

I would particularly like to hear from the member for Callide. He has a lot of original ideas on this. I suspect that he speaks for a lot of the old LNP but they dare not say it. They want him to express it but they will not line up with him. I do not agree with a lot of what the member for Callide said, but I respect him for speaking his mind and I know he is speaking the mind of a lot of people on the other side as well.

There is a renewable energy boom in regional Queensland. What is more, this renewable energy boom is having a central role in creating jobs and lowering electricity prices. Let us look at this boom. There are 41 large-scale renewable energy projects that have commenced operation, are under construction or have been financially committed since 2015. That represents \$7.8 billion worth of investment. When we came to government, just five per cent of our energy came from renewables, and soon that will be 21 per cent. This industry has exploded and it is happening in regional Queensland.


I will give the House a couple of examples of this \$7.8 billion worth of investment. Work started on Australia's biggest solar farm near Chinchilla which will create up to 400 jobs and generate 400 megawatts of renewable energy. The new \$125 million University of Queensland Warwick Solar Farm has opened. That will generate 64 megawatts and will make the University of Queensland the first in the world to have all of its power come from its own renewable energy asset. That supported up to 100 jobs during construction. I point out also that the \$350 million Rodds Bay Solar Farm south of Gladstone passed another milestone. When that gets going, that will be 300 megawatts of power for Queensland and Gladstone. That translates to 300 jobs in construction.

One of the outstanding features of this boom is the fact it is led by money from the private sector. The smart money is flowing into the regional energy economy. I say to the Katter's Australian Party that they may assume it is being led by costly investment subsidies but the truth is both public and private investment is flowing into this sector. You do not need to pay to lead this sector. The economy is rushing towards this sector to invest. What is more, as I have said, the investment by the public and the private sector in this industry is an investment in regional Queensland.

Let's look at the renewable energy zones and the Renewable Energy Fund that we have just announced. There is \$145 million to unlock three Queensland renewable energy zones across North Queensland, Central Queensland and South-West Queensland. The North Queensland corridor has significant potential for demand for new economy initiatives such as CopperString 2.0, minerals processing, manufacturing and hydrogen as well. The Treasurer announced the renewable energy fund on Monday. That means our own state owned energy corporations can increase investment into commercial renewable projects and support infrastructure.

What is the outcome of this boom that we have talked about? This sector is creating about 6,500 jobs. These are regional jobs. They are part of the future for the blue-collar, white-collar and knowledge workers in regional Queensland and it is delivering the lowest wholesale energy prices on the east coast. A typical household will pay \$62 less on average this coming year for electricity and a typical small business, \$144 less. The bill for a typical regional business will go down by about 5.8 per cent.


(Time expired)

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.41 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the motion. I appreciate the intent of the member for Hill and the Katter party to highlight the needs of regional communities and to secure cheaper electricity for Queenslanders. However, there is a path that has been determined over some years now, whether that be to hit nominated targets internationally or here at home via the federal government's nationally determined contributions or Queensland's efforts. As I recently spoke of in this chamber, the path to renewables is not without its challenges, including impacts to birds, amenity to residents and the question of how to repurpose those panels and batteries as well as blades from the wind turbines.

However, we should be concerned about what the fallout may be should subsidisation be removed from renewables, as the motion calls for. Reportedly there are approximately 108 large-scale clean energy plants in the development pipeline throughout Queensland. Would they proceed? We could be left with a job half done and potential failure to get to that projected cheaper and cleaner power. My contribution is not around the 'should' or 'could' as within my community the viewpoints on the efficiency of renewables are diverse and deserve the respect of an appropriate platform and independent analysis to properly debate, which is not possible in this motion.

My question is: after we have gone through some really tough times in the infancy of renewables, including power prices that increased as a result of the initial efforts, why would we change strategy midstream and what would be the costs to Queenslanders and taxpayers across Australia as this has not been a simple or cheap exercise and the extensive investment so far could be lost? As always, I support regional Queenslanders and their needs, including jobs. However, if we are to do our job properly we should be able to do this by investing in their regions and in the sectors we need to grow as part of a Queensland made focus, which includes manufacturing items that currently we source from overseas and those clean energy plants.

Even though I will always support efforts for cheaper electricity on behalf of my community and acknowledge the role that coal has played throughout our history and will play during our transition, I cannot support the removal of subsidies in the journey to renewables at this time.

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (5.44 pm): I rise to speak to the member for Hill's motion. I would say to the member for Hill that there is much in this motion I can agree with. Our Queensland resources sector, worth \$34.3 billion, and the almost 73,000 people who work within it, have a right to be acknowledged and to be proud of the contribution they make to the Queensland economy, and they work hard, many in challenging physical environments.

My uncle has spent almost his entire working life as a diesel fitter in the industry and, similarly, my brother-in-law has been in the mining industry since retiring from military service. I have had the opportunity to tour Mount Isa mine a number of times and to go to the coalface at Moranbah North mine. They work hard and they are proud of the contribution they make and the way they provide for their families. While I give them a shout-out, I do so also to the many FIFO workers who live in my community, a convenient home base for them, with the airport only seven minutes down the road.

I certainly support the member's call that this House commits to providing Queenslanders with the cheapest electricity possible. Our government made that commitment long ago and has been delivering on that commitment ever since. What I cannot support in this motion is the member for Hill's assertion that this can only happen—or should happen—by ceasing investment in renewable energy. People across my electorate believe deeply in renewable energy. It is one of the most often raised issues, from school students to retirees. Whether driven by the desire to see investment in the sector to put downward pressure on electricity prices or the significant environmental benefits it brings, Queenslanders want to see renewable energy harnessed.

Our renewable energy revolution is powering ahead in Queensland, reducing carbon emissions and driving down power prices. Our young fleet of coal-fired power stations is complementing the rollout of renewable energy projects which are creating jobs and lowering power prices. Over the past five years under Labor, 41 large-scale renewable energy projects have launched, representing around \$7.8 billion in investment and about 6,500 jobs in construction. Contrast this with those opposite, who oversaw the development of no large-scale renewable projects while they were in charge. Queensland now has more than 7,900 megawatts of renewable energy generation capacity, either operational or committed, the equivalent of taking more than two million cars off the road, and Queenslanders are on board. One in every three Queensland homes has rooftop solar. Just last month we surpassed more than 600,000 household rooftop solar systems, almost 7,000 of which are located across rooftops in my electorate of Nudgee. Queenslanders see the benefit of these systems on their bills, saving up to \$1,000 a year on their electricity accounts.


Over the past five years, the Palaszczuk government has nurtured a fledgling renewable energy sector to its current firm base of almost 20 per cent of our generation, up from just seven per cent when the LNP were last in charge. From this base, Queensland's renewable revolution can now launch into its next 10-year phase of growth, fuelled by this government's commitment to 50 per cent renewables by 2030.

Our publicly owned generators, CleanCo, Stanwell and CS Energy are leading the way, already supporting 1,900 megawatts of renewable energy capacity. CleanCo is also being tasked to bring on an extra 1,000 megawatts of clean energy by 2025. More than 20,000 megawatts of potential large-scale projects are already in the pipeline, offering more than 28,000 potential jobs. This includes Clarke Creek Wind Farm in Central Queensland, bringing 350 jobs when construction starts next year. We also have the 162-megawatt Columboola Solar Farm to be built between Chinchilla and Miles. That is another 400 jobs. Let us not forget the 400-megawatt Neoen solar farm, also near Chinchilla, creating up to 400 jobs.

It is projects like these, which are happening all over Northern, Central and South-West Queensland, that are helping Queenslanders get jobs despite tough global economic headwinds. On top of that, it is putting downward pressure on power prices, as noted by the Queensland Competition

Authority in its 2019-20 price determination. Regional Queenslanders are now in their third year of power price reductions. Queensland households have been further supported by our \$200 utility rebate and small business has received \$500 off their power bills. Over this three-year period, a typical regional small business will have saved, in total, around \$1,000 and a typical household, \$600. Let us never forget that when those opposite were in charge, power prices went up 43 per cent.

Our government has a strong record in supporting and advancing our vital resources sector, but equally, we will continue to back Queensland's renewable energy revolution.

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—NQF) (5.49 pm): On this penultimate sitting day of the 56th Parliament, I rise to make a contribution to this important debate. No matter where people sit on the political spectrum, it is no secret that the energy debate has consumed Australian politics and public policy for the best part of the last decade. As the member for Whitsunday and the leader of North Queensland First, I am proud to support the coal industry and coal-fired power. 'C' is for coal, and I love mentioning the c-word in any debate in the people's chamber in relation to these matters.

It is important that people have the opportunity to get ahead in life. Electricity costs are spiralling out of control. I listened rather intently and respectfully to the member for Nudgee's contribution. The reductions she referred to are nowhere near good enough—whether for mums and dads, industry, irrigators or whomever. As the leader of North Queensland First leading into the 31 October state election, subject to NQ First securing the balance of power we have committed to investing \$400 million into a new state-of-the-art coal-fired power station at Collinsville. I know that there are people in Collinsville who do not vote conservatively, but they know full well that we need cheaper electricity to get our economy going, particularly on the back of COVID-19 and the economic fallout.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Whitsunday, I have to draw your attention to the use of a term deemed to be unparliamentary. You referred to the 'c-word'. I ask you to withdraw that.

Mr COSTIGAN: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. I appreciate your guidance. I am proud to stand up here and support the coal industry. Those people in Collinsville—they are not members of my own constituency; they are just over the hill, at that northern tip of the Bowen Basin—are looking for people in public office to support the recommissioning of a new coal-fired power station—if you like, going back to the future. We used to do it. In fact, I acknowledge the member for Hill, who has moved this private members' motion, because his father was one of those many people working up a sweat at the old Collinsville power station before it was decommissioned. The member is not the only person in the people's house who has a connection to that former power station.


It is hypocritical for the member for Gladstone to come in here and say what he said about standing up for coal jobs. This project would have no impact on what used to be called NRG in the harbour city. I love going past the Gladstone Power Station. I say to those people of Gladstone: this will not impact your jobs or that economy. There is no base load power station north of the Tropic of Capricorn. It beggars belief that that is the case. How will North Queensland go forward economically, particularly on the back of COVID-19, with no access to base load power? We see Labor selling out its base. That is why people like 'Croakey' Jones at the Collinsville Workers Club tonight, if he is there having a cold one—and good on him—are shaking their heads, because Labor is not the Labor he remembers.

Then there is the LNP under the leadership of the member for Nanango. One way to sum up her energy policy is that it is like a hamster going around in a wheel. Her Majesty's opposition seems to be addicted to solar panels and wind turbines. I do not call them 'solar farms', at the back of Collinsville or wherever; I call them 'solar suckers', because in many cases they use up country that has been good for agriculture in the past, particularly in terms of the cattle industry.

There is no doubt that for many people this coming election will be a referendum on cost-of-living pressures and economic prosperity on the back of COVID-19. The member for Traeger made a great contribution in this debate tonight before I heard some interesting discussions outside the chamber involving the Manager of Opposition Business, the Opposition Whip and the member for Callide. I am sure that the LNP party room is divided in relation to energy policy. They have been divided for a long time.

A lot of people in Bowen and Collinsville are watching the member for Burdekin like a hawk when it comes to energy policy, because he says one thing in Conway Street in Collinsville and in Herbert Street in Bowen but a different thing down here. Down here he says one other thing. People should go and ask Bruce Hedditch at the Bowen Chamber of Commerce and other people, because he has sold

his soul to the devil. At the end of the day, I am not anti renewables—one thing we have committed to, subject to securing the balance of power, is Tully Millstream hydro—but we need a level playing field because right now under Labor, and hypothetically the LNP, it ain't happening.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (5.54 pm): That is five minutes of our lives we will never get back, that is for sure! If this Katter party motion had been moved 15 years ago it would have been somewhat more accurate, but it is not 2005; it is 2020. There is massive transformation happening in the energy sector and a massive drop in cost for renewable energy. The relativities are changing rapidly. This motion is 15 years out of date at an absolute minimum. The truth is that for many years now coal-fired power has not been the cheapest form of generation.

Three years ago, the Chief Scientist of this country was very clear on this. Members of the Katter party might think they know more than the Chief Scientist of Australia. I will back the Chief Scientist over members of the Katter party on this. One thing we have learned is that the Katter party does oppose subsidies somewhere. We know that the Katter party loves a subsidy for just about everything, but we have found the one thing it does not like subsidies for. That, apparently, is renewable energy. Congratulations. We have discovered something new about the Katter party's policy framework.

There is a range of issues that I want to cover. It is ironic that these North Queensland members are railing against renewable energy when they have the best solar resource in the world in North Queensland. The costs keep coming down. Solar farms are proliferating in North Queensland like there is no tomorrow, because it is relentlessly hot with continuous sunshine. Sun Metals is running one-third of its zinc refinery in Townville off a solar farm without any storage for about 330 days a year. The outdated member for Whitsunday wants to rail against industrial development, but industry is backing renewables because they are dropping their costs. In some cases, they do not even need storage to use it. The market is moving. The last coal-fired generator in Australia was constructed 13 years ago in 2007 at Kogan Creek. If it were profitable the private sector would be in there, but all of the private sector market money has been going into renewables because the costs keep dropping massively. Storage keeps dropping massively. This transformation will continue.

Everyone loves a stage coach. There are not too many of them around these days, because better technology came along. There are not too many landlines these days, either, as we all look at our iPhones. Technology is coming. We have to roll with it. The reality is that there will be coal-fired generation for some time yet—there is no doubt about that whatsoever—but the market will continue to move. We can have nostalgic motions such as this that are simply not accurate, but we can also accept certainly realities and work with them.

It is ironic that North Queensland MPs are railing against something in which they have an incredible natural advantage in terms of cheap power. We have been backing renewables for 5½ years now. We have the lowest electricity prices on the eastern seaboard because we have backed renewable energy. That is the truth of it. That is the way to bring down power prices.

It is interesting that no LNP members are speaking on this motion. In the budget lead-up in 2018 we heard the Leader of the Opposition say that she was pro renewables. She did that without telling her party room. There was a riot in the party room. The member for Burleigh was in apoplexy. They all were not coping. She had to soften it within a month. I understand that the member for Callide has been prevented from speaking by the member for Kawana, because they do not want him to take a position that might embarrass them. It is embarrassing: to call renewable energy a fantasy is ridiculous.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I just heard what the minister said. That is a complete fabrication. This is a crossbench motion. I am personally offended. I ask the minister to withdraw what he just said about me.

Mr SPEAKER: There were comments made directly about the member for Kawana. Minister, will you withdraw?

Mr BAILEY: I withdraw, Mr Speaker, but it is a fact that the member for Kawana and the member for Callide just had a disagreement.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The minister withdrew and then said 'but'. There is a long-held tradition in this place that when members say 'but' after a withdrawal they are continuing the same theme.

Mr SPEAKER: I did not hear the minister say 'but', but that is correct, Minister. You will withdraw unreservedly.

Mr BAILEY: I withdraw unreservedly.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr BOYCE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence. The member is making some really big assumptions and I take personal offence and ask him to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, will you withdraw?

Mr BAILEY: I withdraw. I notice that the member for Callide is not contributing to this debate. No LNP member has the courage to say anything in this debate. Mum is the word over there, and we know that their divisions are so endemic that the member for Callide is on his way to joining One Nation. The party room is fracturing. The record of those opposite is 43 per cent power price increases and not a single renewable energy project during their whole term in office. They are an embarrassment. I do have something for the member for Hinchinbrook. The Katter party are renowned jetski riders. There is hope: there is an electric jetski powered by solar that the member for Hinchinbrook—

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister.

Mr BAILEY:—and the Katter party can use.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

Mr BAILEY: Renewable energy is the way forward.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

(Time expired)

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

AYES, 5:

KAP, 3—Dametto, Katter, Knuth.

NQF, 1—Costigan.

PHON, 1—Andrew.

NOES, 85:

ALP, 47—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Lynham, Madden, McCallum, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Mullen, B. O'Rourke, C. O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Pegg, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Stewart, Trad, Whiting.

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


Grn, 1—Berkman.

Ind, 1—Bolton.

Resolved in the negative.

PRIVILEGE

Comments by Member for Everton, Withdrawal and Apology

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.06 pm): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I rise to correct the record about a statement I made on 14 July about borders. I was mistaken and I apologise for inadvertently misleading the House and I withdraw my statements.


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed from p. 2328, on motion of Mr Dick—

That the bills be now read a second time.

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (6.06 pm), continuing: Earlier when we adjourned the debate I was talking about the fact that the Labor Party has a habit of reinventing history. The member for Redlands said that the LNP government had this mantra of sack and sell and whatever else it is. The reality is that the only party that sold anything in Queensland is the Australian Labor Party. The Australian Labor Party sold \$16½ billion worth of assets of the people of Queensland after it told them it would not do that. It has a habit of misleading the people of Queensland. It sold the Queensland Motorways for \$3 billion. It sold the Abbot Point coal terminal for \$1.8 billion. The member for Inala—our present Premier—was sitting around the cabinet table when it sold QR National for \$4 billion. It sold a whole lot of energy assets and sold the Golden Casket. It sold Sungas. It sold Sun Retail. It sold Allgas for \$530 million—\$16.5 billion worth of assets of the people of Queensland without telling them. This is absolute proof that the Queensland Labor Party misleads the people of Queensland and it is attempting to do that again with this Appropriation Bill. That is the reason the government will not bring down a budget.

Labor has delayed the 2020-21 budget until after the state election, meaning that the bill would not likely pass until 2021, so we are here tonight extending the current budget to cover that period. Under this bill, there is unforeseen expenditure of \$1.114 billion from the Consolidated Fund for that unforeseen expenditure and that is to do with 13 departments from the 2019-20 budget that overspent their budgets. The interim supply budget for 2021 is due to the postponement of that 2021 budget from January 2021. The additional interim supply is roughly \$28.6 billion for government expenditure and \$50 million—because this is a cognate debate—for the Parliamentary Service.

When we debated the Appropriation Bill 2020 the then treasurer at the time said that there would be \$3 billion worth of spending, but this government did not identify where it was going to spend that money. It appears our current Treasurer is telling us exactly the same thing. It is a little unclear. There is another \$3 billion. Is it a \$6 billion slush fund that the Labor Party are putting aside so they can pork barrel into their own seats during this election campaign and try to hoodwink the people of Queensland or is it only \$3 billion? Maybe somebody over there—somebody who can actually read a budget sheet; although I doubt there is anybody over there who can—can tell us whether it is \$6 billion or \$3 billion they are going to pork barrel into Queensland and what exactly that pork-barrelling may look like.

Government members interjected.

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

Mr HART: We all know that before coronavirus hit Queensland we had the highest unemployment rate, the largest government debt, the lowest business confidence and the highest bankruptcy in the nation. That is because we have a Labor government. The Labor Party has no economic plan, it has no budget, so it has no plan moving forward. It is quite clear. Instead of the normal practice of the government providing us with a roughly 1,000-page budget that we can go through, tear apart and ask questions about, they have given us a 41-page glossy brochure. There are 234,000 Queenslanders out of work under this Labor government.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. There is too much cross-chamber chatter.

Mr HART: There is no more damning statistic than 234,000 Queenslanders out of work because this Labor government cannot manage our economy. On Monday the Premier had an opportunity to match the LNP's no new tax guarantee and she failed to do that. That is because the plan of those opposite is to increase taxes in Queensland. Over the last few years they have increased over nine taxes. They went to the election telling the people of Queensland they would not be raising taxes. but they went and did it. The people of Queensland cannot get any sense from this statement they have put out as to what is going to come in the future.

We all remember that this government raided the Public Service superannuation fund. They took billions of dollars out of that fund. They geared up our government owned corporations with debt, debt and more debt. They put billions of dollars in their kitty and told us that they were going to pay down debt, but debt has not gone down; it has, in fact, gone up. No doubt they will blame COVID-19 for this debt rise, but it is their incompetence that has led to this.

The Premier and the Treasurer at the time put out a set of fiscal principles that they said their government would operate to. The first one was reducing government debt to revenue. That has been a complete failure. The debt to revenue ratio has exploded from 63 per cent in the MYFER to 108 per

cent this financial year. They said they would target net operating surpluses. Again that has been a complete failure. Labor's \$8.1 billion budget deficit is the worst in Queensland's history. They said they would have a consistent capital program. No, that has not happened. In fact, they have cut their capital program, cutting infrastructure projects, at the expense of Queensland jobs. They said they would maintain competitive taxation. No, that has not happened either. They have failed on every one of these principles. Labor has introduced nine new taxes. They have ripped \$4 billion out of the Queensland economy because of these nine new taxes they have put in place. They said they would limit Public Service growth. No, they have not done that either. While population growth is forecast to increase at 1.25 per cent, the public sector has grown by 2.2 per cent.

The key point of this budget is that in six years Labor has racked up a record \$102 billion of debt because it has lost control of spending. The reality is that they have lost control of spending. They have put us in debt well over \$100 billion. Every dollar of that debt is money that cannot be spent to recover from COVID-19. Right at a time when we need the economy to get back on track, this government has put us in a fiscal position where that is going to be impossible.

It is not surprising that this government has put us into a fiscal position like this when we have the member for Woodridge as the Treasurer. We all remember that train wreck interview on 9 July when the new Treasurer—who was very, very clearly out of his depth—did not know the Queensland debt level, he did not know how many public servants were on his payroll, he did not know what size the Future Fund would be or how much money Labor would be raiding from the Queensland Public Service superannuation scheme. He could not name any of these things or how much savings the now defunct Service Priority Review Office delivered in the last financial year. He was quizzed about these things and he did not have an answer. It is not unusual for leaders of the Labor Party in Queensland to not have an answer. We all remember when the Premier of the state was asked what the GST rate was. I could talk to my two-year-old granddaughter and she would be able to tell me what the GST rate is in Australia, but our Premier, sadly, could not tell us that.

Mr Bailey interjected.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Miller has been regularly interjecting. I will start to name members.

Mr HART: Unlike the Labor Party, the LNP has a number of fiscal principles. We will strive to be the lowest taxing government in the nation by guaranteeing no new taxes and a 10-year royalty freeze. That will boost business confidence, attract more investment and create jobs. These are the things that really create jobs. We will target fiscal balances across the economic cycle by limiting general government expenditure to less than revenue. There is a surprising fact that those opposite might like to understand: you spend less than you earn. It is an unusual concept, I know, to those opposite: you spend less than you earn.

Mr Power: You've run deficits every time. You ran deficits every time you were in government.

Mr HART: This is the problem with the Australian Labor Party: if the story does not fit their narrative they reinvent history. Those of us who were elected in 2012 remember the legacy that was left behind by the Bligh government that caused a massive black hole in the budgets of Queensland for the three years that we were in government.

The Australian Labor Party has been in government since 2015, it is now 2020 and we are \$100 billion in debt. There is no economic plan to recover from that debt. They have a massive slush fund and no doubt we will see a conga line of their members standing in this place to tell us how much money is being spent in their electorates in an attempt to con the people of Queensland into re-electing them on 31 October. The people of Queensland know what they need to do.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (6.19 pm): I have had an enforced period of reflection as I listened to a few speeches. It is interesting that, when any of those opposite talk about uniting and recovering in terms of the budget and our economy, the one thing that will not come from their lips is any mention of COVID-19 and its impact on our economy. They have one trite line, which is to blame others, saying that they use it as an excuse. We need to confront the reality of the historic challenges facing us.

The federal government is stepping up by increasing its deficit from \$500 billion, which is roughly where it is now. According to Peter Costello, it could reach over \$1 trillion. Those are sobering deficits that the federal government is running. Those opposite talk about running cheaper taxes. The member for Burleigh said that we need to lecture the federal government about taking in more than they spend. It is very disappointing to hear such things. They are also things that are never applied to the federal

government, but it goes further. If any member opposite wants to use a figure that includes any debt that is resolved in things that are not government debt, in the same sentence they should reveal that the debt of the federal government includes things such as the debt on the NBN, but none of them have the honesty to do that. None of them will be able to do that.

As I said, those opposite will not confront the realities that Queensland faces. They will not look at the struggle that this whole nation—not just Queensland—faces with COVID-19. I heard the Treasurer quote Sheraan Underwood from Deloitte Access Economics. Obviously that quote slipped by some members opposite so I will repeat it. When looking at the data on various nations, Sheraan Underwood noted that those that had the best economic results also had the best COVID results. He put it in a simple sentence that I think is really important for those opposite to hear. He stated—

The underlying equation is simple. The greater the success against the virus, the greater the success in protecting economies against the pandemic.

We see that the nations that have been successful in reducing the spread of the pandemic have a smaller reduction in their growth rate. Those nations that have had a terrible response to the pandemic have much worse economic outcomes. We see that in Australia. When we look at the states, South Australia and Queensland lead the pack in terms of suffering the least damage. Those opposite need to realise that this is a huge challenge for our state. Pretending that it does not exist will do nothing to address the struggles that we face.

We have to think about the alternatives. Let us think of what would have happened if we had listened to the LNP about opening the borders. The member for Burleigh had billboards asking for it. They called 64 times for the borders to be opened. Let us focus on that. Not only did they call for the borders to be opened; they called for that to give certainty to Victorians so that they could book their holidays and arrive at tourist hotspots in our cities and coastal towns from 1 July. That is what they said the Queensland government should do. We would have had tens of thousands of Victorians here. I remember during the debate they said how wonderful it would be if, on 1 July, we had all of those people visiting coastal towns and tourist hotspots, no doubt including the Barcaldine Workers Heritage Centre. That would have been an economic disaster.

I recognise that the member for Everton has had 64 opportunities—it is probably more, but I am making a rhetorical point so members will give me a bit of a break—to reveal the LNP's plan to pay for their billions and billions of dollars worth of commitments.

An honourable member: \$23 billion.

Mr POWER: I take the interjection: \$23 billion. The member for Everton has had 64 opportunities to stand here and be honest about that. They have the magic pudding economy. They say that there will be no debt, no deficit, no spending and no borrowing, but we know that it does not add up. The people of Queensland know that those opposite want to bury their heads in the sand about COVID-19. They want to bury their heads in the sand about getting right the coordination between our health response and our economic response. On top of that, they have absolutely ignored 64 opportunities to reveal how they will fund their commitments. We on this side have seen that and the people of Queensland have seen it. We know that when they were last in government they sold \$10 billion worth of assets without asking the people. They sacked 14,000 people, including 1,800 nurses. We know their record so we also know that they are not telling us the whole story about how they will cut, sack and sell. They have a record of doing that in government.

When they were in government, they increased debt by \$7 billion. The member for Burleigh told us that we need to spend less than we take in, but they increased debt by \$7 billion. We know that they sacked 14,000 public servants and we know that they sold off Queensland government assets.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr POWER: It was \$10 billion before the election. They increased taxes by more than \$3 billion. Their promises are hollow. Their promises are not believed by the people of Queensland. They are not taken seriously by the people of Queensland because they will not reveal their plan and they will not take COVID-19 seriously.

As I said earlier when speaking on the public service bill, we know that our fantastic public servants have kept us safe by doing the hard yards yet the opposition wants to attack them, traduce them and bring them down. Our nurses have stood up with masks and visors on their faces to take the samples that have detected COVID cases. Our fantastic police officers, such as the ones that the

member for Lockyer used to direct, have taken on the responsibility of patrolling our borders to ensure that people follow the guidelines of our state. During this debate all we hear are their attacks on public servants. I recognise that in keeping our economy safe public servants have been on the front line. Whether it is contact tracers making phone calls and looking through data, whether it is our police officers or whether it is our nurses, all have done fantastic work.

I recognise that we need to see some facts about unemployment and we need to reflect upon a few trite lines. The reality is that we need to fight to create jobs. Before we faced COVID, our unemployment figures were much lower than those we were left with by the LNP. In fact, we had the lowest rate in eight years. Through that period 250,000 jobs were created. What is the LNP's record on jobs? I challenge any one of them to say how many jobs were lost during their period in government. We created 250,000 jobs. How many jobs were lost under the LNP? We will not hear about that from the LNP.

We know that recovery is going to be very volatile. The best way to analyse this is through the biggest survey, that is, the Australian Bureau of Statistics jobs and wages survey, which covers 99 per cent of large employers and 86 per cent of small businesses. That survey, which is the most accurate one, shows that between mid-April and 22 August in Queensland the number of jobs increased by 5.8 per cent. That is obviously much more than the national average. We look to recover that and continue to do that. The biggest thing we need to do is to keep our economy safe.

We have also heard about projections in the future. We need to note that the Queensland Treasury has forecast that 82,000 Queensland jobs will be added by June next year. To be honest, I am more confident that Queenslanders will do such a great job in recovering—they will unite and they will recover—that they will be out there generating jobs and encouraging the Queensland economy. I wanted to speak—

Mr Hunt: I thought you were done.

Mr POWER: No, I am never done when I have the Minister for Main Roads here. He has done such a great job in my electorate, where transport is so important. We know that there is spending in this budget for our roads, for example Waterford Tamborine Road. There are two projects underway on the Mount Lindesay Highway. One is the construction of four lanes between Rosia Road and Stoney Camp Road. The minister knows that. That four-laning is really essential. Some 20 per cent of the traffic gets off at that exit. The other one is the four-laning going into Jimboomba. The northbound lanes will have a new flood reduced bridge that will mean much better connection on the Mount Lindesay Highway when we have floods, as well as four lanes at all other times. I wanted to mention that because I am gratuitously pushing the minister for more. I will continue do that.

We have recently completed the building of two ambulance stations. We have a former ambo in the room in the member for Thuringowa. He is so passionate about our Ambulance Service. I have gone to those stations and met those fantastic people who are passionate about looking after the people of Logan. The member for Thuringowa might ask how many ambulance stations the LNP built for our growing area.


Mr Harper: None.

Mr POWER: He knows it: the answer is none. They did not commit anything to our growing area.

People might know that I am a former schoolteacher. I am passionate about the transformation that education makes. I mention the schools we have built. We have built the Yarrabilba State School and the Yarrabilba State Community College. We are going to stage 2, which includes the new performing arts centre. On top of that, we have just announced the Greenbank North school and there are also new classrooms at Logan Village and Park Ridge. This is a growing area. Members might say, 'Well, member for Logan, this is a growing area; you are going to get classrooms and you are going to get new schools.' The question is: how many new classrooms were built under the LNP when its cuts came in? There were zero new classrooms for our growing area. Of course there were zero new schools, but there were also zero new classrooms for our growing area. They had no interest in our growing area and how much we wanted to do with it.

I also mention our police. The senior sergeants in our area are fantastic. They are committed to and integrated with our community. They have a great bunch of police officers who are fighting to keep their community safe. One of the most important things we did was expand the Yarrabilba Logan Village Police Beat into a full station, expanding the area massively and even having room for extra officers. They are doing a fantastic job in a new area, really expanding the services we deliver.

There is much more I could speak about with regard to what we have done and committed in our area, but I say to the people of Logan: let us not go backwards. In this challenging time, when we have to get our health right and our economy right, let us not go back to cutting, sacking and selling. That most hurts growing areas anywhere in Queensland. It hurt lots of areas that were not growing, but it hurt us in growing areas the most. That is why I am committed to these appropriation bills and to the Queensland government, which will unite and recover for Logan and for the entire state.

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (6.34 pm): It will be a long couple of days listening to every Labor member talk about the pork-barrelling in their seats and go through the list of projects they have funded. I will tell members about Nicklin shortly. I will start by noting the objective of these bills. It is to provide supplementary appropriation for unforeseen expenditure in the prior 2019-20 financial year and to appropriate additional interim supply for the current 2020-21 financial year. We know that budgets conventionally appropriate 1.5 years of funding to allow for any overruns or changes to budget timetables. As a result, funding from the 2019-20 budget is set to end on 31 December 2020. As noted by other speakers, because Labor has delayed the 2020-21 budget until after the state election, a bill would not likely be passed until 2021 and therefore these appropriation bills before the House are required to extend additional funding to maintain government activities from 1 January 2021.

It feels like a bit of a sprint to the finish line for this government this week. With the shorter debate times for bills and the laziness this Labor government has shown in power by having fewer sitting days and shorter, apparently family-friendly hours—family friendly for all the Labor members in Brisbane, not for regional MPs; I see my friend from Thuringowa is probably affected by that as well but his Brisbane friends are not—we are in the House for the last time this parliament, debating urgent bills to keep the functions of government going.

I will deal firstly with the unforeseen expenditure. I note that under the bill the Treasurer is authorised to pay \$1.114 billion for the budget overruns of 13 departments in the 2019-20 financial year, noting the largest overruns are in the Department of Education. With very little capital spending on my own 21 schools in Nicklin, this is disappointing to note, particularly as the member for Logan outlined all the projects at his schools. I also note an overspend in the Department of Youth Justice of almost \$76 million. Considering the government's failures in this area, it would be more pleasing to see crime going down with more money spent, but that, unfortunately, of course, is not the case.

Moving to the interim supply clauses, I note that the appropriation bills also provide additional interim supply for the 2020-21 financial year due to the postponement of the 2020-21 budget from 1 January 2021. The additional interim supply is roughly equivalent to another half of the 2019 Appropriation Act—\$28.635 billion for government expenditure and \$50.5 million for parliamentary services.

This is the second additional supply appropriation bill legislated this year. The first was introduced by the then treasurer, the member for South Brisbane, on 22 April 2020 as the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. That Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020 provided a further \$3.181 billion to the 2019-20 financial year, meaning that a total of \$4.796 billion of extra funding was spent last year, accounting for the \$1.114 billion of unforeseen expenditure. The Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020 also authorised a further \$1.615 billion for the 2020-21 financial year.

As one of our greatest ever prime ministers and a great economic manager John Howard observed, you cannot fatten a pig on market day. After five years in complete mismanagement, time has run out for this incompetent government, that even the CFMMEU said was full of duds, to fix their mess before election day. The record 234,800 Queenslanders who are out of work are not fooled, the struggling business community is not fooled and the rest of Queensland is not fooled by Labor's smoke-and-mirrors act to try to hide their failures prior to the judgement of the people on 31 October.

When we headed into this unprecedented pandemic our economy was already in terrible shape. Queensland should be an economic powerhouse, with huge business investment, business confidence and employment, but where did we find ourselves before this pandemic began? We had the worst unemployment rate in the nation in every year since the state election and in the latest ABS labour force data released in July this year, and we were facing \$90 billion in debt.

Our third Treasurer in three years—the current one—famously told us on national television that debt is a tool. It is not the only tool on that side of the House. We all know Labor's favourite economic tool, do we not? That is tax. There are nine new or increased taxes in these budgets ripping almost \$4 billion out of the economy. Tax is the Labor tool for trying to fix their mess, which is why they refuse to match the LNP commitment of ruling out any new taxes or increases. They refuse because we know

what is going to happen after the election. There will be the COVID tax. They might even try to soften it and call it a levy, but we all know it is coming. They are going to need more of Queenslanders' money to pay back their borrowings for their election war chest. If, like the Treasurer, you still have your first dollar, you might want to hide it because Labor is coming after it.

That is why Labor want to hide their secret plans by not producing a budget before the election. What Queenslanders were presented with this week—a pathetic 41-page economic review—was an insult. I have seen more detailed financial statements at a local bowls club AGM. Our last committee report was 130 pages long. The people of Queensland deserve better. The people of Queensland need economic managers, not this creche of party hacks, as described by the CFMMEU. Then we also saw the slashing of infrastructure spending by \$1.3 billion in the last financial year and at a time when it should have been fast-tracked to stimulate the economy.

We are hearing Labor members spruik about the pork barrel projects in their electorates while my constituents in Nicklin are neglected. The Nambour Hospital redevelopment, which the current Treasurer said—


Mr Healy interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! The member for Cairns will cease interjecting.

Mr HUNT: The Nambour Hospital redevelopment, which the current Treasurer said would be completed by 2020, has barely commenced. The Nambour Police Station was promised over three years ago and still we wait for shovels in the dirt.

We have dangerous intersections at Cooroy that the government were dragged kicking and screaming into a community consultation about in February last year and still there is no word on a plan forward despite several questions on notice to the minister. We have the disgraceful situation of the Obi Obi Road—the tourist gateway to our hinterland towns and the beautiful towns of Kenilworth and Mapleton. With frequent visitors and its camping grounds, the town of Kenilworth is going ahead in leaps and bounds, but it has this dreadful road that Labor do not want to know about leading into the town. They have no plans to fix it. We have the broken promise of nine new rail services for the Sunshine Coast reduced to just one. It is absolutely pathetic. It is a generation of failure for the people of Nicklin.

Those are just a few examples of the economic mismanagement, incompetence and neglect that is destroying jobs and holding back our communities. My community and the rest of Queensland deserve better. They deserve a team focused on the job at hand and focused on real Queenslanders, not focused on celebrities, sports stars and their own jobs. It is almost time for this nightmare to end and there is light at the end of the tunnel for the people of Queensland with the election of a Frecklington LNP on 31 October—a Frecklington LNP government that will invest for growth, unleash Queensland industry, supercharge the regions and secure our children's future.

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (6.44 pm): I rise to speak in support of both the Appropriation Bill 2020 and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2020. However, I will focus my contribution solely on the Appropriation Bill 2020.

Prior to COVID-19, the Palaszczuk government was on track to deliver its fifth consecutive budget surplus. We had seen record exports above \$80 billion per year, continuously outpacing New South Wales and Victoria combined. Government debt was lower than both New South Wales and Victoria in absolute terms and as a proportion of revenue.

Then in March this year everything changed and was turned on its head. As we learnt last week from the federal Treasurer, COVID has plunged Australia into our first recession in nearly three decades. It is in times of crisis that government must step up and do the heavy lifting. The bill before the House does exactly that by seeking supplementary appropriation for 2019-20 for unforeseen expenditure of \$1.114 billion incurred by 13 departments and also appropriates the amount of \$28.635 billion additional interim supply for 2020-21.

In the midst of coronavirus Queenslanders continue to be resilient, determined and optimistic. Our strong health response means our state's expected economic recovery from COVID-19 will be almost twice as strong as the national average. To date, our government has committed more than \$7 billion in initiatives to support Queenslanders' health, jobs and businesses, including: \$1½ billion to support workers and large and regionally significant businesses; \$1.2 billion in health measures; \$950 million in payroll tax relief, including refunds, payment holidays and deferrals; \$400 million for land tax relief; \$360 million to exempt JobKeeper payments from payroll tax; \$249 million to extend payroll

and land tax measures; \$54.5 million in support for essential public transport; \$50 million to defer gaming machine taxes to support pubs and clubs; \$50 million in support for tourism businesses; and \$25 million in housing and homelessness support.

This week we committed a further \$4 billion in recovery measures, taking our total direct COVID stimulus to \$11 billion. We are backing Queensland businesses and supporting local jobs with ongoing investments and new program funding, including: \$249 billion for tax relief for small and medium businesses across the state; a two-month payroll waiver for businesses with annual Australian taxable wages of up to \$6.5 million; continuing to exempt JobKeeper subsidy payments from payroll tax, despite the federal government making these payments liable for income tax; and for business owners renting state government premises and incurring a demonstrable COVID impact we are extending existing rent relief to the end of this year. These measures are in addition to the previously announced payroll and land tax relief and tax exemption for JobKeeper payments.

We will also support our regional councils to help them refinance existing debt, allowing them to redirect funding for job-creating capital works programs. As we continue to support Queensland communities, we are investing in world-class education, with \$235 million to upgrade education infrastructure across the state, delivering 44 projects, including works at schools in Riverview, Bundamba, Redbank Plains, Goodna and Collingwood Park. Our \$477 million Cooler Cleaner Schools Program will put air conditioning in every classroom, library and staffroom in every state school in Queensland, and we will put 190,000 solar panels on school rooftops to help offset the cost.


Nearly two million households in Queensland will see another \$50 taken off their electricity bills from this month thanks to Queensland's publicly owned power assets. This is in addition to our COVID household relief package, which provided Queensland households with \$200 off their utility bills and \$500 for small business. We have also locked in another annual \$50 dividend payment to go to Queensland households next year in 2021. We can do this because we still own our energy assets—assets that those opposite would have sold had they had the chance, assets that include Swanbank Power Station in my electorate.

Unlike other states, the dividends from our publicly owned companies flow not to multinational shareholders overseas but to Queensland families across the state. Queensland's publicly owned electricity companies will invest more than \$1.76 billion on capital works in 2020-21, supporting up to 3,920 jobs. Through the measures contained in this bill we will invest \$500 million in a Renewable Energy Fund that will mean our publicly owned energy corporations can increase public ownership of commercial renewable energy projects and supporting infrastructure. The Renewable Energy Fund will complement our recent \$145 million commitment to establish three renewable energy zones.

We are backing Queensland jobs with more than \$150 million for our small business adaptation grants which locally in Bundamba have seen over 27 businesses benefit from accountants and barbers to landscapers and gyms. We are establishing the \$500 million Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund. Small and medium enterprises with a proven product and defined market but that require capital to aggressively grow can access this fund. By putting our money on the table, we can get more projects through the vital investment decision phase, construction underway and people employed as soon as possible.

As we deliver our plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs, we have moved to protect our public assets while getting them to work hard for Queensland's future through the establishment of the Queensland Future Fund, which has been seeded with over \$5 billion in locked down protected public assets as part of our well-considered and prudent fiscal strategy.

Queenslanders are working together to contain COVID-19, and that is why we have been able to take steps to reopen our economy. We have a solid economic plan to create jobs by investing in infrastructure, buying locally, kickstarting Queensland manufacturing and supporting our small business. Our strong health response to coronavirus has been recognised around the world, and it is being balanced with unprecedented levels of infrastructure and economic investment. I commend both bills to the House.

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (6.52 pm): I rise to speak in this cognate debate on the appropriation bills. Whilst I will not be opposing these bills because we must ensure government functions continue, these bills highlight the incompetence and ignorance of this government and the looming financial crisis which this state will face over the next four years. That crisis is underpinned by a predicted \$102 billion debt—a debt that defies all logic, a debt that will no doubt be worn by generations to come right across Queensland. It would be remiss of us during the course of this debate not to highlight the scale of that debt and what that means for each and every Queenslanders.

When it comes to financial management in this state, the finances were in a perilous state before the pandemic. Whilst this government might like to hang their hat on the pandemic as the reason for bringing these appropriation bills before the parliament, the fact remains that the finances were in disarray, that the finances were a mess and that this state was heading on a perilous journey long before the pandemic actually started.

Just as I did last year when we had a proper budget and a proper estimates process, I will start with the failings of the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and the debacle that is mine and quarry safety in Queensland, because things have continued just as they were. Let me remind the House, yet again, of the recommendation of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee report that was released over three years ago which states, 'The Mines Inspectorate should increase the proportion of unannounced inspections to a rate of at least 50 per cent of total inspections.'

Despite that, this minister is content with 20 per cent as a goal—20 per cent of inspections that, as we have seen over the term of the Palaszczuk government, has decreased. Between the 2016-17 and 2018-19 financial years, inspections of coalmines were reduced by 11 per cent under this minister's watch. When it comes to audits, the reduction in mineral mines and quarries for the same period was 83 per cent. In that same period eight people have lost their lives in Queensland's mines and quarries. Not only have we failed to meet the recommendations under this minister's watch and not only have the inspections and audits reduced; the unannounced inspections under this minister are actually announced. No wonder there is no need for additional funding: the job that this minister is responsible for is not being done.

What is highlighted by this Appropriation Bill is what is not in there. The fact that this particular portfolio has not required additional funding as part of the bill before the House highlights the importance of the resources sector in this state and the fact that the resources sector has continued unabated throughout the pandemic. In fact, it has been a shining light in Queensland. The royalties—\$5.5 billion in royalties which were predicted to fall into the state government coffers last year; there has been a reduction—are going to get this state out of the trouble that it is in. For that reason, we should be making sure that the resources sector is appropriately supported, is appropriately resourced and, when it comes to infrastructure, that those areas where our mines and quarries are operating are supported—and that means road infrastructure and it means telecommunications. Only this week we have heard of widescale phone dropouts and problems in Central Queensland. In this day and age that is not good enough because it puts people's lives at risk, not only miners and property owners but also people travelling through those areas. It is a safety risk.

It is only fair that, when it comes to the resources sector and what it contributes to Queensland's economy, we get our fair share of the pie flowing back into those mining areas such as the electorate of my colleague the member for Gregory. There are a number of mines in his area as well. Not only have we failed to meet that criteria, but now we have a scaled back quasi-budget. After all, it was during last year's estimates that we saw, in writing, the failings of the department. The bad news for Queensland's mine and quarry workers is that those failings have not been addressed. Like the former member for Bundamba said, the Palaszczuk government pokes coalminers in the eye and uses them as pawns—pawns who are failed time and time again when it comes to mine safety.

Let me be very clear: if Minister Lynham or the Treasurer stood up in this House and said they needed more money to increase inspections to fulfil the recommendations of a bipartisan committee with expert advice, I, for one, would support them. Every mineworker in Queensland needs to know that it was this minister and the Palaszczuk government that cut 25 per cent from the natural resources management services in the last budget, despite the actual spend being 30 per cent above the budget. I asked last year what was being cut, and I repeat that question now: Minister, what is being cut?

One thing that definitely is not being cut is the charges being forced upon our primary producers. They will recall that it was this minister and this government that, until the COVID-19 pandemic, planned to smack them with increased charges and, when the pandemic hit, they put those increases on hold. They are not gone; they are just hidden away for this minister to reveal after the election. This government would have Queenslanders believe that they have their best interests at heart and that they can go to the election and some time after the election they will bring down a proper budget. Queenslanders are supposed to believe them and trust them. On their track record, we know that that is far from the case.

The only party with a plan to help primary production grow is the LNP. The Palaszczuk government does not have any plan when it comes to agriculture in this state. After all, primary producers have been demonised by this government to the same extent as our coalminers. If the


minister does not need any more funding because he has failed to do the job that Queenslanders need, then one has to question why that is the case when we still have safety issues in our mines and our quarries.

It is a dark day for Queensland when two of our key industries have been failed by one minister and failed by a government. I will not be voting against these bills because our teachers, our Corrective Services officers, our police and our fireys deserve to be paid for what they do for this state.

Debate, on motion of Mr Last, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

High School Seniors 2020

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (7.00 pm): I rise this evening to pay tribute to the soon-to-be graduating high school seniors of 2020. I am very fortunate to have the outstanding San Sisto Girls College in my own electorate of Chatsworth, but I would like to extend my tribute in this speech to all the year 12 seniors throughout Queensland.

This 2020 cohort has endured many firsts. I stand to be corrected, but I believe this year group was one of the first to undertake prep year, NAPLAN testing and the transition from the old OP tertiary entrance system to the new ATAR system. They are now the first generation in over a century to study through a pandemic.


Throughout Queensland, year 12 senior students have shown remarkable resilience and adaptation in the way they have undertaken their studies during this challenging period. My youngest son, Lachlan, who turns 18 today, is part of this cohort and I have witnessed firsthand how he has had to modify his study and extracurricular program this year. The academic program and sporting calendar have been adapted where required, yet when I drop him off at school the way in which he and his mates just 'get on with it' is truly inspirational. I am aware there has been consternation over school formals, awards nights and schoolies week, but the positive way in which this year 12 cohort of 2020 has continued on is remarkable.

I also pay tribute to the outstanding teachers and support staff throughout Queensland in both the private and public system regardless of where they are located. Their professionalism and dedication to maintaining the educational needs of the year 12 students of 2020 is of the highest order. My wife, Roz, is a teacher at a private college, and the way in which she threw herself into online study delivery was simply outstanding. It was common for her to be preparing online lessons into the early hours of the morning.

To the year 12 senior students throughout Queensland I would say that, although this year has been harrowing and challenging, remember that you have earned the admiration and respect of your teachers, your parents, your family, your friends and all of the members of parliament in this chamber. The level of maturity and resilience you have all shown during this unforgettable year will hold you in good stead for the rest of your life. Your particular year group has endured more change than any other year group before you. I cannot begin to tell you how proud I am of you all.

To the year 12 students throughout Queensland: I wish you all the very best as you embark upon your senior exam block period in the coming weeks. Remember that your final marks do not determine your destiny in life. Sure, they are important for those of you who wish to embark on university studies, but your ATAR is not the thing which will define you. Remember that the gloomy skies will clear and the sun will shine in your lives for many years to come. Never stop chasing your dreams. Look after yourselves mentally and physically. Take a few calculated risks. Be a critical thinker. Challenge what you read and see. Look after your mates. Follow your passion in life. You are a remarkable year group. Go forward and proudly make your mark.

Horn, Mr J


 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (7.03 pm): This evening I want to pay tribute to Jeff Horn and his team. Obviously Jeff is a hero around Australia and around the world, particularly in Queensland, but especially in my local area because he trains at the Stretton Boxing Club. It was a real privilege for me to go to one of Jeff's final training sessions in Stretton before he headed off to Townsville. Although he and his team did not get the result they were hoping for against Tim Tszyu, he remains a hero to all of us, particularly locally in Stretton.

Jeff does a tremendous amount of work that is not recognised and he does not seek recognition for it. I know that he gives tickets to local schools. He talks to young people about anti-bullying, and I have also seen him support local charities. He does not seek any publicity for that; he just gets in and helps out where he can. He is still the same guy that he was when I first met him, which is a real tribute to him given the tremendous success he has had. In my view, he definitely deserves a statue at Suncorp Stadium. I know there are policies and procedures around that, but I think in due course and at the appropriate time Jeff definitely deserves a statue at Suncorp Stadium for all of his achievements, particularly his world title win against Manny Pacquiao at Suncorp Stadium.

I spoke about Jeff's team, and of course his trainer is Glenn Rushton. Glenn is a tremendous guy. He has not just helped Jeff; he has helped a whole lot of people not only with self-defence and to become better people but also with anti-bullying. I know that Glenn received quite a bit of criticism after the most recent fight. I think it was completely unwarranted. I know that Glenn would not be too worried about it. It would be water off a duck's back for him. Glenn Rushton lives in my local community. You see him at the shops. You see him at the local pub when there is a fight on in the United States. I have seen people come up to him when he is having coffee with his family, and he never knocks anyone back for a photo or a chat. He is a first-class guy. I think all of that criticism of Glenn was completely unwarranted. He is always going to look after his boxers' best interests and Jeff's best interests. He is a first-class guy. That criticism was completely unwarranted.

Glenn and Jeff, along with Frank Mechler, have founded the Australian Martial Arts Youth Development Alliance and Bullyproof Australia. They are working to assist year 7 students in particular who are around 12 years of age where bullying is most prevalent. They have helped over 1,000 school students so far. I think that is a tremendous effort that does not receive appropriate recognition, so well done to Jeff, well done to Glenn and well done to the team.

Clayfield Electorate, Road Infrastructure

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (7.06 pm): In the last sitting of this parliament I detailed the ongoing failures of the Labor government to deliver infrastructure in my electorate of Clayfield, particularly around the Albion railway station. I now want to discuss the ongoing failures of the Labor government to deal with congestion issues on the Lutwyche Road-Gympie Road corridor.


The Lutwyche Road-Gympie Road corridor is one of the major road arteries on the north side of Brisbane. It delivers up to 70,000 vehicles a day from Brisbane's northern suburbs and beyond into the city each morning, and it delivers them home again each evening. It runs right through the middle of the Clayfield electorate from the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital through Windsor and Lutwyche to Stafford and Chermiside toward Beams Road at Carseldine. It is in fact a 12-kilometre stretch that is peppered with 35 sets of traffic lights. It constantly ranks in the RACQ's top 10 worst congested roads and it took out sixth place in 2020. Only this week the Kedron Park Road and Lutwyche Road intersection was rated as Queensland's most dangerous. In fact, it has had nine crashes resulting in 16 fatalities or serious injury at that intersection between 2017 and 2019.

That is why I was delighted to join with Deb Frecklington, the Leader of the Opposition, Ed Sangjitphun, our candidate for Stafford, and Amanda Cooper, our candidate for Aspley, to announce that an LNP government will spend \$20 million on upgrading the Lutwyche Road-Gympie Road corridor. Our plans will involve cutting travel times by five minutes on average during peak and increase average speed times for motorists by 20 kilometres per hour in peak times. The work will include: better synchronising traffic lights; intersection upgrades, including increased turning lanes; investigation of the Kedron Park Road-Lutwyche Road corridor that I mentioned previously; as well as other intersections causing congestion and delay along that corridor.

The LNP's South-East Queensland congestion program will create 3,100 construction jobs, and the Gympie upgrade alone will create 62 of those jobs. It is the LNP that has a plan to bust congestion in Brisbane because Labor has failed to do so. Labor's track record is for a proposed Northern Transitway, and that will cause major issues for local business who are still campaigning against it.

The LNP has promised greater and better consultation with those businesses to ensure that jobs and businesses are protected, especially in these difficult times. The project budget under Labor has also increased by almost \$20 million to \$72 million, but still to date no work has been undertaken on this transit way. It is only the LNP—with a plan to bust congestion—that will make it easier for families in my electorate and the electorates of Stafford and Aspley to get to work and to get home. The LNP will support businesses, it will support jobs and it will get Queensland working again.

Cairns Hospital, Upgrade


 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (7.09 pm): As most honourable members of the House would be aware, the Premier and cabinet travelled to Cairns last week for a cabinet meeting. I know ministers were out and about meeting with various groups and inspecting a wide range of projects currently underway which are funded by this government. In particular today I want to talk about the announcements by the Premier in relation to the Cairns Hospital. The first is the \$51.4 million of upgrades at the hospital which include: a \$26.4 million expansion of the Cairns Hospital emergency department, which has been needed for quite some time; a \$1.5 million project to turn a currently unused space into a multidisciplinary pre-admission clinic; a \$2 million commitment to add a new endoscopy room; a \$800,000 project to fit out a much needed 12th operating theatre; and a \$20.7 million commitment to crucial upgrades at the hospital which will cater for projected future demand. Not only will these improvements deliver world-class health facilities for our region, but this investment will support further construction jobs which is crucial for our economic recovery.

The Cairns emergency department sees more than 74,000 presentations in a year and this number continues to grow. The Cairns Hospital is on par with other emergency departments in South-East Queensland, such as the Princess Alexandra Hospital and the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. The \$26.4 million expansion of the Cairns Hospital emergency department is particularly welcome. I have spoken on a number of occasions to doctors and nurses and inspected firsthand what is required down there. I know that Dr Lambros Halkidis and his fellow colleagues were very pleased with the news when the Premier announced it last week. This project will build on infrastructure projects already underway which include \$70 million going into a new three-storey, state-of-the-art 53-bed acute care mental health facility; \$4.5 million for refurbishment of the Cairns Hospital to create an 11-bed ward; and \$3.7 million for a hybrid theatre for vascular surgery and cardiac imaging.

The other exciting announcement at the Cairns Hospital is that the Palaszczuk government will put Cairns on the health map as a tertiary hospital by seeking a memorandum of understanding with James Cook University to transition to a university hospital. That has been a goal and it has been something that we as a community have got behind. We are very keen to see this proceed. We are very pleased also with the announcement by the Premier. As we unite and recover from COVID-19, we are investing in essential infrastructure that is very much needed, in addition to supporting local jobs and helping jump-start the economy which has been impacted globally.

(Time expired)

Burdekin Electorate, Sweet Days, Hot Nights Festival


 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (7.12 pm): We commemorate many things in this House. All of them are important and all of them are about acknowledging an issue, a cause or a person's achievements. Tonight I rise to mention a commemoration that does all three of those things. A few days ago, 'Gimme Jimmy' was officially launched in the Burdekin. At its heart is a plea for Australian music royalty Jimmy Barnes to join us at the 2021 Sweet Days, Hot Nights Festival, but it is much more than that. No matter where you grew up, everyone remembers that iconic vision of Jimmy Barnes standing in front of a roaring cane fire belting out the lyrics to *Working Class Man*. That was over 30 years ago and it was filmed near Cairns.

As I have said many times in this House, our canefarmers excel at improvement. For most cane-growing regions, the days—or should that be nights—of cane fires are over, but not in the Burdekin. The biggest sugar-producing area in Australia is still home to cane fires and what we call 'black snow'. It annoys the hell out of us but it also symbolises the driving force of the Burdekin economy. COVID-19 forced this year's Sweet Days, Hot Nights Festival to become a virtual event, but from 27 to 29 May 2021 the crackle of the cane fire will herald both the start of the festival and the start of the crushing in the Burdekin district.

Let me give the House an overview of Sweet Days, Hot Nights and members will see why we deserve the one and only Jimmy Barnes. The competitors gather with the 'Rising Sun'—a bunch of 'Misfits' piling into the showgrounds, and those who do not make it in are left 'Standing on the Outside'. Some of the competitors are in it for fun and some have amazing stories about their dedication to the sugar industry. Whether they wear a suit during the week or they are a 'Working Class Man', they all fight it out to be 'The Best' because there is certainly 'No Second Prize'. Jimmy, if you say yes, I will even shout you a drink on the 'Saturday Night'—none of that 'Cheap Wine' but a decent drink. By the time you say 'Goodbye', you will understand the charm of the Burdekin. I think we could probably come

up with lyrics for Jimmy Barnes for a song called 'Sweet Days, Hot Nights' and have him perform that song at that festival next year. It would be a great event for the Burdekin. To Jimmy, remember, 'I'm Still on Your Side'. See you next May in the Burdekin.

Mansfield Electorate, Palaszczuk Labor Government Achievements


 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (7.15 pm): As a Jimmy Barnes fan, I am most impressed by that speech. 2020 has been a tough year for every Queenslanders, and I am committed to supporting my community with funding for jobs, health, education and local businesses as we navigate this global pandemic. Since being elected, I have secured well over \$100 million for our local schools to invest in new classrooms and buildings, facilities, refurbishments, extensions and maintenance. We are on track to deliver air conditioning for all staffrooms, classrooms and libraries as part of the \$477 million Cooler Cleaner Schools Program. Solar panels are also being rolled out to offset emissions—a stark contrast to when the LNP were in government delivering not one new classroom in my electorate. We are providing free TAFE courses for Queenslanders under 21, and a full-time teacher aide has been provided for every prep class.

During this term of government, the Gambling Community Benefit Fund has provided more than \$759,000 to 40 local community, service and sporting groups for much needed resources. A local institution, the Mount Gravatt Community Centre continues to be financially supported by the Palaszczuk government for its essential community services, including the highly successful Ways to Wellness program and the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. The Palaszczuk government has invested \$749 million for the M1 upgrade from Eight Mile Plains to Daisy Hill and \$4.5 million to upgrade the Eight Mile Plains park-and-ride facility.

With the community's support, the Palaszczuk government has put Queensland on the road to recovery and is leading our state with a strong health response enabling Labor to deliver Queensland's economic recovery plan. The Palaszczuk government has provided over \$1.6 million to 177 small businesses in the community through the Small Business COVID-19 Adaptation Grant Program. This is a fantastic boost for our local economy and a strong indication of Labor's commitment to supporting our road to economic recovery.

Our response has allowed the Queensland economy to reopen more quickly, including the Mansfield electorate small business community. The Leader of the Opposition and the LNP wanted to open our borders and cannot be trusted with our recovery. The LNP do not have a plan. They do have a record—a cut, sack and sell record—that the members of my community of Mansfield remember all too well. Only the Premier and the Labor team have a plan for economic recovery that will not hurt Queenslanders by cutting services, sacking workers and selling assets.

Noosa Electorate, Community Safety

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (7.18 pm): Communities and frontliners across Queensland are increasingly frustrated by the disrespect shown by a minority of Queenslanders who continue to put others at risk. Noosa is no different, and even though we are fortunate to have fabulous police with statistics that show decreasing crimes, it does not mean there is a decrease in poor and dangerous behaviours. Offending and repeat offending have become a deep concern surrounding responsibility, culpability and consequences for our behaviours at any age. As one perpetrator of domestic violence said, 'Offenders need to own it.'

Our communities full of hardworking, decent and caring residents have had enough. They seek increased accountability for a range of offences, whether on the streets, in homes or what is perpetrated through social media. In other words, they want people to own their behaviours and to acknowledge what their actions create and how much it costs taxpayers and communities to safeguard against this.

There are many examples where we can make improvements immediately. Noosa and elsewhere have those who endanger themselves and other river users through their repeated dangerous actions. Simple changes can make a difference including introducing licensing, as they do in New South Wales and Victoria. It was a positive to have the War on Wrecks Taskforce include this in its draft recommendations. Loss of a licence and impounding of vessels are strong deterrents to these behaviours.


In addition, we have a cohort who are converging on our North Shore on day permits, putting our beachgoers and campers in danger through their hooning behaviours. Our unique natural offerings and beaches are being turned into a speedway and place of fear. This is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. I have welcomed news that drones will be added to policing resources and it is imperative

that they be utilised to identify these culprits. However, we need appropriate legislation and integrated systems between QPWS and QPS to ensure these offenders are refused future permits as part of deterrence and consequences.

These drones can assist in so many areas to create greater safety. What we are experiencing in our beautiful Noosa rural villages is unacceptable, with some drivers, including in convoys of trucks, endangering lives by their irresponsible driving on narrow, winding roads that are shared by school buses, tourists, walkers and cyclists. Our police cannot be everywhere at once. We need whatever technology is available as a matter of urgency to keep our community safe, and I thank TMR and QPS for assisting me in this.

With the amount of education supports and rehabilitation available for offenders, there can be no further excuses. We must create greater accountability and responsibility. Our communities depend on us to do this.

Macalister Electorate, Schools

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (7.21 pm): It is that time of the week again when I give a shout-out about the achievements of my Macalister schools. It is timely that I do this now as each September I invite my state school leaders to Parliament House for my annual Dinner on the Deck event. Principals, school executives and school captains and their parents are welcomed into the people's House. This has been very important in 2020 when our school captains have had limited opportunities to represent their school in public and at formal events.

Last month Beenleigh State High School held its annual, if somewhat scaled down, Paddock 2 Plate lunch. It has been a year since the Premier attended and declared that work would commence on developing a plan for a new hall for the school, one worthy of the community events that the school hosts. One year on, I have had the privilege of unveiling the building options that are being considered to meet the Premier's intent and to seek community feedback. For the record, the options include the expansion of the current hall footprint or the building of a new hall in a new location.


On the subject of Beenleigh State High School's principal, I would like to wish principal Matt O'Hanlon all the best as a state finalist in the Education Queensland Showcase Award for Excellence in School Leadership. As with last year, Beenleigh State High is a state finalist in two categories; it is also up for the Showcase Award for Excellence in the Secondary Years for the Beenleigh READiness—Rise through reading program.

Turning to other schools in Macalister, this term sees the completion of two new buildings. The \$4 million Eagleby South State School building has four classrooms, outdoor learning spaces and play spaces. This building takes pride of place in the community and is visible to all passing motorists and residents. The Indigenous mural by Queensland artist Chad Briggs is complemented by feature lighting and signage which shows the building to its best advantage.

The new \$6.4 million building at Beenleigh Special School is also operational now. It has 12 new classrooms and resulted in a new car park and bus pick-up area which services my fastest growing school. Again, the building itself is a grand statement to students and residents alike that we value our state school learning spaces. While we enjoy seeing our kids learn and grow in appropriate building and playgrounds, making sure kids get to and from school safely is important.

I am pleased to have championed for an intersection upgrade at Beenleigh Redland Bay Road outside Carbrook State School. Last year I secured \$4.35 million to signalise the T-intersection and deal with safety issues of school traffic entering and exiting Kruger Road. As Transport and Main Roads and Education Queensland worked through the planning considerations for the intersection upgrade, the car park and pick-up/drop-off layout was seen as central to resolving the traffic flow issues. I am pleased to report to the House that two departments and a local council have gotten together and come up with a commonsense solution. We have allocated an additional \$519,000 to address the car park capacity and flow. This is more evidence of our commitment to all of our state schools.

Bonney Electorate

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (7.24 pm): I rise for probably the last time this term—hopefully not ever—to say thank you to my community. For my entire life I have loved the part of the Gold Coast that I live in and it has been an honour to serve it. I have tried to be involved in pretty much every part of our community, whether that is schools, organisations, sports clubs or even Facebook groups. I have worked hard to engage with as many people as I can. I have turned up to the opening of an envelope, held mobile offices at cafes and parks and put on well attended forums on the Broadwater, second M1,

crime and the city plan. Even the car I drive is a ute that invites attention, known as the 'Samarok'. I have used it to help people move house, including some fleeing domestic violence situations, to pick up kerbside rubbish and to help with our regular clean-ups of the Broadwater and Parkwood's bushland.

I have fought for jobs. I have pushed to make the full health and knowledge precinct a reality to create something of the empty blocks of state land there. I have advocated to build the second M1, to give hundreds of thousands of Gold Coasters another option instead of getting on a national highway in order to travel anywhere. I have raised issues with the road corridor so that people who have built their dream homes in The Surrounds and Arundel Springs are not forgotten when the plans are put together.


Crime is another huge issue. People are scared in their own homes, and I have long been fighting for more police resources and tougher laws to back them up. I have sat with many people in tears of sadness and tears of anger at our broken justice system. There is 16-year-old Preston Potter's family, distraught at having the man who ran him down while high on ice being given just a \$500 fine. There is also the incredible Beasley family, who are channelling their grief into campaigning for cultural change and action against knife crime.

I have helped our most vulnerable and tried to get better support for homeless people. I have talked about light rail—a lot—because I truly think this form of public transport is the key to our city managing growth sustainably. I have advocated for a stronger waterways authority and for the protection of the eastern curlew, the endangered migratory shorebird that calls the sandbanks of Labrador home in the warmer months.

On more than a few occasions I have taken on the Gold Coast Council. It is fair to say that I am no longer on the Christmas card list of a number of councillors, but I have been proud to stand by locals whether they just wanted to keep our iconic tinnies by the Broadwater, they had issues in their backyards or they were trying to have the ridiculous two-hour parking zones scrapped right up to fighting to protect what we love about Labrador, Biggera Waters and Chirn Park with the city plan changes.

I love being part of my community. I am proud to represent it in this place. I have given everything to being the local MP and I will keep working to have my constituents' support at this election so I continue doing it.

Queensland Greens, Integrity

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (7.27 pm): The member for Maiwar has some very serious questions to answer in this House. I hope he does so before the parliament is dissolved to go to the election. The emails that have come out from the former Greens candidate for Clayfield are quite shocking to read. I table them for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Bundle of correspondence relating to the Greens former candidate for Clayfield, Mr John Meyer [\[1590\]](#).

The former Greens candidate for Clayfield has claimed whistleblower protection, and it has been an absolute shame how he has been treated by the party. The allegations involve the misuse of JobKeeper. This is a scheme that was set up in a global pandemic to help workers stay in a job. The allegations we have heard that those funds are being funnelled into the member for Maiwar's election campaign are disgusting to say the least. We know there is a connection. There is a direct connection between the member for Maiwar's office and Emerald Moon, his staff member, and the Queensland Greens campaign committee. He has some serious questions to answer, as does the Greens candidate for McConnel. Hardworking Greens members raising funds in their electorate to try and have a go in Clayfield are seeing those funds siphoned away to help attack progressive women and good sitting members such as the member for McConnel. I am not surprised by this. We only have to look at the leadership of the Greens.

I met Penny Allman-Payne during the 2013 election campaign. Her political judgement back then was as poor as it is today. Back then when she was the candidate for Bowman she thought that preferencing Tony Abbott over Julia Gillard in that election was a good decision. Since then she has not changed one bit whatsoever. It is an absolute shame for members of the Greens and Greens voters that the Greens party is so fixated on three seats out of the total 93 that they are redirecting resources to ensure they get rid of good, progressive MPs in South Brisbane and McConnel, and they need to front up and answer those questions.

I am calling on the federal government to do the right thing and conduct an investigation into the JobKeeper scheme. Has it been rorted? Has it been rorted by the member for Maiwar? Has it been rorted by the Greens redirecting that allowance into the member for Maiwar's campaign? There are some serious questions and I hope the member answers them before the election.

The House adjourned at 7.30 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Andrew, Bailey, Bates, Batt, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Boyce, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Costigan, Crandon, Crawford, Crisafulli, D'Ath, Dametto, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gerber, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hart, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Jones, Katter, Kelly, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lister, Lui, Lynham, Madden, Mander, McArdle, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mullen, Nicholls, O'Connor, O'Rourke B, O'Rourke C, Palaszczuk, Pease, Pegg, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Sorensen, Stevens, Stewart, Trad, Watts, Weir, Whiting, Wilson