



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

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## TUESDAY, 23 MARCH 2021

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The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

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

### ASSENT TO BILLS



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

The Honourable C.W. Pitt MP

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Parliament House

George Street

BRISBANE QLD 4000

My dear Mr Speaker

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

Date of Assent: 15 March 2021

A bill for an Act to amend the Liquor Act 1992 to support and regulate the emerging craft beer and artisan spirits industries

A bill for an Act to amend the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 for particular purposes

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

Yours sincerely

Governor

15 March 2021

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 15 March 2021, from His Excellency the Governor to the Speaker advising of assent to certain bills on 15 March 2021 [\[358\]](#).

### SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

#### Absence of Member



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have received a notification and certification regarding the absence of the member for Mudgeeraba for the period 22 to 26 March 2021. The member's notification complies with standing order 263A.

### REPORT

#### Information Commissioner



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from the Information Commissioner a report titled *Follow-up of report No. 1 for 2018-19: Awareness of privacy obligations: how three Queensland government agencies educate and train their employees about their privacy obligations*. I table the report for the information of members.

*Tabled paper:* Office of the Information Commissioner: Follow-up of Report No. 1 for 2018-19: Awareness of privacy obligations: How three Queensland government agencies educate and train their employees about their privacy obligations [\[359\]](#).

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### Error in Petition



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the Clerk has advised that due to an administrative error, e-petition No. 3431-20 was incorrectly assigned to a member as sponsor rather than the Clerk. Whilst the record and website have been corrected to reflect the correct position, I seek leave of the House for the tabled e-petition to be replaced with the Clerk as the sponsor. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

## PRIVILEGE

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



**Mr SPEAKER:** On 12 March 2021, I tabled a ruling regarding matters of privilege relating to a complaint by the member for Mudgeeraba about the member for Greenslopes. I ruled that at best the matter was trivial or technical in nature and did not warrant the further attention of the Ethics Committee. I now refer to the matter so that if any member wishes to exercise their rights in respect of that matter under the standing orders, they should do so immediately.

### Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Unparliamentary Language



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 13 March 2021 the Manager of Opposition Business wrote to me alleging that the member for Capalaba used unparliamentary language during private members' statements after a point of order was taken by the member for Oodgeroo. Further, the complaint alleges that use of the language could be taken as a reflection on the chair.

The broadcast of proceedings and, in particular, the audio stream have been listened to by officers from Parliamentary Reporting and Broadcasting Service, my officers and the Clerk. It is clear that the word spoken by the member was not the words the Manager of Opposition Business thought were spoken. There was no unparliamentary language and no disrespect to the chair. I will be taking no further action in respect to this matter.

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### School Group Tours



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I wish to advise that we will be visited in the gallery this morning by students and teachers from Marist College Ashgrove in the electorate of Ferny Grove, Enoggera State School in the electorate of Everton, and Queensland Children's Hospital School in the electorate of Stafford.

## PETITIONS

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

### Esperance Park to Kallangur Railway Station, Noise Barriers

From 124 petitioners, requesting the House to install noise abatement barriers along the rail line, extending to the exiting barrier, between Esperance Park Murrumba Downs and the Kallangur train station [\[360\]](#).

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

### Youth Justice

**Mr Knuth**, from 4,771 petitioners, requesting the House to urgently amend youth justice laws to address youth crime across Queensland [\[361\]](#), [\[362\]](#).

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

### King Street and D'Aguilar Highway Intersection

From 164 petitioners, requesting the House to take immediate action to remedy the unsafe intersection at Moodlu where King Street meets the D'Aguilar Highway [\[363\]](#).

Petitions received.

## TABLED PAPERS

### PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS (SO 31)

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

12 March 2021—

- [315](#) Ruling by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt—Alleged deliberately misleading the House by the member for Greenslopes

16 March 2021—

- [316](#) Response from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence (Hon. Fentiman), to an ePetition (3417-20) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 875 petitioners, requesting the House to urgently regulate body corporate managers

17 March 2021—

- [317](#) Director of Child Protection Litigation—Annual Report 2019-2020  
[318](#) Queensland Family and Child Commission: Deaths of children and young people Queensland—Annual Report 2019-20  
[319](#) Office of the Public Guardian—Annual Report 2019-20

18 March 2021—

- [320](#) Auditor-General Report 15: 2020-21—State finances 2020  
[321](#) Legal Affairs and Safety Committee: Report No. 6, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 3 October 2020 and 26 November 2020  
[322](#) Education, Employment and Training Committee: Report No. 5, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 9 September 2020 and 14 September 2020

19 March 2021—

- [323](#) Queensland State Archives—Annual Report 2019-2020  
[324](#) Public Interest Monitor—Report on inspections under Section 362 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 for the period of 1 July 2020—31 December 2020

22 March 2021—

- [325](#) State Development and Regional Industries Committee: Report No. 7, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 9 September 2020 and 26 November 2020  
[326](#) Transport and Resources Committee: Report No. 4, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 6 October 2020 and 26 November 2020  
[327](#) Commissioner for Mine Safety and Health—Annual Performance Report 2019-20  
[328](#) Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee—Annual Report 2019-20  
[329](#) Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee—Annual Report 2019-20  
[330](#) Board of Examiners—Annual Report 2019-2020  
[331](#) Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—Annual Report 2019-20

### TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

#### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Corrective Services and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020:

- [332](#) Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 15  
[333](#) Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 15, explanatory notes  
[334](#) Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 15, human rights certificate

Community Based Sentences (Interstate Transfer) Act 2020:

- [335](#) Community Based Sentences (Interstate Transfer) Regulation 2021, No. 16  
[336](#) Community Based Sentences (Interstate Transfer) Regulation 2021, No. 16, explanatory notes  
[337](#) Community Based Sentences (Interstate Transfer) Regulation 2021, No. 16, human rights certificate

Public Health Act 2005:

- [338](#) Public Health Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 17  
[339](#) Public Health Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 17, explanatory notes  
[340](#) Public Health Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 17, human rights certificate

First Home Owner Grant and Other Home Owner Grants Act 2000:

- [341](#) First Home Owner Grant and Other Home Owner Grants Regulation 2021, No. 18  
[342](#) First Home Owner Grant and Other Home Owner Grants Regulation 2021, No. 18, explanatory notes  
[343](#) First Home Owner Grant and Other Home Owner Grants Regulation 2021, No. 18, human rights certificate

Land Tax Act 2010:

- [344](#) Land Tax Regulation 2021, No. 19
- [345](#) Land Tax Regulation 2021, No. 19, explanatory notes
- [346](#) Land Tax Regulation 2021, No. 19, human rights certificate

Disaster Management Act 2003:

- [347](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2021, No. 20
- [348](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2021, No. 20, explanatory notes
- [349](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2021, No. 20, human rights certificate

Nature Conservation Act 1992:

- [350](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) (Communications Facility) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 21
- [351](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) (Communications Facility) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 21, explanatory notes
- [352](#) Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) (Communications Facility) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 21, human rights certificate

#### MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs (Hon. Scanlon)—

- [353](#) Biodiscovery Act 2004: Compliance Code: Taking native biological material under a collection authority
- [354](#) Biodiscovery Act 2004: Compliance Code: Taking native biological material under a collection authority, explanatory notes
- [355](#) Biodiscovery Act 2004: Compliance Code: Taking native biological material under a collection authority, human rights certificate

#### MEMBERS' PAPERS

The following members' papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Member for Burnett (Mr Bennett)—

- [356](#) Nonconforming petition regarding the safety of children attending the Bargara State School

Member for Southern Downs (Mr Lister)—

- [357](#) Nonconforming petition requesting the Southern Downs Regional Council to establish special entertainment precincts

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### South-East and Western Queensland, Weather Event



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 am): Over the past three days, much of South-East and Western Queensland has been subjected to an extreme weather event—a rain bomb that will continue for at least another day. The same system has had a catastrophic impact in New South Wales. I am proud to say that more than 120 Queensland swiftwater rescuers, fire and 100 SES volunteers are right now lending a hand where it is needed most.

Closer to home, the SES has answered 840 calls for help protecting homes from rising floodwaters and from the phenomenal amount of water falling from above. Since 9 am yesterday some of those rainfall totals include: 196 millimetres at North Stradbroke Island; 193 millimetres at North Tamborine; and 169 millimetres at Upper Springbrook, just to name a few. More heavy rain is forecast especially in the Maranoa and Warrego, Darling Downs and Granite Belt, South-East Coast, Central West, and Wide Bay and Burnett districts. Over the next six hours, rainfall totals of 50 to 100 millimetres are possible.

I have also been advised that major flood levels are now predicted for the Logan and Albert rivers, so we ask everyone in those areas especially to listen to ongoing broadcast updates. The bureau advises that locally damaging wind gusts will be possible with many severe thunderstorms through the central and south-eastern interior of the state during this afternoon and this evening. This soaking rain increases the risk of flash flooding from more falls expected today.

So far, 12 state schools are closed, mostly due to cut roads. There are also six independent schools closed in the south-east region. Multiple roads are closed. In the Moreton district, 78 houses are being inspected for damage, and up to 40 in Shailer Park. On the Gold Coast, four houses have

been evacuated due to the risk of landslide. Many people would have seen those images. I thank all of the residents for cooperating with emergency services and police at a very stressful time in their lives, having to leave their homes.

I am also advised that supplies to our dams have increased levels to 59.8 per cent capacity. It is particularly pleasing to see water flowing into Stanthorpe's Storm King Dam. I know that is a very big issue around Stanthorpe and Warwick. I am advised that at this stage forecasts are unlikely to require releases from Wivenhoe, Somerset or North Pine dams.

I urge everyone to heed the safety warnings and advice from the bureau. Listen to trusted sources of information. If you do not have to be on the roads, please stay off them. We will continue to keep Queenslanders informed and safe.

### Coronavirus, Update; Coronavirus, Vaccine



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): Queensland has recorded three new cases of COVID-19 overnight. All three cases were detected in hotel quarantine and were acquired overseas. All three are travellers from or through Papua New Guinea. We now have 60 active cases. As everyone knows, we move the active cases into our hospitals.

Some 40,817 frontline hotel quarantine and health workers have been vaccinated to date. Thankfully, only one recent case has been acquired locally. As we know, a doctor contracted that highly infectious UK strain while treating someone at the PA Hospital. Within a week, more than 600 of the doctor's contacts were traced, isolated and tested; none were positive.

Once again, I give a shout-out to Dr Young, her team, Minister D'Ath and all the contact tracers for the work that they do. The situation has been assisted by the fact that people are registering when they go into premises which is making the job of our contact tracers much easier. We will continue to monitor that.

At the same time as we were confronting this potential outbreak, we were fighting COVID coming in from Papua New Guinea. Thirty-five of our current cases are travellers from Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea has more than 3,574 cases, including 120 of its hospital staff. This number has tripled inside a month. It averages 181 new cases a day and includes 120 Port Moresby hospital staff.

Queensland's Torres Strait Islands are as little as four to five kilometres from Papua New Guinea, as the member for Cook knows. That is why we have prioritised the Torres Strait Islands for the COVID vaccine. As of yesterday, 280 eligible people in the Torres Strait region had received their first vaccine dose. This includes the eligible population on Saibai Island, which is one of the closest islands to Papua New Guinea.

As of this week, the federal government's vaccination plan is expanded to include those 70-plus and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 55. This is being managed mostly through GP clinics. Gradually, this will increase to include the rest of the community. I urge people to be patient. Unlike other countries, we have not suffered a second or third wave. Last week, Paris and large parts of Northern France went into another month-long lockdown. On Thursday it recorded 38,000 new cases. In Italy, shops, schools and restaurants are shut. New variants are affecting younger people. In Italy, tragically 105,000 people have lost their lives.

In Queensland, our strong health response is allowing our economy to recover, but we have to remain united and we have to keep up the fight.

### Employment



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 am): The labour force data released last week showed nearly 24,000 jobs were created in Queensland in February. Encouragingly, all of these jobs were full-time jobs. That means Queensland has now recorded the strongest recovery in jobs over the past year. In February, more than six out of 10 full-time jobs created in Australia were created in Queensland. That has led to the largest fall in unemployment in the nation in February to 6.1 per cent. That compares with 6.5 per cent when we came to office and when there was no global pandemic. Since that time there are 296,600 more jobs in Queensland.

Today, I am delighted to say that 21 of the jobs being added in Queensland are the latest intake of apprentices by QBuild. We are carrying out our promise to employ more apprentices as part of our plan to rebuild QBuild. Today is more proof of that. These are good, secure jobs throughout the regions, to give young people a skilled pathway to a trade career and to make sure QBuild has the staff for its vital work around our state.

The recovery in jobs follows strong economic growth. Queensland's domestic economy recorded the strongest growth in the nation since the March quarter, up 2.5 per cent. This growth in the domestic economy has been supported by a six per cent rise in state and local infrastructure investment, including our COVID Works for Queensland program supporting thousands of jobs across the regions.

Our strong health response and our \$11 billion economic recovery plan has meant Queensland is the place to be. More people across Australia want to live right here in our wonderful state.

**Ms Grace:** And why not!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I take that interjection—and why not. A significant exodus from New South Wales to Queensland contributed to the highest population growth over the year to September—68,200, including a net 27,100 from interstate.

We know there is more work to do, but we see evidence that our health response and economic recovery plan are supporting Queensland jobs. By keeping COVID out we have kept the Queensland economy open. Queensland is leading the nation on domestic economic growth, in creating jobs and being the place to live. While many regions across Queensland are powering ahead, there are other regions, including the Far North, that are still doing it tough from the closure of international borders. I do not want to see the recovery of our tourism industry put at risk by the expiry of JobKeeper at the end of this month.

I will not take a backward step in helping Queenslanders to achieve the dignity of work. My government will continue to put Queenslanders first and fight for more jobs in more industries across more regions in Queensland. This includes delivering new hydrogen and critical minerals industries and ensuring that trains, medical products, aircraft and defence vehicles are made in Queensland. By working together we can ensure that our best days remain ahead of us.

### **Women; March 4 Justice**



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 am): Last week women across the country roared. They were moved by a few courageous women—brave enough to share their stories of sexual assault, violence and harassment. What we have seen has been an extraordinary movement, triggered by the personal experiences of so many women in our community—united in their thousands, this time without fear. Many women came out and marched. They marched with family. They marched with friends. They marched with work colleagues. They marched in solidarity to be acknowledged. They marched for justice. They marched for action.

I joined the March 4 Justice rally in Brisbane, along with the Attorney-General and Minister for Women, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer, most of my cabinet colleagues who were available to attend as well as many MPs. The placards from the crowds read: 'Enough!'; 'Well, hear me now!'; 'Me too'; 'We have the right to be heard'; 'I believe her'.

Many of my male cabinet ministers and MPs attended the march. We need strong, respectful men to stand united with us to call out this behaviour and to effect cultural and generational change—men who acknowledge that they might have been complicit in this behaviour in the past by their silence, but no more; men who stand up and say, 'I will not stand by and allow this behaviour.' Brisbane Boys' College school captain Mason Black's powerful speech last week was widely shared on social media. He said it was time for the narrative to change and called on his peers to lead by example. I will read some of his speech into the parliamentary record. He said—

This is not solely an issue of protecting women but an issue of educating men.

...

If a woman says no, she means it.

...


It's up to us, the boys. Accept the injustice and stand up for what is right. Stop being boys, be human.

Women have had enough of not being believed and not being heard. It is now time for the federal government to rise up, to listen and to take action. I want to thank the female members of my cabinet and the many MPs who have bravely shared their stories. You are not alone.

After we announced the new Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce last parliamentary sitting, I have received letters and emails from women thanking us for the opportunity to tell their story—to be heard. The Attorney-General's office advises that they have also had lots of calls from women wanting

to tell their story. They do so because they want to make sure there is change. Women are no longer asking when it will stop; they are demanding it stops now. I hear you. My government hears you. We stand with each and every one of you to say enough is enough.

### **Works for Queensland; March 4 Justice**


 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning) (9.46 am): Last sitting I announced the latest allocations from the Works for Queensland program—a \$200 million commitment to help regional councils create jobs and deliver community infrastructure. This week, the Palaszczuk government is also stepping up for the 12 councils in our most populated area through the new South-East Queensland community stimulus program. We made a pledge during the election to create and sustain jobs by helping these councils fast-track investment in new infrastructure and community assets. We committed to \$200 million over six years through this program, and we are now rolling out the first \$100 million for the next three years for the communities of the south-east.

The program has a focus on encouraging councils to submit projects that provide for economic investment in outer-urban areas or lower socio-economic areas—areas where this funding can make the most difference to people's lives. This program builds on the funding these 12 councils and their communities received in 2020, specifically aimed to help them unite and recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

Through the COVID Works for Queensland program and the Unite and Recover Community Stimulus Package, the south-east councils received \$100 million to help deliver 151 projects, which the councils estimate will support or create more than 2,500 jobs. That is a fantastic result for local tradies, apprentices, businesses and families. I expect the allocations being announced this week will reap similar rewards, delivering important community infrastructure, creating jobs and improving liveability across the south-east. Of the \$100 million over the next three years, \$74 million is being allocated, while the remaining \$26 million will be distributed on a competitive application basis, designed to ensure the greatest positive impact for the communities. I look forward to announcing the successful projects to be funded through the South-East Queensland community stimulus program later in the year and continuing our commitment to create jobs in all corners of the state.

It was very moving to join many members at the March 4 Justice rally last week. We have heard so many stories of shocking assaults and harassment, including from our colleagues. I hope hearing these stories brings about real and ongoing change in our community.

### **Employment; Coronavirus, Economic Recovery**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (9.49 am): Queensland's plan for economic recovery is underway, with our nation-leading jobs growth seeing an additional 23,900 Queenslanders find work in our state just last month. Full-time employment increased by 53,800 in February 2021—the largest monthly rise on record and further evidence of the extraordinary rebound we continue to see in Queensland's labour market. Since May 2020—the peak of national lockdowns—an additional 244,700 Queenslanders have gained employment. During this period, employment has grown more than 10 per cent—faster than any other state or territory.

Queensland was the first jurisdiction in the nation to see employment return above pre-COVID levels. As of February, 39,500 more Queenslanders were employed than in March 2020, in contrast to national figures showing 36,000 fewer people employed in February than in March 2020. This is a terrific result for Queensland. It is also a consequence of our strong health response to COVID-19. Currently the number of hours worked across the state is 4.5 per cent above pre-COVID levels.

Encouragingly, our unemployment rate has continued to drop from a peak of 8.8 per cent in July 2020 to 6.1 per cent in February 2021. This is the largest decline in the nation over this period. However, we know there is still more work to be done. That is why our government has implemented a range of measures to promote domestic tourism and make sure all Australians know that Queensland is the place to be. Unfortunately, many of our tourism businesses, particularly in our regions, continue to do it tough with international borders remaining closed.

To combat this, the Palaszczuk government continues to provide rebates to operators and travel incentives to Queenslanders, including our Cairns Holiday Dollars initiative that has put \$200 travel vouchers in the pockets of 15,000 Queenslanders. We cannot do all the heavy lifting alone; we need the help of the federal government. That is why we continue to call on Scott Morrison to extend JobKeeper and protect thousands of Queensland businesses and Queensland jobs.

### Education, Respectful Relationships



**Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.51 am): I urge all school communities to be safe and to look at the website for updates on schools that are closed.

Two weeks ago in this House I announced that the Palaszczuk government would be working across all government and non-government school sectors to examine whether the Australian curriculum and the Department of Education's Respectful Relationships education program adequately address the issue of sexual consent and reporting in Queensland schools.

Last Monday I was proud to stand with the Premier, ministers and MPs outside this House to support thousands of brave women marching through the streets of Brisbane to say enough is enough. We stand also with the female MPs in this House who have bravely come forward with their own confronting experiences. I join the Premier in saying you are not alone. This issue is now clearly on the national agenda, particularly following disturbing reports last night on the news and on *Four Corners* about grossly deplorable conduct in our federal parliament.

I am pleased to report to the House that the first steps have been undertaken with the recently announced education review. However, I must emphasise that families and society also have an important role to play. I have met directly with the Catholic and independent school leaders to discuss ways to work together to strengthen education on consent and reporting in all Queensland schools. In addition, my director-general has written to principal associations, unions, peak parent bodies and the QCAA seeking their input and involvement.

I am writing to my federal counterpart, Minister Alan Tudge, to request consent and reporting education be placed on the agenda of the education ministers' meeting on 30 April and that the national curriculum body, ACARA, work with the states to ensure strong, consistent content is included within the Australian curriculum. I am also writing to my Ministerial Student Advisory Council to seek their views ahead of our meeting in May. The department's existing Respectful Relationships Education Advisory Group is being stood up to provide their input.

Last week I spoke with Chanel Contos, who published the Teach Us Consent petition. I congratulated Chanel on her advocacy and discussed with her what we are doing here in Queensland and encouraged her to participate in the review. I look forward to reporting on key milestones which form part of the department's education consent and reporting review plan. It is vital that we get this right. I join the Premier in saying enough is enough.

### Coronavirus, Vaccine; Public Hospitals, Demand



**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.54 am): Queensland's vaccination program is in full flight. We have now stood up 37 vaccination hubs across the state and administered more than 40,000 vaccine doses to Queenslanders. Thanks to the great progress we have made in administering vaccines to our phase 1a cohort, we have been able to commence our phase 1b vaccinations. This week the Commonwealth commenced its part of the phase 1b rollout. Overall, the Commonwealth is responsible for delivering vaccinations to more than 60 per cent of the Queensland population. Once CSL is able to ramp up onshore production of AstraZeneca, it is my hope that there will be greater certainty of vaccine supply to the Commonwealth and, by extension, states and territories.

This vaccine rollout is a joint effort, but Queensland's vaccine output will always be contingent on a steady and certain supply of vaccine doses, which is the Commonwealth's responsibility. Queensland will continue to stay the course on its vaccination rollout plan and work closely with the Commonwealth to ensure that we can continue to keep Queensland safe.

We know that keeping Queenslanders safe and healthy extends beyond the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. Emergency departments across the state are seeing significant, sustained and unprecedented demand pressures. Between 1 July 2020 and 28 February 2021, there were over 1.58 million presentations, including fever clinic activity, to Queensland's emergency departments—an increase of 11.5 per cent. There are almost 60 beds being used—I think it is 60 today—for COVID patients, and that is close to the highest number since the start of the pandemic.

Almost 600 public hospital beds are taken up by patients who are awaiting placement in either aged-care or disability facilities. Just today I wrote to the federal ministers for aged care and disabilities to request federal government assistance in finding suitable accommodation for these individuals.

We have staff spread across hotel quarantine facilities. These hardworking staff are also managing fever clinics and vaccination hubs and clearing the elective surgery lists caused by COVID thanks to our \$250 million investment. We also know that COVID still requires ongoing significant resourcing to ensure we can react quickly to situations as they arise.


We know the flow-on effect is placing additional pressures on our Queensland Ambulance Service. However, patient off stretcher time in the year to February 2021 has declined from 73.6 per cent in 30 minutes to 70.9 per cent in 40 minutes when comparing the same period in 2019-20. Additionally, lost time has increased over 20 per cent from 51,931 hours to 62,676 hours in the same period.

However, the Palaszczuk government has a proud record of rebuilding Queensland's health system, helping Queenslanders in need, and we are not shying away from the challenges the health system is currently experiencing. On 12 February, Queensland Health approved an additional \$25 million to open additional bed capacity across the system, with \$15 million already released to deliver an additional 130 beds. We are reactivating a successful campaign regarding what type of presentations are suitable for an emergency department. I remind the public that if it is not an emergency please go to your GP as opposed to coming to an emergency department.

I can announce that 50 additional paramedics will be employed in April, taking further pressure off the system. I will also be convening a meeting of the Patient Access Advisory Committee later this week, which will include representatives from the hospital and health services, consumer groups and unions to identify strategies to deal with these unprecedented pressures.

Our health system has weathered the seismic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. We now face an unprecedented influx of demand in our hospitals. While there will inevitably be challenges, I am confident that with record funding and courageous and resilient staff, we will be able to continue providing world-class care to all Queenslanders.


### South-East and Western Queensland, Weather Event

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.58 am): The wet and wild weather has not left us yet. The next 24 hours will continue to pose a challenge. No-one should be complacent. Flash flooding will continue to be a risk, particularly in streams or creeks that respond quickly to a heavy, short duration of rainfall. Landslips are also possible, especially in areas of steep terrain. We have already seen examples of that in the Gold Coast hinterland. Yesterday Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the State Emergency Service assisted with the rescue of 23 people at Wongawallan as a result of a landslide.

While flood levels are expected to remain below the peak seen following Tropical Cyclone Debbie, I urge people to be prepared and remain vigilant. Overnight we have seen widespread heavy rainfall and flash flooding across South-East Queensland and that is expected to continue today. Since Sunday morning there have been four swiftwater rescues in the Brisbane and Gold Coast areas conducted by the Fire and Rescue Service's swiftwater rescue technicians. State Emergency Service crews continue to assist affected residents with leaking roofs, tarp requests and other flood related calls for service.

A severe weather warning is in place and people need to be aware of the risks. Stay well away from floodwater and avoid unnecessary travel on the roads. If you are faced with floodwater the safest option is to back it up and find another route. Remember: if it is flooded, forget it. The heavy rain is expected to move out to sea over the next few days. Until then I urge everyone to be aware of the potential dangers posed by the weather. It is important to monitor the Bureau of Meteorology's website for the latest warnings. I take this opportunity to thank our emergency services personnel—the officers, the staff and the volunteers—who are out there in bad weather and sometimes dangerous conditions reaching out to those in need.

### QBuild

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (10.01 am): In 2019 the Palaszczuk government committed to rebuilding QBuild, and that is exactly what we are doing. As the Premier announced earlier, today we welcome a further 21 trade apprentices to the QBuild family—the next generation of tradies on Queensland's front line. We welcome apprentice electrician Caitlin from Barron River; we welcome apprentice painter Terrence from Mundingburra; we welcome apprentice carpenter Tanita from Mackay; and we welcome apprentice plumber Lachlan from Morayfield. We welcome them all.


Thanks to our economic recovery plans regional Queensland is booming. Building approvals are up 33 per cent in Cairns and 66 per cent in Townsville. Programs like Rebuilding QBuild are giving young Queenslanders in every corner of the state the tools to take advantage of Queensland's economic recovery. Of course this side of the House backs skills, we back training and we back apprenticeship programs because we know it means more jobs for Queenslanders. In fact, skills and training are key pillars of our economic recovery plan—a plan that has created more than 24,000 jobs just last month and a quarter of a million since COVID hit.

I can report to the House that our government is on track to meet our QBuild tradie and apprenticeship targets. On that note, today I can announce that applications are hereby open for another 39 qualified tradespeople to join QBuild ranks. We are putting the call out today to qualified carpenters, painters, plumbers, electricians and refrigeration mechanics right across Queensland. This will mean more tradies to work on our schools, hospitals, police and fire stations, and even critically important visitor amenities in our state forests and national parks. They will make sure that, as Queensland is good to go, the facilities are ready to go. This also means more experienced tradies to mentor apprentices at depots in Rockhampton, Cairns, Bundaberg and Caboolture.

I am also pleased to report that QBuild is leading the way for equality in the workplace. We are knocking the 11 per cent national target for women in construction out of the park—already at 14 per cent—because Labor is committed to creating workplaces where women feel safe and valued. Today we welcome another five Queensland women—Andrea, Ashley, Caitlin, Julia and Tanita—to the QBuild apprenticeship program. I was informed that Julia was inspired by her father, Trevor, to follow in his footsteps and become a sparky. Julia says that she is excited to work in a team where women are encouraged and supported to learn from qualified tradespeople.

When the LNP sacked 1,654 QBuild workers and cut the apprenticeship program they jeopardised the future of trades in this state. Julia is just one of the reasons we are rebuilding QBuild. I think that I speak for everyone in this House when I wish Julia and all of our apprentices good luck working for QBuild and good luck working for Queensland.

### Bruce Highway

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.04 am): There are very few names that are as Queensland as Bruce. Everyone in Australia knows about the 1,677-kilometre Bruce Highway and our Assistant Minister for Regional Roads and MP for Maryborough, who is known outside this chamber as Bruce—a case once again of Bruce on the Bruce. The Assistant Minister for Regional Roads got on the road to showcase how Queensland's economic recovery is well underway. Travelling from Maryborough to Central Queensland, he checked out how Queensland's plan for economic recovery is creating jobs in our regions and how the Palaszczuk Labor government is delivering a very real \$12.6 billion Bruce Highway plan. He inspected rest stops, new overtaking lanes and some of the 33 Bruce Highway projects underway right now by this government. He also met with construction crews who are benefiting from the 16,000 regional jobs created as part of the \$17.8 billion spent on regional roads and transport.

The assistant minister knows that our work will not stop there. Joining the 30-plus projects underway are another 120 projects in the pipeline. Whether that is the \$1 billion Rockhampton Ring Road, the Townsville Ring Road stage 5 or Cairns Southern Access Corridor stage 5, this government has a program of works to keep local jobs going, particularly in the regions. That is why last week the assistant minister joined Bruce Highway Trust chair Peter Garske to launch nominations for an expanded trust—something we committed to at the election—together with a \$100 billion boost to the Bruce Highway which we expect the federal government to match. The trust will drive a long-term vision for all 1,677 kilometres of the Bruce Highway with a series of five-year action plans.


Nominations have opened for six regional representatives who regularly use the highway and are road safety experts or regional development experts. Having these additional voices join statewide industry leaders like RACQ, Queensland Farmers' Federation, Queensland Trucking Association and local and federal government representatives will help identify what our regions need for the future and leave the politics out of Queensland's critical artery. Projects like the \$1 billion Gympie bypass, the \$480 million Cairns Southern Access Corridor and the \$120 million Mackay Northern Access Upgrade show what can happen when all governments work together. I look forward to the new members being selected.

The Bruce Highway connects families, regional centres, economies and freight from paddocks to ports to export markets. With so much wet weather around I urge people who drive the Bruce and everywhere to drive safely and to especially keep an eye out for our road workers and first responders

as they build a more flood-resilient highway, particularly on the Bruce at the Haughton River and the Gympie bypass. You only have to look at the swathes of families moving here and the jobs we are creating to see that our economic recovery is well underway. We can only deliver our economic plan for recovery because the Palaszczuk Labor government is united. We are not raffling \$10,000 a night accommodation on the aptly named Makepeace Island like the LNP. We are united; we are not a rabble like those opposite.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I remind ministers that ministerial statements are for the purpose of informing the public.

### **Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund**

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport) (10.08 am): The Palaszczuk government's \$25 million Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund is creating new jobs for Queensland's economic recovery. With COVID's long and lingering tail, the Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund is backing businesses with confidence to build new experiences and attract more visitors particularly to regional Queensland, rebuilding our regional recovery.

The program has invested in 22 projects across the state to make Queensland the place to be. Our Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund is supporting some 732 construction jobs, 460 operational jobs and is set to attract almost 750,000 new visitors and boost regional tourism spend by more than \$193 million a year.

Eight remaining projects are about to begin, are underway or have recently finished, collectively securing \$10.5 million in funding to support 187 construction jobs where they are needed most—in regional Queensland. Among them is the Outback Gondwana Foundation at Eromanga, which is building a gallery for the 30-metre skeleton of a titanosaur—Australia's largest dinosaur—and is set to grow outback tourism by August. There are 65 powered and non-powered camp sites under development at Splitters Farm in Bundaberg, in addition to eight five-star luxury eco-tents. The Overflow Estate at Wyaralong received \$1.3 million for five self-contained eco-accommodation pods for the existing winery and events business and will be ready for visitors by the end of July.

At Moffatdale, we are helping Dusty Joe's build nine cottages and villas for the existing tavern, restaurant and cellar-door experience. On Mount Tamborine, work is starting on a new food tourism business with gift shop, workshop, native flower garden and market garden where visitors can learn to grow and prepare their own food. At Lone Pine, development approvals have been submitted for a 15,000 square metre expansion of the famous wildlife sanctuary, including boardwalks, seven new exhibits and night tours. The Palaszczuk government is helping Queensland tourism to invest in jobs and rebuild better for the future.

### **Gambling Community Benefit Fund**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.11 am): I am pleased to announce that 545 local community groups will share in more than \$12.7 million worth of Queensland government grants through round 107 of the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. Not-for-profit organisations are the heart and soul of our communities, and I am proud that the Palaszczuk government is able to support so many fantastic organisations across this state, especially in regional Queensland.

Every round receives a high number of impressive and varied applications for funding. Round 107 provided some wonderful examples of not-for-profit groups looking at new and meaningful ways to support their local community and deliver services. One example includes Mackay based not-for-profit OneLife NQ, which are using their \$30,000 grant to upgrade three purpose-built residential villas for people with a disability. Accommodation upgrades will ensure tenants are living in safe accommodation and that other service providers and family and friends are safe whilst visiting.

Round 107 will also fund a gem and mineral club in Hervey Bay after polling in the local community uncovered an interest in gem cutting. The grant of \$20,000 will purchase new equipment and improve their space for workshops, which I am sure the new member for Hervey Bay will be very excited to see take shape.

Toowoomba's Downs Rugby club continues to use sport to build community connections and promote inclusivity, particularly encouraging girls and boys with difficulties to get off the sidelines and onto the field. A grant of \$33,000 will buy vital medical equipment and a medicab vehicle for use across nine separate rugby competitions across South-West Queensland.

For Queensland communities, 2020 was a difficult year, making organisations that are at the heart of their communities even more critical in keeping Queenslanders connected and bringing communities together. This funding will stimulate the economy by encouraging the purchase of much needed equipment and the hiring of contractors and builders for facility improvements and engaging services for the purposes of hosting events or workshops. The Palaszczuk government encourages groups to buy local and support local suppliers.

I am also happy to announce that round 109 of the fund will open today. I encourage members to share this with organisations in their electorates that need funding of between \$500 and \$35,000 to continue to bring Queensland communities together.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### Member for Southport, Register of Members' Interests



**Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (10.13 am): It has been brought to my attention that the *Gold Coast Bulletin* have a story online that alleges I did not update my pecuniary interests register on time. I can advise that this allegation is false. On 23 February 2021 I settled a contract to purchase a property. On 2 March 2021 I updated my pecuniary interest and sent it to the registrar. On 11 March 2021 I received confirmation from the registrar that my pecuniary interest had been updated. My update was completed well within the required time frame. I table an email from the Clerk today confirming this.

*Tabled paper:* Email, dated 23 March 2021, from the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, to the member for Southport, Mr Rob Molhoek MP, regarding the Register of Members' Interests [\[364\]](#).

I have been advised that this allegation was being shopped around to media by the Labor government. Whoever was shopping this around would have known that the allegation was false but continued to do so. This behaviour by the Labor government is reprehensible—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member, you are straying from the purpose of personal explanations so I will ask you to come back to the issue at hand.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I need no assistance from members on my right.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** I will be seeking an apology. Furthermore, Mr Speaker, I will be writing to you with respect to this matter as I believe a gross injustice has occurred by the misuse of the pecuniary register and the falsification of information.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, I have called the House to order. You are warned under the standing orders.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Mr SPEAKER:** Question time will conclude today at 11.15 am.

### Health System



**Mr CRISAFULLI** (10.15 am): My question is to the Minister for Health. Some of Queensland's most urgent patients have waited over an hour for an ambulance and almost half of all ambulance arrivals are ramping at some of our major hospitals. Why is Labor losing control of our health system?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. I will ignore the imputation in that question. I find it rich that the Leader of the Opposition would ask us about investment in health because it is the Palaszczuk government that has continued to invest in health since the day we came into government back in 2015. If the Leader of the Opposition had been listening to my ministerial statement, the Leader of the Opposition would have heard that we are seeing unprecedented demand on our emergency department.

The Leader of the Opposition likes to be in denial about COVID generally—and we have seen that over the last 12 months—but every other jurisdiction and every other nation around the world is seeing pressure on their health system. We have been fortunate that our emergency departments and

our ICUs are not overwhelmed with people dying from COVID. We are very grateful for that and it is because of the great work this government has done on the advice of the Chief Health Officer and it is because of our amazing health staff, but that does not mean there is not pressure as a consequence of COVID. We have the highest number of COVID-positive patients in our hospital system today since COVID started. We are managing our fever clinics, we are managing hotel quarantine and we are now managing vaccination centres, as well as unprecedented demand on surge numbers.

We acknowledge all of that. If the Leader of the Opposition does not want to acknowledge that, then he is not in touch with what is happening in the health system and what is happening with COVID in this state, in this country and globally, but we have seen that over the last 12 months. For 12 months those on the opposite side have been in denial about the impact of COVID. If it were up to them, borders would have been lifted and there would be no restrictions—let it just spread through the community and overwhelm our health system.

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member for Everton is warned under the standing orders.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I have already said this morning that we have immediately released \$15 million to increase bed capacity by another 130. In addition, we have \$10 million and we are looking at where those demands are on top of those 130 beds, because this comes back to bed capacity. Part of the reason we have constraints on our bed capacity is that elective surgery was frozen as part of a national cabinet decision and we are now supercharging our elective surgery so people are in beds as a consequence of that elective surgery. We are delivering on top of all of the trauma that is coming into our hospitals. Those on the other side can carry on as much as they want, but it just shows how out of touch they are in understanding what is happening in the health system right now.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before calling the Leader of the Opposition, can I please remind members that, if a minister is being responsive to the question as asked, I need to hear the answer, as does Hansard. It is difficult to hear that with continual interjections.

### **Elective Surgery, Waiting List**

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I have a question to the Premier. In January 2015, 30,073 Queenslanders were waiting for elective surgery. Five years later, in January 2020, 55,916 Queenslanders were on the waiting list. Why has the surgery waiting list nearly doubled under this government?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I do not know where the Leader of the Opposition has been recently, but there has been something called a pandemic. It is a global pandemic called COVID.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Elective surgeries were delayed. I think the member can remember they were suspended—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Premier! The House will come to order.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Do not worry, member for Nanango. I will get to you in a moment.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, Premier. You will direct your comments through the chair.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left, I will start naming members without warning if the interjections continue.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** As Queensland faced the unprecedented—

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member for Nanango is warned under the standing orders. I had just called the House to order and you immediately interjected. I would have thought, members, by now you would understand what my trigger is.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** As Queensland was faced with this unprecedented health emergency, we took actions. We took dramatic actions which—

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118(b) on relevance. It may assist: the question actually had a date range. The question was about the period between January 2015 and January 2020—before COVID, before the pandemic. That is when the surgery waiting list doubled, not what the Premier is speaking about.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. We will not be arguing the point of the question in a point of order. Premier, I ask you to come back to relevance on the issue. I note you still have a significant amount of time on the clock. You will round out your answer.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Because of COVID there were a number of surgeries that were delayed. This is a fact that the whole Queensland public knows about. It is great to hear an interjection from the member for Kawana—

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member for Buderim is warned under the standing orders.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:**—who sat around the cabinet table and made the decisions to actually axe staff in our health system. That is right. Since that time we have had to build up the capacity of our health system. We are proud of the men and the women who work in our health system delivering care to people who need it the most.

**Mr Watts** interjected.

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right. They attack the doctors, attack the nurses and attack the firefighters.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right; they are still attacking.

**Mr Dick:** We back them; they sack them.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right: we back our health workers; they sack our health workers. It is a very brave LNP person who stands up in this House and talks about health in this state.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Premier, there has been a point of order raised. There were specifics in the question which I would ask you to come back to under standing order 118(b).

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is why we have invested \$250 million to make sure we can get through these emergency surgeries. Around the world at the moment we see the health systems of nations gripped in a crisis due to COVID. That is a fact. Their health systems are collapsing.

**Mrs Gerber** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Currumbin, you are warned under the standing orders. It is difficult to hide.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right; the member for Currumbin was helping people across the border when the border was shut. That is right. We will not forget that.

**Mr Dick:** Breaking the law.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right, breaking the law. That should be investigated.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Again, I raise relevance under standing order 118(b). The question was specific—waiting list doubling in a five-year period—from which the Premier is straying.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I will ask the Premier to come back to the question as asked. However, I note that the question not only contained a date range but also some broader issues. The Premier will come back to the question as asked regarding the date range as mentioned by the opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was responding to an interjection and the earlier interjection from the member for Nanango, who called for the border to be opened 64 times. That would have had our hospital system in the grip of a second wave like we heard—

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Ask me another health question. I am more than happy to talk about health in this state. I am more than happy to talk about vaccinations and I am happy to talk about COVID. I am happy to talk about the record of the LNP that decimated the health system in this state—absolutely decimated it.

*(Time expired)*

### QBuild

**Ms KING:** My question is of the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier update the House on the employment of regional apprentices, including women, as QBuild is restored to its proper role in our state?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Pumicestone for that very important question. QBuild is another proud asset of our government. Our workers in QBuild are rebuilding our depots, bringing the mighty QBuild back to the way it should be. If we want to talk about decimating something in this state, the LNP did a good job at decimating QBuild. Not only did they rip apart the health system; they ripped apart QBuild as well.

That is why, with our unemployment rate coming down and our focus on jobs and regional economic recovery, we are very pleased that there are going to be 21 new apprentices in QBuild across our state. Of course, as the minister said—and I will elaborate a bit further—these QBuild apprentices are going to a number of places. A number of people are planning to be apprentices in plumbing. They will be going to Mansfield, Morayfield, Pine Rivers and Glass House. We have a carpenter going to Scenic Rim, Clayfield, Pumicestone, Lytton and Springwood. We have carpenters in Toowoomba North, an electrician in Toowoomba South, another carpenter in Mackay and we have an electrician apprentice in Barron River and another carpenter apprentice in Cairns.

As honourable members can see, these are the future workers of our state—good, decent trades and good, decent jobs. We will always back jobs on this side of the House. We build jobs; they cut jobs. We know that is in the LNP's DNA.

Five of these apprentices are women. It is great to see women getting involved in QBuild: Andrea, Ashley, Caitlin, Julia and Tanita. Julia from Toowoomba is actually following in her father's footsteps; her dad is an electrician. Once again, we are not only backing men in this field; we are making sure that women and young girls have great opportunities to get into a trade.

We know what the LNP did. They stripped more than 1,600 jobs from QBuild. That is right. The member for Broadwater sat around that cabinet table with the member for Clayfield and the member for Kawana. That is right: he sat there and made those decisions. You cannot escape your responsibility there.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Direct your comments through the chair, Premier.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** They also mothballed QBuild depots, and we have revitalised Cairns, Rockhampton, Wide Bay and Caboolture because we believe in QBuild. We back QBuild, we back the jobs and we will continue to do that for the state for many years to come. Isn't it great to see that unemployment data showing the strength in Queensland's economy because of our strong health response?

*(Time expired)*

### Health System

**Mr JANETZKI:** I have a question to the Minister for Health. In 2018-19 only 52 per cent of ambulance patients were satisfied with their ambulance arrival time, the lowest satisfaction rate in the nation. Why was Labor losing control of the health system before COVID hit?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. Why is he not using current figures? Why are those opposite not saying what the public have thought about the Queensland Ambulance Service in the last two years? Would it be that the LNP love cherrypicking? 'There's one bad figure somewhere at one point in time. I'm going to say that that is a fact and that is the way it has always been and always will be.' This is what LNP members do so well: cherrypick figures. They go back as far as they can to find some particular response.

I regularly get letters from members of the public who talk about the amazing service they have received from the Queensland Ambulance Service and from our hospital staff. They tell us how pleased they are with the response they are getting from the Queensland Ambulance Service and our hospital

and health services. This government has invested significantly in both the Queensland Ambulance Service—an almost \$1 billion budget this financial year—and Queensland Health—an over \$21 billion health budget this year. We are recognising—

**An opposition member:** Why is there still ramping?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I take that interjection. Those on the other side absolutely have tin ear. They have no idea what is going on in this state when it comes to the pressures caused by unprecedented surges, what is happening with COVID and what we are delivering with record numbers. We still average between 4,000 and 7,000 tests a day. Surprisingly, staff are doing that job. That involves vaccination centres, pathologists and staff managing the positive COVID patients to keep us safe each and every day. That is what they are doing right now. Members opposite should not deny that any of that is happening and then ask, 'What is happening today compared to 2018 or 2015?' In relation to the 2020 figures, we have put in an extra \$250 million in the last 12 months alone to deal with the elective surgery backlog.

I have absolute confidence and trust in the Queensland Ambulance Service and the great work it is doing. Those opposite want to stand up and say that the public do not have confidence because they want to talk down the health system and the great work our Ambulance Service is doing. They want to talk down the seriousness of COVID and what it means for this state, for this country and globally. They can keep putting their heads in the sand about what is happening and the reasons it is happening, but we know what is needed. We are continuing to invest in our health system in this state. As I say, extra paramedics will be coming on next month.

*(Time expired)*

### **Regional Queensland, Tourism Industry**

**Mr HEALY:** My question is of the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier update the House on the government's strategy to support tourism operators in regional Queensland to rebuild and recover, and is the Premier aware of any alternative views?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Cairns for the question. It was a great privilege last week to join the members for Cairns and Cook and the tourism minister in Cairns and Port Douglas to talk to tourism operators. Our tourism holiday vouchers are going down incredibly well. In fact, operators are telling us that that is one of the most effective measures a government can take in terms of helping people who are struggling and doing it tough. We are about helping people who are struggling and doing it tough—unlike those opposite, who cut the tourism budget.

We had the opportunity to speak to Steve from Sailaway, who said that he is seeing an increase in bookings. It was wonderful to hop on the Quicksilver boat with Tony Baker and to see that they will be moving from operating four to five days a week to operating seven days a week. That is fantastic to see. We still want to encourage more people to go there. It was also good to hear local accommodation operators saying that their bookings were quite good—between 80 per cent and 90 per cent occupancy in some of the larger resorts. That is fantastic. It is great for tourism. We need more people to go there.

It is concerning to read today about the kind of tourism that members of the LNP like. That kind of tourism is to Makepeace Island. I understand that this fundraiser was held on 19 July 2019. Apparently, former leader Deb Frecklington and home affairs minister Peter Dutton were on Makepeace Island at Noosa—a very nice destination for the LNP. We know that they like destinations. They like Western Australia, they like Luna Park and they like schoolies. Obviously now the member for Nanango loves Noosa. There are some real questions to be answered here. Why was the member for Broadwater not invited? That is the question.

There are some questions to be answered here about property developers. These are real, concerning questions. I understand that the ECQ may be investigating. Why do members of the LNP like travelling so much and getting money from property developers? These are serious questions that the public needs answers to. Perhaps the member for Maroochydore could investigate some of this. She could get out the crystal ball and have a look at that. Perhaps the member for Broadwater—

**Mr SPEAKER:** The Premier's time has expired.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I could keep going, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** But you can't, Premier.

### Ambulance Services

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question is to the Minister for Health. The union says—quite recently, last night—that ambulance staff waste 400 hours every day at hospitals, and a government whistleblower has told the media that Queenslanders have died and will die because of these delays. Where is the minister's plan to eliminate ambulance ramping?

**Mrs D'ATH:** Clearly, members opposite have come in with their script today and they will not deviate from it, despite already having received an answer multiple times. I will explain it to them again. I have already stated that we will have extra paramedics coming online next month. Some \$15 million has already gone into HHSs to create another 130-bed capacity. We have \$10 million more allocated and going out shortly, looking at where else we need to put that bed capacity. We are investing in our emergency departments.

We have made record investment to deal with elective surgeries. This is creating a bed capacity issue. By having to fast-track all of those elective surgeries, consequently we have people taking up beds. This then causes problems through the emergency department. About one in three people coming into our emergency departments needs to be admitted, so we have to look at bed capacity. It is not just about how many ambulances and how many paramedics we have on the road; it is about how we are managing to transition them.

I am meeting with the advisory committee, comprised of the chief executives of every HHS, a consumer group representative and the unions. I spoke to them last night. Members opposite only like to quote them when it suits them. Any other time they are bashing them up. I spoke to the union representative last night and said that we will work together on strategies to alleviate some of these pressures. I want these ambulances back on the road as quickly as possible—we all want that—but we have to work through why we are seeing this unprecedented demand in the numbers that are coming into our EDs right now.

As we have said previously, we have an increase in category 5s. We are restarting our education of the community, asking them to not come to emergency departments if it is something they can see their GP about. We are looking at categories 1 and 2. We are seeing category 1s within the recommended time—better than Victoria and New South Wales. We are seeing those people who are most urgent. That means that from time to time other people will have to wait. We need to make sure our category 1s are given the priority they need for life-saving treatment. That is what our public health system does so well.

I have already provided answers to every question the opposition has asked and I outlined in my ministerial statement the investment we are making, both in ambulance and in our hospitals, to free up bed capacity, to provide more paramedics and to open up more stations and provide new ambulances. We will continue to work with all of the stakeholders about what else we can be doing, both in the immediate and in the medium to long term. We are about long-term reform on the health system as well because we have increasing demand, which is a global problem.

*(Time expired)*

### Sunshine Coast, Job Creation

**Mr HUNT:** My question is of the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on what the Palaszczuk government is doing to create jobs on the Sunshine Coast, and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for Caloundra for his question. He is indeed a passionate advocate for the Sunshine Coast community and he knows that the Sunshine Coast has borne more of the brunt of the economic impacts of the pandemic than other parts of the state in part because of its older population but also its economy's exposure to tourism. It is one of the regions that will benefit from the SEQ community stimulus program.

The Sunshine Coast will share in that \$100 million program, expected to create more than 2½ thousand jobs. In fact, the Sunshine Coast will benefit from just over \$7 million from that program in new investments. It is already making great use of the previous funding round allocations including at the Beerwah Community Meeting Place, and I understand that recently the first sod was turned on that project that will create 11 jobs.

Today we have learnt what the LNP does for the Sunshine Coast. It does not need half-price plane tickets because Peter Dutton was happy to bill taxpayers for 100 per cent of the cost of his flights to the Sunshine Coast—\$460. What was he there for? Was he there to help the people of the Sunshine Coast? No! He was there for another dodgy LNP fundraiser—a long lunch with Dutton and Deb which was expected to raise \$130,000.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Please table that or put it down, Minister.

**Dr MILES:** This was part of a series of events that even the LNP said went too far. Even the LNP said that these events were too dodgy for it in both emails to its MPs and in face-to-face meetings with the then leader of the opposition. It would appear that this was part of a series of events, including a dinner in the cellar where attempts were made to launder developer donations through third parties. Look at those opposite ducking for cover now.

The member for Nanango says that she cannot remember being there. The member for Surfers Paradise was perplexed why he was even there in the first place—‘How did I get here? Are these my feet?’—despite being No. 1 on the list of attendees. He says, ‘You better ask the member for Ninderry where all the money went.’ These questions need to be answered by the Leader of the Opposition himself: who was at these events? Were they prohibited donors? How much did they donate? It is time for the Leader of the Opposition to release the complaint that the LNP made against its own parliamentary wing. If he declines to do so, if he fails to do so, then he is nothing more than a cellar dweller like the rest of them.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Just for members’ information, the cellar is a wonderful venue and we hope that we can encourage more people to make bookings.

### Ambulance Services

**Mr MINNIKIN:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Lesley has written to the opposition saying—

Recently my 88-year-old mother had a fall and was unconscious for a period of time. It took three hours for the ambulance to arrive and the call centre had to keep calling to monitor how she was going. They also advised that they had 60 outstanding jobs they could not get an ambulance to.

Is the treatment of elderly patients being compromised by ramping?

**Mrs D’ATH:** I thank the member for his question. As I say, we would prefer that no-one has to wait beyond the recommended time for the arrival of an ambulance. As I have explained multiple times today, we are seeing unprecedented demand and I want to acknowledge the tremendous work that our Ambulance Service has done. There have been a number of measures put in place in recent times, including that we now have mental health specialists co-located inside our call centres to deal with some of those mental health calls and co-responders who go out so that we can make sure that people who are better placed elsewhere than our emergency departments are dealt with appropriately.

We also have other initiatives being done with the Queensland Ambulance Service. It has done an incredible job of redirecting people away from emergency departments—thousands of cases, in fact, in the last 12 months. I want to acknowledge all of the initiatives that it has already been working with Queensland Health on that are seeing some really positive results, but we are seeing unprecedented pressures in our emergency departments and our bed capacity right now.

Let me go through it again. Currently 60 beds are being used for COVID-positive patients at the moment—the highest number we have had since COVID started. We are also seeing COVID still requiring ongoing significant resources across our health system with our pathologists, our testing clinics and also now our vaccination centres. We have put \$250 million towards fast-tracking elective surgery, because that helps free up beds. If we free up beds, we free up capacity in emergency departments which means we get people out of ambulances and ambulances back on the road. Currently almost 600 beds—and I do not hear those opposite talking about this—are being taken up by people who are not needing hospital treatment but should be in aged care or disability, and I have written to both federal ministers again today. The previous health minister also wrote to them at the start of last year about this issue. They gave us some short-term funding, but it was just short-term funding really for COVID.

This is an ongoing problem. If we want to free up beds, if we want to free up space in emergency departments and free up our ambulance officers, we have to deal with these things. There is a royal commission report into aged care and there is a royal commission into disabilities. We have to do something about this, and the Commonwealth has a significant part to play.

In fact, it is the regulator and the funder of these things and it needs to step up and help us deal with this. There is joint responsibility here, but members opposite will never criticise the Commonwealth and never say boo about these issues because it is their mates and they do not want to criticise their mates. If they were in government, they would not be holding the Commonwealth to account. Rather, they would be saying, 'That's fine. Whatever you want, Scott Morrison, we'll do it for you.' We are investing in these services to help people in Queensland.

(Time expired)

### Regional Queensland, Job Creation

**Mr TANTARI:** My question is of the Treasurer and Minister for Investment. Will the Treasurer update the House on Queensland's outlook when it comes to regional jobs, and is the Treasurer aware of any other initiatives to boost jobs growth in the regions?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the member for Hervey Bay for his question, and with energy and enthusiasm almost overnight the member for Hervey Bay has made a massive difference in how that electorate is represented in this parliament. Queensland's plan for economic recovery and job creation continues to lead the nation, and that strength is evident in the property sector. In January the value of new lending for dwellings in Queensland increased by 11.3 per cent, higher than the national average of 10.5 per cent.

The strength of dwelling approvals has been especially pleasing in regional Queensland. In the last year dwelling approvals are up 33 per cent in Hervey Bay, 33 per cent in Cairns, 24 per cent in Central Queensland, 21 per cent in the Darling Downs, 21 per cent in Ipswich, 24 per cent in Logan and a whopping 66 per cent in Townsville.

Homebuyers and participants in the construction industry know it makes sense to build in Queensland, and our government is supporting them every step of the way. That is how you conduct a proper relationship with the property sector—a lesson that once again the LNP has failed to learn. Today we read in the *Australian*—

The Electoral Commission of Queensland has launched a formal investigation into several LNP events attended by property developers ...

These include an event for the then leader of the opposition, who was the then alternative premier—the member for Nanango—and her colleague the guest speaker and 'star attraction' Peter Dutton. Let me say this: if Peter Dutton was the star attraction, it is a miracle that the LNP did not have to pay people to go to the fundraiser!

The member for Nanango is apparently the subject of a formal investigation by the body in charge of the fair conduct of elections in this state. Queenslanders deserve to know this: what crimes did the LNP commit and how often? That is exactly what Queenslanders want to know: what crimes did the LNP commit and how often? We know what the LNP is guilty of—guilty of opposing lowering the threshold for the public disclosure of political donations in this state. We know it is guilty of opposing the banning of property developer donations to political parties. We know it is guilty of opposing that every single step of the way, including in the High Court and losing, because it is the same old LNP—a leader without vision, an opposition leader without vision, an opposition leader without ideas, and today we find out whether he is an opposition leader without any backbone.

### Ambulance Services

**Dr ROWAN:** My question is to the Minister for Health. The media has reported that an Indooroopilly woman tragically died on 15 February as she was waiting for an ambulance to respond to her triple 0 call. Can the minister explain what prevented an ambulance arriving on time?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. As the member absolutely knows, sadly people are sometimes deceased when ambulances arrive. I cannot talk about any individual case. It would not be appropriate to talk about individual cases. As the member knows, certain deaths are automatically considered by the Coroner. There are internal reviews done. There is a dedicated team within the Queensland Ambulance Service that in certain cases listens to the call that has come in, how the responder dealt with that, what priority it was given and how it was dealt with by the ambulance officers to see not only if there was a failing in the system but also if we can improve that system. We have to acknowledge all of those things are done.

I cannot talk about that particular case. It may or may not be one that is being considered by the Coroner. I think we have to be careful when we give these sorts of examples to put context around the fact that sadly sometimes these things do occur. You cannot blame the time that the ambulance took to arrive as the direct causation of that death. I think you have to be really careful in making that claim.

While I am on my feet in relation to the Ambulance Service, a question was asked before about public satisfaction with the Queensland Ambulance Service. I just want to put some facts around that question that was asked before. This House was told that 52 per cent were satisfied with the Queensland Ambulance Service in the 2018-19 data. In the patient experience of ambulance services, 52 per cent relates to this question: ambulance arrival time—much quicker or a little bit quicker than I thought it would be—52 per cent. What is the overall satisfaction in the 2018-19 ambulance patient experience data as very satisfied or satisfied? It was 96 per cent!

Those opposite come in and throw these figures around. They cherry-pick as always to talk down our system, to talk down the great service our paramedics deliver for this state. I think that it is absolutely disgusting that they would manipulate that data and come in here and say there was 52 per cent satisfaction when it was actually 96 per cent satisfaction. Before those opposite continue to spend the rest of question time getting up and asking me questions and quoting statistics, they had better make sure their figures are correct.

### State Schools, Class Sizes

**Mr SMITH:** My question is to the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing. Will the minister update the House on the latest class sizes data and advise if the minister is aware of any alternative approaches?

**A government member:** Great question!

**Ms GRACE:** It is a good question. Obviously the member for Bundaberg, as a teacher, knows that if you want to reduce class sizes you have to employ more teachers because that is what brings about class size reduction. I am pleased to inform the member for Bundaberg, and this House, that Queensland has the best student-to-teacher ratio of all states in Australia. In the latest figures that have come down we have a student-to-teacher ratio of 13.2 to one. We inherited from the LNP a student-to-teacher ratio of 14 to one. When one considers we have over 580,000 students in our schools that is a remarkable effort.

Unlike those opposite who do not employ teachers to keep up with growth, on this side of the House we do. Since we have been in government we have employed 6,000 new teachers and 1,500 teacher aides. The latest statistics show how well we are doing in teacher-to-student ratios. In the next four years I look forward to the record 6,200 teachers and 1,100 teacher aides we will be employing.

The policies of those opposite were exposed as a debacle during the election campaign. One minute they announced we are getting 3,000 extra teachers. Then we came out with our figures and it was, 'Whoops, we made a mistake, sorry. It is not 3,000 it is 7,000 now.' It was a complete debacle on the numbers they were employing. There were no Treasury figures to back it up, just simple facts going forward.

Maybe they should have referred to the member for Ninderry, because the member for Ninderry was very good with getting figures right, particularly in attending fundraiser events. Who would have thought that a detective sergeant was so good at event organising. We have the Triple D long lunch—Dutton, Deb and developers.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Correct titles will be used, Minister.

**Ms GRACE:** Then we have the cellar lunch at which the member for Surfers Paradise was scratching his head wondering why on earth developers were there. Maybe he needs to speak to the member for Ninderry, because probably an ex detective sergeant would be very good to find out how you can circumvent the electoral laws to allow them to come.

Maybe now his colleague, the member for Maroochydore, may have something to do. She can read the tea leaves. She can read the little crystal ball she has to find out exactly what happened. But the real bite is on the Leader of the Opposition. What is he doing to come clean? Even Michael O'Dwyer, the state director, said this was highly problematic. There he sits, the Leader of the Opposition, doing nothing. Let us see if he takes action and shows true leadership.

**Mr Ryan** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister for Police, you are warned under the standing orders.

### Premier and Minister for Trade, Email Accounts

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Premier. I refer to the QC advice relied on by the Solicitor-General into the mangocube email saga. It is reported this QC charges \$10,000 per day. The Premier says this QC's legal advice was not paid for by the government. Can the Premier advise where this gift of legal advice was declared on the members' interests register?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The member for Maroochydore said that the Solicitor-General relied on that QC advice. That is not wholly correct. The Solicitor-General made his own determination and that was tabled in the parliament.

### Electoral Donations

**Ms McMILLAN:** My question is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. Will the Attorney-General update the House on compliance with electoral laws and developments concerning prohibited developer donations and is the Attorney-General aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government has some of the strongest electoral donation laws in this country. Not only have we implemented real-time donation disclosure and reduced the threshold for donations down from \$12,000 to \$1,000, we have also taken strong action to ban developer donations.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Toowoomba North, I find your interjections are designed to disrupt the minister and have very little to do with the question that was asked. You are warned under the standing orders. Member for Theodore, you are also warned under the standing orders.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The ban on developer donations was a recommendation from the CCC. What was the position taken by those opposite? They opposed each and every one of these landmark integrity reforms. Let us not forget that it was those opposite who took this government to the High Court to get around developer donations and to keep their donations secret. Thankfully the High Court rejected the LNP's arguments.

It seems from today's revelations in the *Australian* that the LNP are trying hard to get around our strong donation laws. As outlined today, the Electoral Commission of Queensland is investigating a number of allegations relating to developer donations and fundraisers. There was the cellar dinner here with the member for Nanango, the member for Surfers Paradise and the member for Ninderry. There was the exclusive lunch with Peter Dutton on Makepeace Island, with Peter Dutton even charging the taxpayer for the privilege.

If the LNP are so concerned about transparency and accountability in Queensland, and we keep hearing from the member for Maroochydore that they are, it is absolutely time for the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Broadwater, to come forward and tell us who attended those events, where the money came from and where the money has gone, because today's allegations are incredibly explosive. The ECQ is reporting whether or not the LNP—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. I am sorry, Minister. Member for Southern Downs, you are warned under the standing orders. You will direct your comments through the chair.

**Ms FENTIMAN:**—has been potentially funnelling money through other entities or even the private accounts of members of parliament. It is so damaging that the state director of the LNP, Michael O'Dwyer, referred his own party leader to the ECQ. It is unprecedented to refer your own party fundraisers for investigation to the ECQ. Today the LNP has serious questions to answer. Today the member for Broadwater needs to stand up and answer: who was at those events, where did the money come from and where did the money go? He cannot remain silent on the matter any longer.

### Mount Morgan, Water Security

**Mr ANDREW:** My question is to the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water. Could the minister please update the House on the long-term plan for water security for Mount Morgan and surrounds?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. It is an interesting question given the rain that has been falling in Queensland over the past few days and it is great to see some good inflows. Hopefully we can continue to get inflows into Central Queensland, particularly up in the Mount Morgan region. I can tell the member that I have had a phone conversation with the mayor of Rockhampton and offered to meet with him and continue to work through the issues that the Rockhampton Regional Council is having with the Mount Morgan water supply. Water security is critical for communities in Central Queensland, which has a good base of locals who have certainly been doing it tough for many years. As I said, my department and I will continue to work with the regional council.

At the end of the day, water delivery and service is a council responsibility. We will be working very closely not only with the mayor of Rockhampton but also with the many mayors throughout regional and Central Queensland because we know how important water security is for them. That is why in the last parliamentary sitting week we announced that we will be raising the Rookwood Weir by 700 millimetres to get another 10,000 megalitres into that weir. We know the importance of water security in Central Queensland. We know how important it is for the people of those communities to get jobs on the ground when we build things such as that weir. Certainly we know that for the people of the Rockhampton region there will be opportunities coming from building water infrastructure and we are committed to delivering that. Since we have been in government we have put \$1.2 billion into Queensland water infrastructure and I am proud of that record.

We will continue to look after the projects that are coming forward and we will assess them properly. We want to ensure that Queensland dams are built to a code so that we know that they are safe and we do not have to go back and revisit them as we have seen happen with the Paradise Dam in Central Queensland. We want to ensure that the communities that are downstream of major dams and weirs are safe and that we get things done properly.

I am a bit perplexed about some of the recent talk by our federal colleagues who are wondering why we are not moving projects forward when many of the projects are being done and are being assessed by private companies. We want to ensure that when they come to us those things have a detailed business case. We want to ensure that all of the hard work has been done so that when the funding comes forward from the state and federal governments the dams are viable, they are safe and they deliver on our agenda, which is for water security for regional Queensland.

I thank the member for the question. As I said, I will continue to work with the mayor of Rockhampton. I certainly intend to get up to Mount Morgan for a visit. In the meantime, I hope this wonderful rain, which is falling throughout Central and South-East Queensland, continues and that we fill up all the dams—

*(Time expired)*

### Community Safety

**Mr WALKER:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. Will the minister update the House on how the Palaszczuk government is keeping Queenslanders safe and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for Mundingburra for his question. I know he is passionate about keeping Queenslanders safe. I am very proud of the way that the Palaszczuk Labor government is rolling out the vaccine to Queenslanders. Between the Commonwealth and the state, around eight million vaccinations will need to be given to Queenslanders over the next few months. We are working with all states and territories and the Commonwealth on that rollout to get the best possible outcomes. Last week my director-general went to Canberra to meet with officials from across the country, including the Commonwealth medical officer. They had a very productive meeting to discuss how we can ensure that we continue to give certainty and confidence to the public on the rollout.

I am very pleased that we have already done over 40,000 vaccinations in phase 1a, which means that we have done the majority of the 1a cohort. Now we are doing an audit process to see if anyone who may have been sick or away for whatever reason still needs to get their 1a vaccination as we roll out phase 1b. There are 37 sites across Queensland.

It is sad that, just as we saw with COVID, the LNP has continued to play politics with the vaccination rollout. Conveniently, when there was a serious incident involving the overdosing of two elderly people at a Queensland aged-care facility, the Leader of the Opposition said—

This is the greatest vaccine rollout Australia has seen and it must be as smooth and safe as possible.

There will be those who seek to weaponise mistakes but we won't play that game.

That lasted about five seconds because the Leader of the Opposition and his shadow health minister then started to criticise the time frame of the rollout, saying that we had vaccines held in supply. That was done so that we can give the second dose and, of course, so that we can ensure certainty going forward because the Commonwealth could not give us that certainty. However, did we hear any complaints from those opposite about the Commonwealth holding stockpiles? No! In fact, in the past 48 hours Scott Morrison said that the reason that some GPs are getting only 50 vaccines a week is that they need to hold back supply as they have no guarantee globally that more is coming. Do we hear them criticising? No, not at all!

Recently we made a decision based on the advice of the Chief Health Officer, who had made a decision about the allergic reactions that we have seen. The federal health minister then said that they do not criticise Queensland for the cautious approach that we took while awaiting TGA advice, but those opposite said that I should not be running off and making decisions without health advice. It was the Chief Health Officer who made that decision and it was Health that put that advice out to the vaccination centres—

*(Time expired)*

### **Bruce Highway, Flood Mitigation**

**Mr DAMETTO:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. The Bruce Highway between Cardwell and Ingham is regularly closed due to flooding at the Gairloch Washaway. Fortunately, \$40 million of federal funding has been committed to developing a flood mitigation solution for Gairloch. Will the minister commit to utilising that funding to reduce the time and severity of road closures at that section of the Bruce Highway?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the member for Hinchinbrook for the question. As I outlined in my earlier statement on the Bruce Highway, we are delivering a \$12.6 billion jointly funded Bruce Highway upgrade plan. At the moment we have 33 projects underway and another 120 in the pipeline. That includes projects between Townsville and Cairns such as the \$157 million Townsville Northern Access Intersections Upgrade, the Babinda intersections upgrade and the \$481 million Bruce Highway upgrade between Edmonton and Gordonvale, which I know is close to your heart, Mr Speaker. In recent years we have delivered projects north and south of Ingham, such as the \$119 million Cattle and Frances creeks upgrades and the \$10 million Arnot Creek Bridge upgrade.

I am pleased to inform the House that this year planning and consultation work will start to look at potential upgrades of the Bruce Highway between Ingham and Cardwell. There is already \$48 million locked in for that with the federal government. Sadly, I have to inform the member for Hinchinbrook that the project was stalled under the LNP when the Leader of the Opposition was a cabinet minister in the Newman government. They were too busy cutting funding to our state roads with \$1.6 billion in cuts and they failed to progress the initial planning done in 2011 under the Bligh Labor government. As I said before, we are getting on with the job of building a better Bruce—with Bruce, the member for Maryborough—and we will continue to do so.

### **Building and Construction Industry**

**Mr POWER:** My question is for the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement. Will the minister update the House on how the Palaszczuk government has supported building and construction in Queensland, especially in Logan, and is he aware of any alternative approaches?

**Mr Stevens** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mermaid Beach, there is no issue with the question being asked. There is no time limit on questions.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** There is relevance, member for Clayfield.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I thank the member for Logan for hammering it home. Indeed, under Labor building is booming in Queensland. Of course, when the COVID pandemic hit, we nailed down COVID-safe plans to keep Queensland tradies at work. Our reforms mean that more Queensland workers are getting paid in full and on time. It is Labor policy that has scaffolded the Queensland construction industry in the face of uncertain economic conditions. It is just as well that we have rectified the LNP's defective building policies, because even now tradies ask: why would the LNP saw through protections for tradies? Why would they take an axe to the industry watchdog, the building commission? Maybe that is what they were discussing on their secret long lunch with barred donors.

The Newman government put good Queensland construction businesses in a vice and allowed dodgy operators to run amok. Now it has been revealed that they have been taking those dodgy operators' money. Those opposite must have had screws loose to cut those protections when the construction industry was already burdened with over \$3 billion in unpaid debts. Those opposite must have still had their earplugs in, but we on this side of the House listen to industry. We have reinstated the rules to protect consumers and workers.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr de BRENNI:** That is right. Tradies still ask: why would the LNP rip out the foundations in this state and let dodgy companies off the leash? Maybe the member for Ninderry can answer that question. Now, under Labor, licensed builders must again lay their books on the workbench, running a spirit level over the industry to create fairness. We have given the commission more resources in its toolbox to make sure that tradies deliver the best product possible for Queenslanders.

We have been fixing up the mess of the member for Everton for years. We have built on security-of-payment laws that sand down non-payment risk. I reckon you would need the world's longest tape measure to measure all the benefits that have flowed to Queensland from the over \$1.4 billion of investment that has flowed through initiatives like our project bank accounts: in the electorate of Logan, the Logan Reserve State School, supporting 10 jobs through project bank accounts; in Hervey Bay, the ambulance station construction project, supporting 14 tradie jobs through project bank accounts; and in Traeger, the Charters Towers fire and rescue station, supporting nine jobs through project bank accounts. The member for Everton claimed that security-of-payment reforms like these would be a wrecking ball to industry but, unsurprisingly, he was wrong again.

As we heard today, residential building approvals are up 83 per cent. Even the Bunnings financials are up nearly 36 per cent. I reckon it would be easier to find a left-handed screwdriver in Bunnings than to understand the LNP's building policy.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Sawdust, Minister, sawdust.

### Premier and Minister for Trade, Email Accounts

**Mrs GERBER:** My question is to the Premier. The Premier tabled Solicitor-General advice which referenced advice by another well-known QC. The Premier told media that neither she nor Minister Bailey asked for the earlier QC's advice and that the government did not pay for it. Will the Premier tell the House who requested the earlier QC's advice and who paid for it?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** As I have said previously, the Solicitor-General's advice has been tabled in this House. I have nothing further to add.

### Tourism Industry

**Ms LUI:** My question is of the Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport. Will the minister update the House on recent Palaszczuk government support for the Queensland tourism industry, and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

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

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I thank the member for Cook for her question. It was a great pleasure to be in Port Douglas with her, the Premier and the assistant minister, meeting with one of the first Queenslanders to receive a \$200 Cairns Holiday Dollars voucher. Some 106,000 Queenslanders have entered the draw for one of the 15,000 vouchers, which are expected to generate some \$14 million for the region's tourism operators. We have also seen further initiatives, including turning the iconic Great Barrier Reef into Queensland's biggest living classroom. That will come into play in the third term of this year. There is even more for tourism operators to be positive about, particularly as we see this Sunday night the launch of our new Good to Go TV ad to make sure that 10 million Australians know that Queensland is the place to be.

It is a shame that we are seeing this in a context where the Australian government's commitments to support the tourism industry have not met the measure. The \$1.2 million program—

*(Time expired)*

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

## MOTION

### Business Program



**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.16 am): I move—

1. That the following bills will be considered during this week's sitting:

- (a) the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill; and
- (b) the Criminal Code (Consent and Mistake of Fact) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.


2. If any bill listed in 1. has not completed all stages by 5.55 pm on Thursday, 25 March 2021, Mr Speaker:
- (a) shall call on a minister to table any explanatory notes to their circulated amendments, any statement of compatibility with human rights or any statement relating to an override declaration;
  - (b) shall put all remaining questions necessary to pass the bill without further debate;
  - (c) may interrupt non-specified business or debate on a bill or motion to complete the requirements of the motion; and
  - (d) will complete all stages required by this motion notwithstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders.

I thank the members of the Business Committee for their contributions during the meeting and thank all members of the Legislative Assembly for the way we have conducted ourselves in an efficient way over the last few weeks to get through the legislation and also allow many members to make their contributions to the address-in-reply. There are two very important bills listed for debate this week: the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Criminal Code (Consent and Mistake of Fact) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I look forward to listening to the debate on those bills.

I also hope that, with the progression of those bills through the House this week, we will have the opportunity to hear further members giving their addresses-in-reply. I know that there are still quite a few members who have not yet had that opportunity, and certainly we are keen to ensure that they do.

As we have done in the last three sitting weeks, there is not the proposal to allocate specific time for each of these bills. We are putting these two bills forward, and if they are not finalised by 5.55 pm on Thursday, 25 March then the question will be put. As we have seen over the last few weeks, I am very confident that members will commit themselves to being relevant and appropriate in the way this debate proceeds and that we will get to the address-in-reply as well.

I am sure that, as always, the opposition will oppose this motion, but I am grateful that we are seeing a much more cooperative and collaborative approach to bills being debated in parliament over the 2021 sitting calendar so far. I hope that will continue into the future.

 **Mr BLEJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (11.18 am): I can advise the House that I lost a lot of sleep last night thinking about this motion today, following the discussions in the Business Committee yesterday. I was thinking of all the reasons I have opposed said motion in the past, and I cannot bring myself to justify one of the oppositions I have previously held with respect to this motion today. I can see the Leader of the House acting very surprised, as is the member for Noosa!

The *Notice Paper* lists the orders of the day: the child protection bill, the address-in-reply, the Criminal Code consent bill, the workers compensation bill and the nature conservation bill. That is all. Then we have two bills referred to parliamentary committees: the youth justice bill and the COVID emergency response bill. We only have four active bills to debate and we have two bills under consideration by committees. We have the ongoing debate of the address-in-reply, which, I understand, has about 17 hours remaining.

Over the last five years I have opposed this motion because we have said that the government was rushing things and guillotining legislation. I have always held the view—and I still do—that members ought to have the right to speak on a bill that impacts them and their constituents. However, I find myself in a different situation today. Two bills will be debated this week without a guillotine placed on them—other than the Thursday evening guillotine by which time both bills have to be completed. I cannot help but conclude that the only reason this is the case and the government is allowing lots of speakers on each bill is that it has run out of things to do. There is nothing there. There is limited legislation to debate.

If we did in this sitting what we did in the last six or 12 months of the last parliament, we would get through the four active bills on the *Notice Paper* and have nothing to debate next sitting week. There are two bills before parliamentary committees. Unless the government introduces a heck of a lot of bills this week and sends them off to committees, the parliament will have run out of government legislation to debate. It shows, therefore, that there is no plan from the government. There is no agenda. The child protection bill and the Criminal Code consent bill—both important bills—will be debated this week. If members want the opportunity to speak, they will have it. As we saw last sitting week, there was plenty of opportunity to debate two bills. If we do what the government has been doing for the last three or four years—that is, rushing through bills—then all the bills on the *Notice Paper* will be dealt with.

Although I cannot oppose the motion today, members should not think for one second that I do not know what is going on. It is not by the good grace of the Leader of the House or the government that they are wanting to work with the opposition to ensure a seamless transition of two bills this week; it is the fact that they know that if they get through those two bills quickly we will get to the next two

bills, which will mean four bills will have been debated this week, and then there will be nothing left for parliament to do. This is like when parliament did not sit for the last 12 months because they did not want to use the virtual parliament.

That is the reality of the situation now. We have done a 180. Last year, bills were continually being guillotined. Now the government knows that it has lazy ministers who have not introduced bills and do not have cabinet support to introduce bills. There is no agenda. There is no plan. Where are the plans from the health minister? Where is the legislation introduced today to fix ambulance ramping across Queensland? That could be a bill. That is an idea. How did they not consider that at cabinet? We know that there is the important issue of youth justice, but that bill is before a parliamentary committee at the moment. The committee has not reported and the bill is not subject to debate.

The reality is that those opposite have run out of things to talk about. They have run out of things to do. Therefore, there is no vision. If this is the case so early on in the term, God help us for the next 3½ years when it comes to what this parliament will do. I suspect they will cease sittings because there will be no bills to debate. That is what we get with a third-term, arrogant, lazy government with ministers who have nothing to do. They cannot show why they are making \$350,000 a year. It is a waste of money. It is a waste of resources. This is an arrogant government—get rid of the lot of them. I support the motion.

*(Time expired)*



**Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (11.23 am): When the member for Kawana was saying that he lost sleep over this I was thinking he must have been thinking about bringing back the stuffed toy on his shoulder—bring back the rat—but apparently not. Apparently it was much more substantial. What we have just heard from the Manager of Opposition Business is that he does not oppose the motion, which is a rarity. I will acknowledge that.

**Mrs D'Ath** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** There is a smile from the Leader of the House. It is a pretty rare event because he loves his time to get up in here, be the amateur thespian, hold the stage and have everyone look at him. He was in a quandary, because how does he get that stage time if he does not oppose the motion? He solved it brilliantly by going into the hypothetical world.

This sitting is early in this term of government. There are five bills on the *Notice Paper*. His imagination is fertile—I will give him that—that somehow there is a lack of commitment from the government. It is early in the term. This would be the same for any term. He successfully concocted an argument so that he could have his amateur thespian stage time. This is when he is not opposing the motion. It was a clever piece of theatrics—amateur, admittedly.

What we have is over 1,000 election commitments. We have a very strong agenda. We will be delivering every single election commitment, just as we did for the first two terms. We look forward to it, with our bigger party room and our very strong agenda. We are seeing unemployment come down, according to the figures last week. Our COVID response is world leading.

Those opposite ask questions about health. How much ramping is going on in London right now? How much ramping is going on in Paris, where they are overwhelmed with COVID cases and deaths? The opposition can come in here and play politics and raise issues that are tenuous at best, but the two bills to be debated are important bills. I acknowledge that the opposition does not dispute that they should be debated. We still have the address-in-reply debate to complete. We still have 51 members to give their speeches on the address-in-reply. There will be plenty of time for that.

The fact is that there is flexibility contained in this business program motion, depending on the number of speakers we want on either bill. The flexibility shows that we are working with the opposition and crossbench to ensure there is adequate debate. I acknowledge that this is probably the first business motion in many a year moved by the Leader of House that has bipartisan support. I congratulate the member for Kawana for using the full time allotted to him while not opposing the motion.

There will come a point when those opposite realise what a poor Manager of Opposition Business the member is. They will realise that they have a better—

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.


**Mr BAILEY:** I think the member for Chatsworth is putting his hand up for the position of leader of the opposition. The member for Chatsworth is getting in there for the next spill that will happen on the other side. We have to love it. He is in 51 club, like so many others on the other side. They held on to

their seats by a fingernail at the last election. Those in the 51 club are the members for Coomera, Clayfield, Chatsworth and Glass House. They are all clinging on with their fingernails. The member for Currumbin is not even in the 51 club. She is the only member of the 50 club.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order in terms of relevance to the motion. Like the government has run out of legislative agenda, the minister has run out of things to say in terms of this motion. I would ask that he be called back to address the motion.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Minister, I will ask that you come back to the question before the chair.

**Mr BAILEY:** The member for Kawana had to get a little bit more stage time in there—bless him. It may be the only business motion this term with bipartisan support so let us enjoy it while we can. In an odd way, we all enjoy the amateur thespian routine of the member for Kawana.

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (11.27 am): What can I say? I am almost speechless. I am going to read what I wrote. Having sat on the Business Committee last term and again this term, initially I supported the business program motion as a method for us as legislators to be more efficient. Time lines are part of that and what our communities expect of us, as it is their taxes that pay for us to sit in this chamber. However, I saw the unintentional consequences of this support, including my missing out on getting to speak on a bill important to my community when the allocated time ran out.

As an Independent, I prepare a speech for every bill. I do not know how many in this House do that. I seek a spot to speak if my contribution has content not already covered by other speakers or is highly relevant to Noosa. Particularly frustrating with the Business Committee process is when requests are put forward to sit extended hours to accommodate contentious and complex bills so we can all have the opportunity to speak for the 10-minute maximum if needed. When this was not granted, I could not support the motion for that sitting.

This sitting, and the last, there has been a trial of not allocating times and instead nominating which bills needed to be completed by end of week. This appears to be working. However, we have yet to see what domino effect this will have including on our productivity overall. I look forward to analysis midyear. Let's face it: what is said in this chamber during debate does not change how someone will vote on either side of the House, although on the crossbench it may. However, it provides the rationale for how we are voting and an opportunity to introduce a related or, as we often see, unrelated concern. This is vital for the crossbench when we do not have alternate speaking allocation such as in adjournment, PMS or MPI debates that sitting week.

We live in a time of innovation and everyone in this chamber should support efforts for greater efficiency. Regardless of my support for the business motion today, I will continue to advocate for a review of our committee system including the Business Committee, the estimates process and its gremlins, and the need to repurpose this current half hour wasted every sitting debating this motion. To finish, we can say what we need to within three minutes, as I am demonstrating now. It is definitely not easy for me—just ask my committee chair. Thank you to my fellow committee members. It is great to see progress in this space. I support today's motion, although that is no guarantee for next sitting.


Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## CHILD PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 3 December 2020 (see p. 325).

### Second Reading

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.31 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

On 3 December last year I introduced the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill was referred to the Community Support and Services Committee for consideration and the committee tabled its report on 12 February 2021. I thank the committee for its examination of the bill, particularly the member for Mansfield, the chair of that committee, and note its single recommendation that the bill be passed. I also thank the former Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for its detailed examination of the bill when originally introduced by my predecessor the Hon. Di Farmer,

member for Bulimba, in the last parliament. I would like to thank all of the people who made submissions to both committees and the stakeholders who provided valuable input when the bill was being developed.

The Child Protection Act 1999 recognises the importance of permanency and stability for children. This is not just legal permanency but also permanency in their relationships with people of significance to them and stability in their living arrangements. The bill proposes amendments to the Child Protection Act to enhance the approach to achieving permanency for children under the act. Adoption is already one option available for achieving permanency for a child who needs long-term care. The bill clarifies that adoption is an option to be considered as part of a suite of long-term options available.

The bill also clarifies the importance of and promotes alternative permanency options for children subject to a child protection order granting long-term guardianship to the chief executive. In doing so, the bill implements the intent of recommendation 6(b) of the Deputy State Coroner's findings of inquest into the death of Mason Lee. The Queensland government has implemented significant reform since Mason's tragic death, including legislative reforms that commenced in 2018 to improve stability and permanency for children in care in Queensland.

An objective of these reforms was to promote positive long-term outcomes for children in the child protection system through the timely decision-making and decisive action towards either reunification with family or alternative long-term care. These reforms included a definition of permanency to include three elements: relational, physical and legal permanency; new permanency principles for ensuring a child's best interests with consideration of relational, physical and legal permanency; requirements for all case plans to include goals and actions for achieving permanency; a limit on the making of successive short-term child protection orders that extend beyond two years unless it is in the child's best interests; and the introduction of a new child protection order—a permanent care order—which grants guardianship of a child to a suitable person until the child turns 18 years of age and is more secure than a long-term guardianship order. This bill continues to build on these reforms by further strengthening our focus on achieving permanency for children known to the child protection system.

In talking about the objectives of the reforms, I will take this opportunity to clarify the differences between the New South Wales and Queensland child protection systems, noting in her findings of inquest the Deputy State Coroner referred to the New South Wales' approach to the adoption of children in care. In New South Wales, similar to Queensland, reunification with the child's parents is the first preference for permanency, followed by guardianship of a relative, kin or other suitable person. Differing from Queensland, in New South Wales the third preference is for the child to be adopted, except for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and the last preference is for the child to be placed under the parental responsibility of the minister for child safety.

Where a child's permanency plan has a goal of reunification, adoption or guardianship, the maximum period that an order gives the New South Wales minister parental responsibility for the child is two years unless there are special circumstances. In comparison, Queensland limits the total duration of successive short-term child protection orders to two years, unless it is in the child's best interests and reunification with family is reasonably achievable within the time frame.

While our systems have some differences, both New South Wales and Queensland laws recognise that timely permanency outcomes are in the best interests of children and young people. Both systems have specific protections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in permanency planning, and the best interests and wellbeing of the child are always the primary consideration in any decision made.

When I introduced this bill in December last year, I advised that the proposed amendments would be complemented by operational reforms. I am pleased to advise that many of these actions have been completed and others are underway. These actions include: completing a review of the implementation of the 2018 permanency reforms, including safe care and connection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; completing a review of case plans for the 141 children in care under three years old on long-term orders to ensure the most appropriate long-term outcomes are being pursued; reviewing case plans of 880 children in care under three years of age on short-term orders to ensure the most appropriate long-term outcomes are pursued; working with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak to explore permanency outcomes for 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under three years of age who were identified through the first case read process and are not placed with family or community kin; and establishing a new senior position of Chief Practitioner in the department dedicated to overseeing improved permanency outcomes across the department. The Chief Practitioner, Dr Meegan Crawford, was appointed in September last year.

As part of the ongoing response to support implementation of the bill, the department will provide internal quarterly reporting on the status of permanency planning for children in care, including the number of children on permanent care orders or other long-term orders; progress actions in the internal permanency strategy and road map to focus on system improvements that improve permanency outcomes for children in care and those who can continue safely residing with their families; and continue to explore opportunities to improve outcomes for our children in care. This is a major focus for the Chief Practitioner.

I note that, as part of its consideration of the bill, the committee had access to submissions made to the former Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. Several stakeholders who made submissions to the former committee were supportive of the bill's objectives to enhance the approach to permanency and permanency planning. However the bill's reference to adoption was consistently raised as an issue for many stakeholders throughout both committee processes. I will address these issues shortly.

Before I turn to the detail of the bill, I would like to make clear that the Child Protection Act embeds all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in legislation. The five elements are: prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection.

The prevention principle is that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child has the right to be brought up within their own family and community. The partnership principle is that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons have the right to participate in significant decisions under the act about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. The placement principle is that, if an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child is to be placed in care, the child has a right to be placed with a member of the child's family group. The participation principle is that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child and their parents and family members have a right to participate, and be enabled to participate, in an administrative or judicial process for making a significant decision about the child. The connection principle is that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child has a right to be supported to develop and maintain a connection with the child's family, community, culture, traditions and language, particularly when the child is in the care of a person who is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

The act requires that the department have regard to these principles when making a significant decision about an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child. The act also requires that the court have regard to the principles when exercising a power in relation to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child. Nothing in this bill proposes to change the application of these important principles.

I will now turn to the detail of the bill. Section 5BA(4) of the Child Protection Act includes a hierarchy of preferences for deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child. The first preference is for the child to be cared for by the child's family; the second preference is for the child to be cared for under the guardianship of a family member who is not a parent of the child or another suitable person; and the third preference is for the child to be cared for under the guardianship of the chief executive. The bill proposes amendments to this order of preference by providing that adoption is the third preference for children other than Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children the bill provides that adoption is the last preference for achieving permanency. This recognises that adoption is not part of Aboriginal tradition or Torres Strait island custom and should be considered as a way of meeting the child's need for long-term stable care only if there is no better available option. This is consistent with the Adoption Act 2009, which I will turn to in more detail later.

Permanency and adoption are very sensitive issues, and the submissions received by the committee reflect this. During the previous committee process some stakeholders expressed support for this amendment; however, many other stakeholders considered that adoption is not an appropriate option for achieving permanency for children in care. Adoption is already available as an option for achieving permanency for children in care. The bill does not introduce adoption as a new option and does not require adoption to be pursued for a child. Instead, the bill clarifies that adoption is an option as part of a suite of alternative long-term care options available.

The committee also heard from several stakeholders who highlighted the trauma of past forced adoption policy and practices and that contemporary adoption could still have negative impacts on a child, such as separation from their birth family, siblings and broader family group. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families continue to live with the trauma of past practices. I acknowledge every person affected by past forced adoption practices and appreciate the bravery of those who have shared their experiences. I acknowledge that for many children who require long-term care adoption may not be appropriate due to their individual circumstances, including: age, cultural identity, ongoing support needs and the importance of ongoing connection with family.

An adoption order severs a child's legal relationship with their birth family, not only their parents but also grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins—indeed, all family and extended family members—and changes their identity. For these reasons we know that in practice adoption is rarely deemed the most suitable option for children in care. In the last seven years, 10 children have been adopted from Queensland's child protection system. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's 2019-20 report confirms that the number of local adoptions in Queensland is comparable with those in other jurisdictions. This aligns with a general decline in the number of local adoptions across Australia, reflecting significant changes in society. Today parents are provided with more supports to care for their child.

In Queensland, the Supporting Families Changing Futures reform program is focused on delivering the right services at the right time to support families and keep children safely at home. Contemporary adoption practices are voluntary and enable parents to make informed decisions around their child's care arrangements. This allows for appropriate consideration of children to either be reunified with their parents, extended family outreach to support the parents, external supports to be provided to enable the parents to care for their child, or the child to be adopted. There are some children who require long-term care for whom adoption may be the best option to bring stability and support. The bill makes it clear that adoption will be considered as an option among the suite of options to be considered for a child who requires alternative long-term care.

The best option for an individual child will always be based on their individual circumstances and needs. We will continue to act and make decisions based on the principle that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child—both through childhood and for the rest of their lives—are paramount. When we consider a child's safety, wellbeing and best interests for the purpose of the Child Protection Act, the other general principles under section 5B and the principles for achieving permanency for a child under section 5BA are part of that consideration. The other general principles include, among other things: that a child has the right to be protected from harm or risk of harm; a child's family has the primary responsibility for the child's upbringing, protection and development; and the preferred way of ensuring a child's safety and wellbeing is through supporting the child's family. It is also a general principle of the act that, if a child does not have a parent able and willing to give the child ongoing protection in the foreseeable future, the child should have long-term alternative care.

The principles for achieving permanency for a child provide that the action or order that should be preferred is the action or order that best ensures the child experiences or has: ongoing positive, trusting and nurturing relationships with people of significance to the child, including the child's parents, siblings, extended family members and carers; stable living arrangements with connections to the child's community that meet the child's developmental, educational, emotional, health, intellectual and physical needs; and legal arrangements for the child's care that provide the child with a sense of permanence and long-term stability including, for example, a long-term guardianship order, a permanent care order or an adoption order for the child.

Queensland's child protection system prioritises achieving permanency for children in the context of the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child being paramount. It is a general principle of the Child Protection Act that the preferred way of ensuring a child's safety and wellbeing is through supporting the child's family. For deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child it continues to be the first preference that the child is cared for by their family; however, if the department assesses that adoption may be a suitable option for a child who requires long-term care, the process under the Adoption Act 2009 must be followed.

The Adoption Act includes guiding principles and safeguards that recognise the impact of past forced adoption policies and practices and prevents those practices from happening again. This includes clear requirements for the consent of the child's parents and for the Childrens Court to have oversight of the making of final adoption orders. The Adoption Act requires prescribed information to be given to each of the child's parents. This includes: information about options other than adoption for the child's long-term care; support that may be available to the parent, whether or not adoption of the child proceeds; possible short- and long-term psychological effects for the parent and child of consenting to the adoption; and how and when the parent's consent to the adoption may be revoked. There is also a requirement for the chief executive to arrange pre-consent counselling for each of the child's parents. The counselling must be carried out in a way that allows the parent to ask questions and discuss the prescribed information and matters arising from the information.

The Adoption Act also requires that the child is given certain prescribed information in a way and to an extent that is reasonable having regard to their age and ability to understand. The chief executive must also ensure the child receives counselling about the proposed adoption, which must be carried

out in a way and to an extent that is reasonable having regard to the child's age and ability to understand. If the child is able to form and express views about their own adoption, the court must consider those views before deciding whether to make an adoption order for the child.

The Adoption Act includes limited circumstances when the court may dispense with the need for a parent's consent. Relevant circumstances include where the court is satisfied the parent: is not, and will not be, willing and able to protect the child from harm and meet the child's need for long-term stable care within a time frame appropriate to the child's age and circumstances; is unreasonably withholding consent to the adoption or refusing to engage with the chief executive in relation to whether to give consent to the adoption; or does not have capacity to give the consent.

A joint submission by a number of our key stakeholders to the Community Support and Services Committee suggested independent oversight is required. Only the Childrens Court can make an adoption order for a child. This is not a decision that can be made administratively by the department.

During the committee process, several stakeholders raised that adoption is not an appropriate option for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We have listened to our stakeholders on this issue. The bill reflects this by highlighting that, for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child requiring long-term care, adoption is the last preference after being cared for under the guardianship of the chief executive. This is consistent with the principles of the Adoption Act which recognise that adoption, as provided for under that act, is not part of Aboriginal tradition or island custom and as such should be considered as a way of meeting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child's need for long-term care only if there is no better available option.

Any consideration of adoption for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child must apply all five elements of the child placement principle contained in the Child Protection Act, as well as human rights considerations contained in the Human Rights Act 2019, and the existing protections and mechanisms under both the Child Protection Act and the Adoption Act will also continue to apply. The protections in the Adoption Act include a requirement for the court to have regard to the views of an appropriate Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person if considering adoption for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, both about the child and about Aboriginal tradition or island custom relating to the child.

The Adoption Act also provides that, if a child is in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive or someone else under the Child Protection Act, the court must not make an adoption order unless a document signed by the chief executive is produced to the court stating that the chief executive considers the adoption is an appropriate way of meeting the child's need for long-term stable care.

There are also safeguards in the Adoption Act to support children to maintain connection with their community or language group. For example, the Adoption Act requires that, if a child is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child and the prospective adoptive parents are not from the child's community or language group, an adoption plan must be agreed to that addresses how the prospective adoptive parents or adoptive parents will help the child to maintain contact with their community or language group, help the child to develop and maintain a connection with their Aboriginal tradition or island custom, and preserve and enhance the child's sense of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity.

While neither the Adoption Act nor the Child Protection Act promote adoption as an appropriate option for the long-term care of an Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander child, any recommendation that adoption be pursued as an option for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child in care will be personally reviewed by the Director-General of the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs. This responsibility will not be delegated.

To support implementation of the bill, information about compliance with the child placement principle will be prepared and provided to the court to support an application for adoption of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child. For an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, the department will encourage and facilitate an independent Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity for the child providing advice about compliance with the child placement principle. This will better enable the court to independently consider whether adoption of the child is the most suitable option.

The joint submission to the committee suggested introducing a requirement for the department's compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle to be to the standard of 'active efforts'. I am pleased to advise the House that this is already an operational commitment and my department continues to work to embed this in practice.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle provides a critical safeguard to protect the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The department is also working to further embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement

principle in policy and practice and support staff to make active efforts to comply with its five elements. The department is committed to partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, departmental staff and organisations to do this. We understand the importance of our legislation being consistent with tradition and island custom. We demonstrated our commitment to this with the passage of the historic meriba omasker kaziw kazipa act in 2020 that recognises traditional Torres Strait Islander child-rearing custom.

The bill also includes a new requirement for the chief executive to review the case plan for a child who is subject to a child protection order granting long-term guardianship to the chief executive 24 months after the order is made. This new provision seeks to promote alternative permanency options for children who are already subject to a child protection order that grants a long-term guardianship order to the chief executive. During the previous committee process, many stakeholders noted their support for this. However, some stakeholders raised concerns that the amendment would lead to increased adoptions for children in care. Other stakeholders interpreted the amendment as requiring adoption to be considered after two years for every child under the long-term guardianship of the chief executive.

The bill does not require that adoption be considered or expedited after two years of a child protection order granting guardianship to the chief executive. Rather, the bill requires the chief executive to review the case plan in these circumstances to consider whether there is a better way of achieving permanency for the child. Alternative permanency options may include: reunification with the child's family; pursuing an alternative child protection order for the child, including an order granting guardianship to a member of the child's family or another suitable person; a permanent care order; or adoption. The order of priority for achieving permanency, as amended by this bill, will apply to these case plan reviews, including that adoption will be the third preference for a child who is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child.

Should the case plan review identify adoption as a new permanency goal, this will be captured in the report about the review as required under the act. This outcome will not result in adoption automatically being pursued for a child. If adoption is assessed as an option for achieving permanency for a child, the process under the Adoption Act, which I outlined earlier, must be followed.

In submissions to the previous committee, some stakeholders interpreted the bill as imposing a two-year time limit on achieving reunification with a child's family. The bill does not impose such a time limit, and a child being cared for by their family continues to be the first preference for deciding whether an action or order achieves permanency for a child.

The bill also proposes unrelated minor and technical amendments to the Adoption Act to enable an application for a final intercountry adoption order to be made for a number of children placed with prospective adoptive parents by the Commonwealth minister. The Adoption Act enables the chief executive to apply to the Childrens Court for a final intercountry adoption order for a child when the child has been in the custody of the prospective adoptive parents for at least one year, including in circumstances where the chief executive placed the child in the prospective adoptive parents' care.

The chief executive of the department is usually responsible for the placement of children in Queensland as part of Australia's intercountry adoption program because of a delegation by the Minister for Home Affairs and the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection under Commonwealth legislation. Following the 2017 Queensland election, machinery of government changes occurred that resulted in the forming of a new department. As the instrument of delegation referred to a previous department, the delegations conferred on Queensland were unable to be exercised until a new delegation had been approved by the Commonwealth minister.

Between 30 April 2018 and 1 July 2019, the Commonwealth minister placed a small number of children from overseas with their prospective adoptive parents in Queensland. The chief executive cannot apply for a final adoption order under the Adoption Act for these children because they were not placed with their prospective adoptive parents by the chief executive. This situation has significantly impacted and created great uncertainty for the families and children affected. The bill amends the Adoption Act 2009 to enable the chief executive to apply to the court for a final adoption order for the relevant children. During the committee process, stakeholders did not raise concerns about this minor amendment.

Again, I would like to extend my thanks to the Community Support and Services Committee for its thorough consideration of the bill. The bill builds on our government's commitment to improving permanency and stability for children in care. We want every child to have a safe, loving and stable home where they can achieve the best start in life. I commend the bill to the House.



**Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (11.58 am): Every child has rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out these rights and government responsibilities. Governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected by anyone who looks after them. Every child who cannot be looked after by their own family has the right to be looked after properly by people who respect the child's culture, religion, language and other aspects of their life.

The main principle of the Queensland Child Protection Act 1999 is that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child, both during childhood and for the rest of the child's life, are paramount. Since the death of 22-month-old Mason Jett Lee and the subsequent coronial inquiry that highlighted the staggering failures by the Palaszczuk Labor government and the department of child safety stating that they 'failed Mason in every possible way', the community has demanded that more be done to protect children and that accountability and transparency be core to decisions that impact a child's safety and wellbeing.

On 2 June 2020 Deputy State Coroner Bentley of the Coroners Court of Queensland delivered her findings from the inquiry which resulted in six recommendations. All six were accepted by the state government and today this amendment bill we are discussing responds solely to recommendation 6(b), which provides that the government consider whether the Adoption Act 2009 should similarly reflect the 2018 amendments to the New South Wales Adoption Act 2000, expecting children to be permanently placed in out-of-home adoptions within 24 months of entering the department's care.

This bill was examined previously by the former Legal Affairs and Safety Committee in the 56th Parliament, which tabled its report on 28 August 2020. I note that this bill is exactly the same as the previous one and also that their report is part of the latest report dated February 2021. I acknowledge and thank both committees and their respective secretariats. I also thank the deputy chairs of both the current committee and the former committee: the member for Currumbin, the member for Southern Downs, the member for Scenic Rim and also the member for Burnett from the opposition.

The objectives of this bill are to: enhance the approach to permanency under the Child Protection Act 1999; to clarify that adoption is an option for achieving permanency for children in care as part of the suite of alternative long-term options available; and clarify the importance of and promote alternative permanency options for children subject to a long-term guardian order to the chief executive.

The principles for achieving permanency for a child already exist and are outlined in section 5BA of the Child Protection Act. It states—

- (1) The principles stated in this section are relevant to making decisions about actions to be taken, or orders to be made, under this Act.
- (2) For ensuring the wellbeing and best interests of a child, the action or order that should be preferred, having regard to the principles mentioned in sections 5B and 5C, is the action or order that best ensures the child experiences or has—
  - (a) ongoing positive, trusting and nurturing relationships with persons of significance to the child, including the child's parents, siblings, extended family members and carers; and
  - (b) stable living arrangements, with connections to the child's community, that meet the child's developmental, educational, emotional, health, intellectual and physical needs; and
  - ...
  - (c) legal arrangements for the child's care that provide the child with a sense of permanence and long-term stability, including, for example, a long-term guardianship order, a permanent care order or an adoption order for the child.
  - ...
- (3) For this Act, permanency, for a child, means the experience by the child of having the things mentioned in subsection (2)(a) to (c).
- (4) For deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child, the following principles also apply, in order of priority—
  - (a) the first preference is for the child to be cared for by the child's family;
  - (b) the second preference is for the child to be cared for under the guardianship of a person who is a member of the child's family, other than a parent of the child, or another suitable person;
  - (c) the third preference is for the child to be cared for under the guardianship of the chief executive.

The reason it is so important to reiterate the permanency that already exists and is outlined in the Child Protection Act—and I will point to it later—is the sad poor performance we have seen of placing children in permanency over the course of the last five years.

Clause 8 of this bill clarifies that adoption as an option for achieving permanency for children in care is the third preference in the order of priority. As such, the principle that the child be cared for under the guardianship of the chief executive becomes the last preference in deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child. The exception, as outlined, is in the case where a child

is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander when the preference for the child to be adopted is the last preference. The principle that the child be cared for under the guardianship of the chief executive becomes the last preference in deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child.

The key principle will change to (1) that the child be cared for by the child's family; (2) that the child be cared for under the guardianship of a person who is a member of the child's family other than a parent of the child or another suitable person; (3) if the child is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, that the preference is for the child to be adopted under the Adoption Act 2009; (4) that the child be cared for under the guardianship of the chief executive; and (5) if the child is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, that the last preference is for the child to be adopted under the Adoption Act 2009. In cases where a child is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, the preference for the child to be adopted is the last preference.

In 2013 the Carmody commission of inquiry was established under an LNP government following growing public concern over the increasing number of children and young people taken into care. A question taken on notice during the public briefing on the bill revealed that since the recommendation was made, only 10 children were adopted from Child Safety. Only six of these adoptions have taken place over a five-year period under the Palaszczuk Labor government when there was already existing legislation to allow for this. Yet under this government, over three times that number of children who were known to Child Safety have lost their lives since 2015.

In a joint submission led by the Queensland Family and Child Commission, Australian Human Rights Commission, the Queensland Human Rights Commission, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak, PeakCare Queensland, Queensland Council of Social Service, the Office of the Public Guardian and SNAICC stated that the concept of permanency is multidimensional and must always balance the physical, relational and legal elements, and we in the opposition agree. While submitters raised concerns about the risk of a system-led approach that could see emergency process dominating decisions, the child's interests must be paramount when the department is assessing needs, support and decisions pertaining to the child and long-term care arrangements. Too many children right now are being displaced by a system that is clearly failing.

I note the committee report outlined the department's response to reinforce that the best option for achieving permanency for an individual must be based on their individual circumstances and needs. The number of children who were subject to child protection orders increased by 8.4 per cent, from 10,296 as at 30 June 2019 to 11,164 as at 30 June 2020. Since 30 June 2016, the number of children subject to child protection orders has increased by 17.3 per cent.

Over this period the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to child protection orders increased by 23.5 per cent and the number of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to these orders increased by 12.8 per cent. The committee noted that of these children, 6,802 were subject to long-term orders. In the case of only 1,657, or 24.4 per cent of these children, the guardian was a relative or other suitable person. These children deserve to be assessed on an individual basis.

The submission raised concerns pertaining to the impact of adoption on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, noting that Indigenous children are 9.7 times more likely to be in care than non-Indigenous children, and there is a significant overrepresentation. There are additional principles outlined in section 5C of the CPA that provide a level of assurance that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to self-determination and that their culture and heritage, traditions, family, community and language are rights that are outlined in principles of prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection. I note that the minister outlined those principles in detail and there will be no change to those principles as part of this amendment.

In addition, the proposed amendment is consistent with section 7 of the Adoption Act. The committee report outlines that adoption is not part of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture or tradition and custom and that adoption of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child should only be considered as a way of meeting the child's need for long-term care when there is no better option available. All children require the individual assessment to ensure that the best option for that particular child and their circumstances is explored.

I acknowledge in October 2020 the appointment of the chief practitioner, whose role will have a focus on permanency, practice improvement and ensuring that reviews of serious injury and child death translate into improvements to practice. I note that the department has been reviewing the case plans for children under three years of age in care to ensure that the most appropriate long-term outcomes

are being pursued and that the development of an internal permanency strategy to place long-term decision-making and stability for children is front and centre in child protection practice. I look forward to seeing improved outcomes for children as a result of these measures and will be monitoring it closely.

I also note the audit of case plans for children under three years of age to assess whether another legal or placement option would be better to meet their permanent needs. Our state's most vulnerable children deserve nothing less. The opposition will monitor closely the outcomes of the measures to ensure that the government is held to account and that we never see a child failed in the way that Mason was failed. The Act for Kids submission stated—

Act for Kids believes that in order to protect human rights, a less restrictive manner of achieving the aim of increasing permanency planning for children could be achieved without amending the Child Protection Act ...

We believe the proposed amendment does not promote the rights of children to have a voice in decisions about their future.

I note its submission. Queensland Foster and Kinship Care raised concerns, stating—

QFKC does not believe the introduction of Adoption as a third option (which was already available under the current act) ... will make any difference to the lived experience of children and young people's sense of permanency.

The government and our community must never forget the interests, rights and voice of a child as their basic human right. It is more importantly so for a vulnerable child who has no voice—a child, we have come to know, whose interests, rights and voice were failed. Let this amendment not just be a box ticked to meet the recommendations of a coronial inquiry. The culture that exists within parts of Child Safety that has driven 75 per cent of longer term orders to be granted to the chief executive, despite this being the least preferred option, is what needs to change. Children deserve a safe, nurturing environment.

Stakeholders in support of the bill include Adopt Change Ltd, Jigsaw Queensland Inc. and the Queensland Alliance for Kids, who advocate for prioritisation over long-term guardianship by the chief executive officer. Children will be offered stability with a family so they have the opportunity to not just survive but also thrive. A statement of reservation prepared by LNP members of the committee outlined the inaction by the Palaszczuk Labor government on the Carmody inquiry's recommendation of permanency through adoption. The statement of reservation highlighted that the department of child safety's website states—

To grow up happy and healthy, children need permanency in their lives. For children to feel a sense of permanency, they need to know where they will be living from one day to the next, and from one year to the next.


The Auditor-General's report tabled on 4 August 2020 found that almost 25 per cent of children in care have had at least six placements, with six per cent—equating to 626 children—having had between 11 and 20 placements. Having engaged with many foster carers across the state, I can confirm that many have become a revolving door over long periods of time and have seen the impacts firsthand of these decisions and the impact on children—from mental health to displacement and a sense of loss. There needs to be significant transparency moving forward, and the government must not treat this amendment as a tick and flick to meet the recommendations of a coronial inquiry. A holistic view of the child—their rights, the support of the family in the community, a child's identity and culture—needs to be respected, responded to and adequately resourced.

It is important to note that the Queensland Law Society and the Queensland Family and Child Commission raised issues in relation to the truncated time frame that was given to provide submissions. In doing so, they queried the unintentional consequences that could arise from the lack of time allowed to publicly comment on and analyse the bill. Given the time frame of the bill's lapsing and the concerns raised by stakeholders, I believe that a key accountability of the government's report card in child protection is ensuring that any legislative reform, resourcing and review is undertaken with priority and transparency.

I now turn to the paramount principle of the Child Protection Act. As I stated earlier, the paramount principle enshrined in section 5A of the Child Protection Act is that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child, both through childhood and for the rest of the child's life, are paramount. This is a principle that we have seen the Labor government fail to achieve time and time again. Just last week it was revealed that 53 children known to the child protection system died in 2019-20. Let me say that again: 53 children known to Child Safety were failed by the system. Nine died as a result of assault or neglect and eight died from suicide. The mortality rate for children known to child protection was almost twice the Queensland child mortality rate. Even more alarming, between 2015-16 and 2019-20, 71 per cent of deaths by fatal assault and neglect were of children known to child protection compared to only 29 per cent not known to child protection.

Sure, this is an important reform. It is one that will hopefully create more options for a safer, more supportive environment and provide permanency options for children, but with 53 children known to a government department dying in one year, the child protection system as a whole is broken and there is much more to do. The extremely high proportion of deaths from fatal assault and neglect speaks volumes. The death of one child is one too many, but the death of nine children, all who died in appalling circumstances under the watch of Child Safety, is appalling. Those opposite need to think hard about what more can be done to protect our most vulnerable. The LNP is committed to protecting those children who cannot speak for themselves, no matter their economic background, ethnicity, sex or where they live geographically across our state. The LNP is also committed to ensuring that the government, through its department, is protecting children and that tragedies like Mason Jett Lee are never repeated.

As no public apology for the failings will ever suffice, it is only through policy, cultural reform, structural reform and the resourcing of place based community and family support services that will prevent children being lost in a system that has failed. It is about an holistic view of the child and family, with the child's rights and needs at the centre. The amendment proposed in the bill is merely one tool, when all principles have been thoroughly worked through, to ensure that a child has a safe, permanent family structure when all other avenues have been exhausted. Given that the goal is to provide clarity and enhance options in the approach to permanency for children and in the interests of children, the LNP will not be opposing the bill.

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (12.17 pm): I rise to support and urge support for the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. The previous speaker suggests that the system is broken. Some 3,000 workers employed by the child safety system work very hard each and every day to ensure the safety of every Queensland child who comes into the system. To suggest that the system is broken really is quite defeating to those 3,000 workers and to our significant Public Service who give their life, their career and their daily commitment to the children of our great state.

We know that those children who come into the care of Child Safety are from some of the most complex environments. It was not until I started as principal at Glenala State High School in Inala that, for the first time in my life, I began to truly understand poverty. Poverty is multilayered. Poverty affects children in more than one way. It is very concerning and derogatory to the 3,000 workers who make up our system and who contribute tirelessly in relation to the 10,000 children in our care to suggest that the system is broken.

Like every other Queenslander, I was appalled at the death of Mason Jett Lee but encouraged by the commitment of the Palaszczuk government to take up every recommendation made in all of the reports coming out of Mason's death. There is always more to do to make Queensland's children safer, and this bill is one more of the many changes made to build a stronger system. I am sure that other speakers will talk about the implementation of the rest of the recommendations in the Deputy State Coroner's findings of the inquest and the government's commitment to making the change in this bill. This bill is advanced without in any way undercutting, winding back or reducing in force the child placement principles set out in schedule 7 of the Adoption Act and schedule 5C of the Child Protection Act, both of which relate to the placement of our First Nations children.

Bringing this bill to the parliament matches the approach of this government since it was first elected. The Palaszczuk government has made an unprecedented investment in child safety since 2015. Prior to that the LNP had cut jobs in Child Safety, so to suggest that it is committed to the safety of our children is appalling. In both funding and additional staff, the Palaszczuk government has made significant reforms to Queensland's child protection system and our family support system over the past five years.

The Palaszczuk government has allocated over \$728 million since 2015 and funded more than 550 new staff to the end of this financial year, along with recent announcements regarding an additional 154 child safety staff. Despite this investment and reforms, our system faces increasing pressure but child safety staff do an extraordinary job, as I mentioned, and continue to deliver positive outcomes each and every day in the face of significant demand in the extremely complex needs of children and their families.

Let me talk about that demand. Some 129,113 concerns or intakes were reported to Child Safety over the past 12 months, which is one every four minutes. Investigations commenced in the last year are up 11 per cent. Some 10,527 children are in out-of-home care, foster care, kinship care or residential care. This is up by 9.1 per cent since last year. Let me be clear: the Palaszczuk government will not turn away any child if we believe they need to come into care, and we can be proud of that principle. When we talk about complexity, the sort of thing we mean is this: 39 per cent of children who

came into the care of the department during the 12 months to 30 June 2020 had a parent with current or previous methamphetamine use recorded, up from 38 per cent a year ago, and in 78 per cent of cases the type of methamphetamine was ice.

There is a huge prevalence of risk factors within households where a child experienced or was at risk of significant harm: 67 per cent of parents had a current or past drug or alcohol problem; 56 per cent had a current or previously diagnosed mental illness; 54 per cent had a criminal history; 51 per cent experienced domestic and family violence within the last year; and 43 per cent had been abused as a child. Some 75 per cent had more than one of these risk factors, and I spoke earlier about the complexity of poverty. Every single one of those risk factors is significantly worse than five or 10 years ago. The world we live in is significantly different than five or 10 years ago. For example, when the Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, the Carmody report, reported to the Queensland government in 2013, ice was barely on the radar. It now has an enormous impact on the safety of Queensland children.


With regard to the results in spite of that demand and complexity, cases of substantiated harm are down from over 8,000 in 2012-13 to fewer than 6,500 for the year ending 31 March 2020. For investigations with a 24-hour priority, 94 per cent had an investigation commenced within that time frame. This is the best result since recording this data commenced in 2008-09. Case loads for CSOs continued to be around or below 18 for the 11th quarter in a row, down from 21 under the LNP. Queenslanders are continuing to step up to become foster and kinship carers. Over the last year 1,645 families stepped up to become carers for the first time, an almost 20 per cent increase compared to last year. We have increased the number of carer families to more than 5,600, 880 more than in 2013.

One of our proudest achievements in child protection is the deployment of large-scale early intervention programs and services. We know that these programs and services work. As a result of our investment in early intervention, from January 2015 to May 2020 there have been over 156,000 Family and Child Connect inquiries and intensive family support referrals for information and advice and to connect families to support services. From April 2017 to May 2020 there have been more than 11,500 referrals for family support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family wellbeing services.

The early intervention family support system is working. Some 11 per cent of families who completed the family support services programs were investigated by Child Safety within six months. Some 26 per cent of families who did not receive a family support service were investigated within six months. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families referred to Child Safety, six per cent of families who completed family support services programs through a community controlled family wellbeing service were referred to Child Safety for investigation and assessment within six months.

These results do not just happen; they are driven by the investments the Palaszczuk government has made in restoring frontline services and investing in programs which work. They are also a reflection of the tremendous efforts of our staff and the work that they do with our families and carers. *Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019-2023* is the Queensland government's strategy for delivering the right services at the right time to the right families to keep children safely at home. It is a whole-of-government plan, setting out a five-year strategy for the final years of the 10-year child and family reform program initiated by the Carmody report.

It is the Palaszczuk government that has delivered the vast majority of recommendations in the Carmody report and the Queensland Family and Child Commission recommendations, and we are committed to implementing these recommendations as well as those of other independent bodies such as the Deputy State Coroner and the Queensland Audit Office. There is more to be done to make sure our child protection system is the best it can be in the face of that demand and complexity, and the Palaszczuk government will be looking at what is needed next. We have implemented multiple rounds of legislative reform and a further tranche is required of Minister Linard in her charter letter. I congratulate our minister. I congratulate the great work that we have enacted within the child safety environment, and I know that our children are safer today than they were under an LNP government. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (12.27 pm): At the outset I want to acknowledge the work of the committee, the secretariat and the previous committee and all the work it did in bringing this important reform to the House. When we debate reforms, especially around children and their safety, we must ensure that every child can grow up in a safe, nurturing and stable home and families can thrive in a state that should provide resources and opportunity. We must raise awareness and work consistently on reforms to enable children to grow with the benefits of permanency and safety. It has been long known that for positive life outcomes having strong, stable family units staying together helps vulnerable children. However, when this is not possible and safety is an issue, other permanent solutions or options, including adoption, should be included.

Many children in statutory care have now been in care for two years or more. Statistics submitted to the committee showed: 40 per cent have experienced two to five placements; 14 per cent six to 10 placements; and 32 per cent had moved more than 11 times. We know that many of these children who may get moved around are significantly more likely to be impacted by homelessness, have a poor education and suffer from health and mental health issues. Unfortunately, many find crime as a way of life.

Many reports and inquiries have recommended and shown that we must provide safe, permanent homes for children in care. For these children to grow, they need permanency. In March 2020, after a mountain of work, we in the LNP were very proud to introduce a suite of reforms based on dealing with permanency and child safety. Changes in legislation for children in the care of the minister needed to be fixed and short-term options in terms of safety and permanency planning were needed. There have been calls to deliver more permanent outcomes for children at risk, so in supporting the legislation we start to see improved options for the 8,200 children in the out-of-home care system. The issue of prioritising adoption over long-term guardianship was prominent in submissions to the committee, and I believe that the outcomes offered by providing stability within a family are the outcomes we seek to achieve.

In the legislation the care hierarchy is clearer, providing a framework for decision making in the options for children in care. There are a range of existing safeguards in the legislation intended to prevent inappropriate consideration of adoption for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children, including the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and recognition of the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to self-determination. The Adoption Act also specifically provides that adoption as provided for in that act is not part of Aboriginal tradition or island custom, and adoption of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child should be considered as a way of meeting the child's need for long-term stable care only if there is no other available option.

The proposed legislation only refers to adoptions made under the Adoption Act 2009 and does not differentiate between open and closed adoptions. The reason I include this is that it was an important part of the negotiations and the deliberations about the best outcomes and how this legislation should look. There has been significant debate around these issues, and I acknowledge those who have provided their thoughts and comments through the committee.


The Adoption Act currently supports open adoption by making provision for adoption services to: develop an adoption plan with the birth parents and prospective adoptive parent about the degree of openness once the child's adoption is finalised; provide identifying information to each party about the other party at the time the final adoption order is made, if agreed by all parties; and contact a party to an adoption on behalf of another party before the adopted child turns 18 years old to discuss their interest in exchanging identifying information. As the adoptive parent is the legal parent of the child, open adoption is about enabling the child to maintain connections and gain an understanding of his or her identity. It is not about co-parenting.

On 2 June 2020, Deputy State Coroner Bentley of the Coroners Court of Queensland delivered findings following the inquest into the death of Mason Jett Lee. The Queensland government accepted all six recommendations in the Deputy State Coroner's report. The government's response was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 17 June 2020. Recommendation 6(b) was that the government consider whether the Queensland Adoption Act 2009 should similarly reflect the 2018 amendments to the New South Wales Adoption Act 2000, expecting children to be permanently placed through out-of-home adoptions within 24 months of entering the department's care, something that the act now reflects.

Seven years earlier, in June 2013, the Carmody commission of inquiry recommended that the government routinely consider and pursue the use of adoption in cases where reunification is no longer an option. All who have worked in this space have seen the issues around reunification. A question asked during the public briefing held on 27 July 2020 exposed the shocking truth that in the last five years only six children have been adopted from the child protection system. All of us were a little surprised about that finding.

Current affairs news stories, numerous articles in the *Courier Mail*, the Auditor-General's report and even data collected by the department itself show that the child safety system is in need of a complete overhaul and reform. This legislation is a good start. We hope more significant reforms are being brought forward to fix the system and protect our most vulnerable. Implementing adoption as an option for achieving permanency for children in care is only the first step in a long process that needs to be undertaken to reform a system that needs our legislative support.

In conclusion, I acknowledge the work of the committees who worked on this bill, all submitters who put so much time and effort into expressing their views and give a shout-out to the secretariat for their patience and professionalism. Thank you.

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (12.33 pm): I rise to speak on the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill was originally referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee in the 56th Parliament before it was transferred to the Community Support and Services Committee. I acknowledge the committee chair, Corrine McMillan MP, the member for Mansfield; the member for Burnett; the member for Maiwar; the member for Scenic Rim; and the member for Nicklin. I also acknowledge the committee secretariat.


On 2 June 2020, Deputy State Coroner Bentley of the Coroners Court of Queensland delivered her findings following the inquest into the death of 22-month-old Mason Jett Lee. The Queensland government accepted all six recommendations in the Deputy State Coroner's report. The bill responds to the coroner's recommendation regarding potentially amending the Adoption Act so that children could be expected to be permanently placed through out-of-home adoption within 24 months of entering the department's care. The bill does not amend the Adoption Act but instead proposes amendments to the Child Protection Act. While the previous reforms to the Child Protection Act 1999 have had positive results, it is acknowledged that more needs to be done to improve the permanency outcomes and stability of children in care.

I briefly want to touch on my experience working as a child support worker for the department of child safety in Cairns. I pay my respects and acknowledge and thank all of our hardworking child safety workers in the department who work extremely hard to make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children. They need to be recognised in this conversation because it is a hard job. They are in a position where they in some instances are a parent. Standing here today and looking at the child protection bill I think permanency in this space is what is needed. It is not about who we should blame and it is not about the gaps in the system; it is more about working collaboratively to look at ways that we can better improve the system for the benefit of the children to come.

As a parent, my values are around providing stability for my children. As a mother I work hard to make sure that my children get the care that they deserve. We need to work in the best interests of all vulnerable children. I wish more for those vulnerable children in care who do not have the right support in place at home because all children deserve the best. As a parent you want to do the best that you can. This bill will make a world of difference in creating permanency for children who, through no fault of their own, have entered into situations where they do not have stability in their lives. As far as I am concerned, children have the right to be safe in their home, to have a roof over their head and to have food on the table at all meal times. They deserve to go to school every day and make friends and learn through positive relationships. This is what is missing. This is what this bill will provide. It takes all of us sitting in this chamber today to acknowledge the difference it will make to those vulnerable children.

I want to touch on the meriba omasker kaziw kazipa bill. As a Torres Strait Islander, it is important that there is a cultural aspect to providing support to vulnerable children. I acknowledge the minister's support in making sure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids are dealt with in a culturally appropriate manner. As a Torres Strait Islander my culture is important to me. My connection to my home is important to me. My connection to my family and extended family is what makes me the person that I am today. It is important that the cultural rights of Torres Strait Islander or First Nations children going through the system are protected in this bill.

This bill will make a difference. Kids deserve the best. We all need to do what we can to protect the interests of children in Queensland. Children deserve permanency, stability and a happy and stable home. I think this bill will deliver that. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (12.39 pm): I was part of the committee that reviewed this bill in this parliament and I thank the previous legal affairs committee for the work that they did on the bill that was not debated in the 56th Parliament. I acknowledge all of the submissions that were made to both inquiries and the concerns that were raised in support of and against this bill, as well as the concerns that were raised about adoption generally and the impact it has on the adopted child and the families of adopted children.

I think it is a good move for adoption to be formally shifted up the order of priority as it relates to children in the care of the state of Queensland. In my view and in the view of many in the community, that option and also the option of putting in place more permanent care orders are vital to minimising the social impact and damage done to young children in care when their parents are unable to take

care of them. I commend the change that is brought forward by the government. It does take time to bring these things about. I recall in 2013-14, in the 54th Parliament, when the Carmody inquiry report was handed down, having conversations with carers of children in care in my electorate who wanted changes made to make permanent care orders easier to obtain. In part those conversations were about considering adoption and making it easier. That discussion has been going on for some time. Of course, this is about implementing a recommendation from the coronial inquest into the tragic death of Mason Jett Lee. Be that as it may, it is good to see it coming forward.

I have spoken to many carers who wish they could adopt the children for whom they are caring. In some cases they have cared for those children for almost all of their lives. No matter the age of the children, many of those carers have the desire to be able to adopt them but, from the experiences that have been relayed to me, that is simply not a practical option at the moment. The process is very long and, in the view of the parties I have spoken to, it seems that it is not supported by relevant government agencies.

While this bill shifts adoption up in the order of priority, that move needs to be supported in practice at the departmental and government levels because we need to stop the merry-go-round that some young children are on which sees them moving from carer to carer. Some children have 10 or even more foster carers. We need to stop that merry-go-round of carers because it is incredibly damaging to the young child in care. The instability that it brings to children is impossible for many of us to comprehend. Certainly I cannot comprehend it. As I am sure everyone will understand, it gives rise to problems later in life for those individuals and for society as a whole.

It is good to see the proposed change to the formal part of the priority, but that needs to be supported in practice at the departmental level. We need to make it easier for would-be adoptive parents to go through the process of formally adopting the children in their care so that they can take full responsibility for them. That is distinguished from a permanent care order where overall the department is still the formal legal guardian of the children. In that situation, carers still have the lingering thought in the backs of their minds that the situation is not permanent because the department can take those children away or move them into other care situations.

In my own electorate there are long-term carers of children. One couple who comes to mind cared for a child from the age of two months until about 10 years and then that child was removed from their care. If adoption had been an option for that couple I have no doubt that they would have availed themselves of it, which would have completely changed the dynamic of that relationship. I have no hesitation in saying that it would have completely changed the trajectory for the child who was removed from the couple's care. Unfortunately, she has headed down a very dark path in her own life. She is living on the streets because she did not want to stay in residential care, for whatever reason. It is a bad outcome for everyone and it could have been avoided. While I do not let the department off the hook for the decision to take the child away from the parents who were caring for her, which was a bad decision as well, the fact that adoption was not an option in a practical sense meant that that situation was allowed to develop.

I take issue with the comments that the committee chair snuck in at the end of her address to the parliament. She said that she is sure that children in care are safer now than they were under the LNP. That is a disgraceful statement. Members on this side and I have avoided politicising this issue but that statement must be responded to. It is a disgraceful statement. In fact, I thought a lot better of the member for Mansfield before she said those things. Given that in his report into the death of Mason Jett Lee the Deputy State Coroner said that the child safety system failed that child in every conceivable way and there were 21 people culpable for his death, the statement of the member for Mansfield does not stack up. As far as I know, 18 children have died while in the care of the state in the past five or six years. That did not happen during the term of the Newman government. For the member to state that children are safer now does not stack up and the member for Mansfield should apologise to the House for making that statement.

We will be supporting the bill. I hope that it leads to a more practical option with more adoptions occurring in practice in Queensland and that it does not remain yet another theoretical possibility for the better care of children in care in this state.



**Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (12.46 pm): I rise in support of the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. As we all know, the bill delivers on the Queensland government's acceptance of recommendation 6(b) of the findings of the inquest into the death of 22-month-old Mason Jett Lee, which recommended that the government should consider whether Queensland legislation

should reflect 2018 amendments made in New South Wales that the Deputy State Coroner described as expecting children to be permanently placed through out-of-home adoption within 24 months of entering the department's care.

At the outset I acknowledge that this bill arises from the most terrible tragedy. It is impossible to read the deputy coroner's report into Mason's death and to see in graphic detail the horrific circumstances of his life without feeling sick to the stomach. It must be that Mason Jett Lee did not die in vain. Mason's mother and stepfather are in jail for causing his death, as they should be. Since 2016, the Palaszczuk Labor government has undertaken three independent reviews into the circumstances surrounding his death. The 16 recommendations made across those three reviews were all accepted and have all been implemented. Since 2017, \$200 million has been invested and between 2015 and 2021 there has been an \$857 million investment by this government. In the deputy coroner's report it was good to see the acknowledgement of the significant work that has been done. Many of the deputy coroner's recommendations have already been met through actions undertaken over the past five years.

The purpose of this bill is to make priority legislative amendments to the Child Protection Act to enhance the permanency framework for children in care and to make a minor and technical amendment to the Adoption Act 2009. In accepting recommendation 6 of the deputy coroner's report, at the time the Queensland government noted that in 2018 we introduced significant reforms to improve permanency outcomes for children involved in care through amendments to the Child Protection Act 1999, and I was very proud to be the minister responsible for the passage of that legislation through the House.

The changes were based on feedback from a comprehensive review of the act from 2015 to 2017, including two stages of substantial public consultation. They included new permanency principles; case-planning requirements, including early planning for permanency; a limit on the making of successive short-term child protection orders that extend beyond two years unless it is in the child's best interests; and the introduction of a new child protection order, a permanent care order.

We know that it is not enough for a government to just have a checklist of things you have done. We need to know that those initiatives are effective. I congratulate the department on the work they have undertaken to make sure that the permanency work is embedded within practice and that there is a strong focus on long-term outcomes for children in care. That is why this bill is and was being complemented by changes to departmental practice, many of which have already been completed and others which are underway, including a review of the implementation of the 2018 permanency reforms, including safe care and connection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; completing a review of case plans for the 141 children in care under three years old on long-term orders to make sure the most appropriate long-term outcomes were being pursued; reviewing the case plans of 880 children in care under three years on short-term orders to ensure the most appropriate long-term outcomes are pursued; and establishing a new senior position of Chief Practitioner in the department. The Chief Practitioner was appointed in September last year. I again congratulate Meegan Crawford on her appointment. She is an outstanding officer. Her position is dedicated to overseeing improved permanency outcomes across the department.

As part of the ongoing response to supporting the implementation of the bill, the department will be providing internal quarterly reporting on the status of permanency planning for children in care, progressing actions in the internal permanency strategy, and working on a road map to focus on system improvements and continue to explore opportunities to improve outcomes for our children in care.

How well are the permanency reforms operating? The number of children in the system on a long-term order has now increased to over 60 per cent, more children under the age of three are in permanent, stable care arrangements and almost 100 per cent of children subject to short-term orders now have permanency goals in their case plans. These are major achievements that will make a difference to children's lives; however, we will always need to do better. Where the safety and wellbeing of children is in question, we must always do better.

The member for Whitsunday referred in such a derogatory manner to the culture of the department, with clear negative imputations about staff. This is something the opposition does on a regular basis. I take offence on behalf of the department. The staff of this department are some of the most dedicated people I have ever had the privilege to meet. I was so proud to be minister in the last term of a group of people who continue to battle every single day, with the challenges they face, to make sure our kids are safe. They keep coming back, day after day, to do it again. They receive concern reports once every four minutes about children across Queensland. They deal every single day with

the depths of depravity. They are confronted with issues that the average person would never dream about in their wildest imaginings. They would never read about it in a book; they would never see it in a movie. The things that some people will do to their children are simply unspeakable, and the issues that must be addressed in order to make change are some of the most complex—homelessness, poverty, hunger, substance abuse, disengagement from education, domestic and family violence, neglect, mental health. The effect of these issues on parents, many of whom want to do their best and simply are just up against it, is absolutely enormous.

We have, quite separately, the most pressing issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. We know that the over-representation in the child safety system is simply unsustainable. I congratulate the department for the Our Way strategy and for their absolute determination to ensure that the child placement principles are respected and that self-determination is key to all of our actions in addressing that over-representation.

I acknowledge the enormous contribution that the non-government organisations in this space have made to the debate on this bill. I congratulate them on the work they, and all of the workers within those organisations, do every single day. The way they work together, the way they work constructively with government and their absolute long-time passion for what they are doing is so commendable and so impressive. I also acknowledge the carers, who are simply astonishing people. Without fail, whenever I meet one of them I walk away wondering how they do what they do, day after day.

The safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child, both throughout childhood and for the rest of their life, are our paramount considerations. They are paramount not only in our consideration of this bill but also in everything this department and this government do in the interests of the most vulnerable children in the state.

I congratulate the current minister, the member for Nudgee, who has absolutely thrown her heart, soul and energies behind her portfolio, and the minister who preceded me, the member for Waterford. I want to congratulate their staff on the work they have done and also acknowledge the committee for examining this most complex and most challenging issue. I commend the bill to the House.



**Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (12.55 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I start by acknowledging that the findings of the coronial inquest into the death of Mason Jett Lee were truly shocking. It is harrowing to think that one so vulnerable could be treated so horrifically, and there is no question that our child protection system needs to do better to protect children from harm.

The report published last year by the Queensland Audit Office into the family support and child protection system paints a pretty bleak picture of the current state of the system. It tells of a system under pressure from increasing numbers of families with multiple and complex needs, it lays bare that family support services do not have the capacity to deliver the services needed to meet this demand, and it tells of the increasing difficulty the department is having in attempting to place children into care based on their needs because of a shortage of carers and because of children staying in care longer.

The result is that, even before we specifically consider permanent options for placement of children out of home, children are being placed into out-of-home care and short-term care based on what is available, not what meets their specific needs. The very clear opposition from relevant advocacy organisations, concerns about the human rights consequences of this bill and particular impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been roundly ignored by the government. They have sidelined these concerns and simply reintroduced exactly the same bill that was met with such criticism in the last term of government. It still prioritises adoption over guardianship of the chief executive and introduces an arbitrary time frame to drive decisions about permanency rather than investing in child-first, case-by-case management or providing the supports that biological parents need to meet their children's needs.

It is a sad indictment that the government continues to push ahead with a legislative agenda that takes so little notice of the voices that should be front and centre in law reform like this. That is the case with both bills we will discuss this week. We have seen the government ignore key stakeholders. Those organisations best positioned to critique whether legislation will achieve its intended purposes and to propose necessary amendments to meet those goals are simply sidelined.

While I obviously cannot comment on all of the criticisms stakeholders have made, I will turn firstly to the Human Rights Commission. The commission does not support the amendments overall. That is clear. The commission's submission concluded by expressing the view that the amendments are not based on evidence that they will achieve the stated purpose, are premature in light of the forthcoming review of adoption legislation and do not sufficiently safeguard the rights of the child and

birth family. I understand that there is a statutory requirement that the minister undertake a review of the Adoption Act this year. Given what we have heard from submitters in this inquiry and the even broader range of submitters in the last parliament and from the Queensland Audit Office recently, why would we not at least wait until the review of adoption legislation is complete later this year?

The Create Foundation points out a significant omission in who is being asked about this—that is, the kids it will actually affect. When the Create Foundation consulted with young people, they immediately identified the complex and all-too-common reasons that two years might not be enough time for biological parents to prove they are suitable—reasons like substance abuse disorders or family violence. Those kids with firsthand experience of this know that it can take longer than two years to solve. As Create points out, this bill creates a time frame driven imperative for permanent placement, potentially driving more kids towards forced adoption without increased government support for the biological parents. Adoption should remain a last resort, but, even if it is not, it should involve thorough, child centred, preadoptive assessment where the child is given a genuine opportunity to participate in the decisions affecting them.

Debate, on motion of Mr Berkman, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

## MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

### Health System; March 4 Justice



**Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): When a government is losing control, it starts to blame others. When a government starts losing control, innocent people fall through the cracks. When a government starts losing control, innocent lives are lost.

Today, when the opposition sought, quite justifiably, to put the blowtorch on the performance of this government when it comes to everything from ambulance ramping being back in this state to unacceptable long-term hospital waiting lists, we were told that it was everybody else's fault. It was Canberra's fault because of funding and nursing home issues. We had the Premier say that it was the fault of a disease that was still two months away from this state for the five-year reporting period we were referring to. The minister blamed patients for daring to want to use medical facilities that they pay their taxes for. Make no mistake, ambulance ramping is back in this state because the government is losing control of its health system.

The health minister sought to say that raising these issues was somehow a slur on medical professionals and that the public were getting it wrong. Last night we decided to talk to everyday Queenslanders. We sent out a call to arms. Five minutes before walking into this place we had received 1,204 email responses from everyday Queenslanders—paramedics on the front line, doctors, nurses, mothers, fathers—who have had enough. Today, they get their voice on the floor of this House.

I apologise to this House for the content of the first two stories because they are a little graphic, but their stories are going to get told and those opposite are going to hear them. They are going to stand up and fight for constituents because every one of these are a story from a constituent of those opposite. The first comes from Karen from Caboolture. She says—

My niece went to the Caboolture Hospital at 2.30 pm suffering a suspected miscarriage. She was in considerable pain at this time. She walked out at 9.30 pm after sitting in the waiting room. They were too busy. She went home and miscarried there. She then went back the next day at 10 am. She waited in the waiting room, had bloods then back to the waiting room, had a scan then back to the waiting room. She was told she miscarried and was sent home. Not good enough.

Stacey from Logan said—

My uncle had to sit on a chair at night from 5 pm in the afternoon to 9 am the next morning, with terrible diarrhoea, which by the morning was pooled around his chair. I left him at 9 pm with his brother. When his brother and sister went back in the morning, he was still on the same chair—

a chair that those opposite sometimes classify as a bed, I might add—

He did not receive a bed until 3 pm that afternoon, and that was a 24-hour bed.

This man worked during his lifetime and paid his taxes. He lived off his savings after finishing work and refused to be a financial burden to society. He wouldn't apply for the age-old pension even though he was able. That was the very first time in his life he needed the emergency department at the hospital. Very disappointing.

It took me a lot to get him to go and get help. He was happy to stay in his home and die rather than go to hospital.

Let me tell the minister who said it is a slur on frontline health services a story about a paramedic from Hervey Bay. He said—

I happen to be one of the 45 paramedics working in the Bay. I have been a paramedic. Yes, ramping is bad here, and it is the same throughout Queensland. This happens also because there is not enough nursing staff to look after patients in all the ED beds. So there are empty beds because of the lack of staff.

Another problem is ED patients that are being admitted to either medical or surgical wards cannot do so because of the lack of beds in the ward. Again, from a lack of staffing. I am friends with a number of nurses in both medical and surgical wards.

He goes on to say—

Another way to reduce the ramping is reducing transfers from the Maryborough ED to the Hervey Bay ED. Every day on a daily basis, both day and night, we are like a taxi service running patients from Maryborough to Hervey Bay because Maryborough don't like handling sick patients.

Janine, a nurse from Caloundra, said—

I was taken by ambulance to Sunshine Coast University Hospital and I too was stuck on an ambulance bed for much more than 30 minutes. There was line after line of ambulance beds lined up waiting their turn. It was appalling.

Lucy from Redcliffe said—

Redcliffe Hospital not only has an ambulance problem but also bed and staff shortages. I've had to leave after waiting hours and not getting any help when my doctor thought I had a blood clot in my leg.

Time will prevent me going on, but there is also Dorothy from Aspley, Judith from Waterford, Joan from Condon and Julie from Greenslopes. There are over 1,200 of them. Do members want to know something? There will be another half a dozen by the time I go back to my office. There will be another dozen or so by tonight. Today, they had to sit there and listen to the Premier say that it is because of COVID and the minister say it was their fault because they dare turn up to an emergency department which they have paid taxes to support. I have news for them. These are real Queenslanders, honest Queenslanders and today they find their voice.

I again put on the record that the only slur on medical professionals is coming from those who refuse to properly resource them. The only slur on medical professionals is from those who will not admit there is a problem. Ambulance ramping had been fixed in this state. The minister can quote numbers all she likes. She can say there is record funding. She can talk about dollar figures, but dollars do not mean anything to somebody who is sitting in a pile of diarrhoea and their own blood. That is what we are seeing in the stories of real Queenslanders. We will call it out for what it is.

In my remaining time, I wish to raise what is an important issue and one where our community has found its voice. I talk about what started as an issue in Canberra but spread throughout our state, and rightly so. Along with my colleague the member for Mudgeeraba, I was proud to attend the March 4 Justice. It was a march that stretched for a distance longer than I have ever seen come to this place.

As I spoke with participants I heard the stories of people who had not marched before, people who had not marched for decades and people who wanted to have their voices heard. I commend them for doing so. We must continue to make sure that as a result of the voices that have been found that real change is made. I acknowledge that this is a conversation that started in our nation's capital, but it is one that we must have through every workplace in this land, and that includes our workplace here.

I acknowledge the contributions from those opposite this morning. I acknowledge the contributions from our members both male and female. It is vital that we create a workplace here and a society where equality, fairness and justice mean something to us all. So it is that I commit today that the party I lead must reflect Queensland's diversity. In the weeks ahead I will be laying out the initiatives I believe are essential to reform our party. One of them will be ensuring the party actively seeks younger, more diverse and a larger portion of women for vacant seats. This is important. It is important for us to be a diverse political movement. It is important for our parliament and it is important for the voices of those who have taken every ounce of strength to tell their stories—brave women, brave young men, brave people in society who have stood up for change. We as a parliament and as a party must applaud and continue to reflect that mood.

### Electoral Donations



**Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (2.10 pm): What we have just heard from the Leader of the Opposition is that old adage made clear: if you can fake sincerity, you've got it made. Imagine being lectured to by the LNP on health care when the member for Broadwater sat around the cabinet table and closed the Barrett Adolescent Centre against advice. The then minister whom he served with in the cabinet, Lawrence Springborg, did not even read the advice.

There he was, the member for Broadwater, sitting around the cabinet table when they closed that adolescent mental health centre with tragic consequences for young people in this state. The member for Broadwater can come in here today with his fake sincerity and his stories, but when he had a chance to make a decision about health care in this state he did nothing. He sacked 4,400 health workers in this state. He sacrificed them as they threw an anvil on the economy of Queensland. What an absolute disgrace!

We have heard once again today about the opposition's absolute disregard for the rule of law in this state—their absolute addiction to property developer donations, disregarding the law in Queensland, disregarding donation laws that they opposed every single step of the way. What did we learn in the *Australian* today? The Electoral Commission has launched a formal investigation into—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DICK:** They still call out. You would have thought on one occasion they might be silent. The ECQ has launched a formal investigation into an LNP event held on an exclusive island near Noosa. This was an event the then alternative premier of this state, the member for Nanango, attended to take property developer donations. That is the allegation that has been made and that is what is being investigated. Who was the guest speaker? Peter Dutton. How desperate must you be to raise money by having Peter Dutton as a guest speaker?

We learnt that someone else was there, and that of course was the member for Surfers Paradise. In his own words, the member for Surfers Paradise was 'an innocent guest' at this event, but he was 'perplexed' at how property developers came to be present. The member for Surfers Paradise must have missed the memo: don't ask; don't tell. Of course, he was not slow to pass the blame on. The member for Surfers Paradise threw the member for Ninderry under the property developer bus.

Spare a thought for the poor old member for Ninderry, who has been thrown on the backbench. He worked so hard as a shadow minister and was punted as soon as the member for Broadwater got a chance. Like the member for Glass House and the member for Burleigh, he was cast aside from the shadow front bench. This comes after all the work he did grifting property developer donations for the party for the election. He got kicked to the kerb. It must be galling for him to see the member for Surfers Paradise there—now in his third decade—on the opposition front bench totally unaware of why he was in Noosa, who was there and for what purpose. 'Don't ask me,' said the member for Surfers Paradise.

We know the LNP do not like these laws, just like they do not like transparency and accountability when it is applied to them. For all the Leader of the Opposition talks about applying the blowtorch, they cannot stand it when the heat is put on them. For all the posturing of the member for Maroochydore, the LNP only care about accountability when it is applied to somebody else.

They fought our political donation reforms all the way to the High Court—where they promptly lost. We now know the LNP are the subject of a formal investigation by the ECQ—a formal investigation that was instigated by their own party. That is how bad it is. As we read on an almost daily basis in the *Courier-Mail*, Peter Gleeson is chronicling the chronic dysfunction within their political organisation. This is a party that does not trust itself. Why should Queensland ever trust them? The Leader of the Opposition has talked a big game about pursuing an integrity agenda.

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order, member for Everton!

**Mr DICK:** I will give this much: at least the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was willing to sit here and listen to it. Now the test is for the Leader of the Opposition. If the Leader of the Opposition is so concerned about integrity, what is the member for Broadwater—

**Mr STEVENS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. As the member would be well aware, references to people's absence are not allowed under the standing orders.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will take some advice. Treasurer, I remind you of the standing orders. The convention is that you do not refer to the absence of members from the chamber.

**Mr DICK:** The Queensland Leader of the Opposition cannot stand behind the Prime Minister's go-to strategy saying that he was not advised, that he did not know. He cannot stand behind Scott Morrison's alternative strategy: don't ask; don't tell. He has to ask his frontbencher what went on, who was there, what money was taken and why. If not, he is just another opposition leader, another LNP leader in this state, who does not have the backbone to stand up to his own party. He is a Leader of the Opposition, as I said in question time, with no vision, no agenda and no ideas. We have to find out today whether he is a Leader of the Opposition with no backbone at all.

(Time expired)

### Auditor-General's Report, State Finances



**Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.16 pm): I say to colleagues on this side of the House that that was the Treasurer of Queensland and that is what his mind is focused on! That is what his mind is focused on, when his mind should be focused on the economic recovery of Queensland. He is dealing in that rumour, in that gutter information, in that supposition, when his mind should be on delivering an economic recovery for Queensland.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order, member for Lytton!

**Mr JANETZKI**: An important report was delivered last week. Auditor-General's reports may not make much news and they may be pretty dry reading, but the Auditor-General's report from last week tells us some interesting things about this government.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order, member for Lytton!

**Mr JANETZKI**: One of those things is their complete lack of transparency and accountability when it comes to the economic performance and the releasing of transparent information in this state. We know that last term this government was the first to cancel the budget but the last to announce COVID economic recovery for this state.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Lytton, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr JANETZKI**: We know that when Queenslanders went to the poll last year they did not understand the true economic performance of Queensland. Now this report by the Auditor-General has made it clear that Queenslanders should have known. The Auditor-General made a clear recommendation that at the very least the financial statements should have been made known to the people of Queensland before the election so that Queenslanders could have a true and full economic position of this great state.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Pause the clock. Member for Mermaid Beach and member for Cairns, you will cease your quarrelling across the chamber.

**Mr JANETZKI**: What we saw was the complete concealment of the position of the financial state of Queensland. In New South Wales and Victoria, for instance, their finalised financial statements will be released by the middle of October every year. In Queensland it could be up to six or seven months post the end of the financial year. The people of Queensland deserve better—a more transparent government, and that is what the Auditor-General is now saying.

The second key recommendation in the Auditor-General's report related to the Future Fund. The Future Fund was set up by this government to deal with Queensland's debt position—\$5.6 billion or \$5.7 billion was going to be set aside. If we are going to address the debt problem in Queensland it is going to have to be a better Future Fund than that, because the interest bill on our debt right now is about \$3 billion. This Future Fund, which was set up to pay down principal debt, will pretty much just cover interest repayments on that debt. The Auditor-General has made it clear that those funds should be audited every single year. Every fund set up under the Queensland Future Fund should be audited.

The other thing that was made clear in the Auditor-General's report relates to the state employees' superannuation fund. Back in 2016, \$4 billion of public servants' money was ripped out. Back in 2016 we warned that that fund would end up in deficit. The State Actuary at the time even said there was a fifty-fifty chance of that fund being in deficit by 2020. Mr Deputy Speaker, lo and behold that is what has happened. Tens of thousands of Queenslanders' superannuation entitlements—people look forward to that money in their retirement—has been put at risk by the dodgy decision-making of this government. Back in 2016 the \$10 billion was fully funded. It did not matter whether it was actuarial or accounting standard: it was \$10 billion in surplus. Now the situation is that the fund is in deficit.

Another thing the Auditor-General mentioned in his report that must be brought to the attention of this House and Queenslanders is debt. This government has completely junked its fiscal principle of sustainable debt. In his report the Auditor-General said—

Over the long term, the state must be able to fund its operations and a significant portion of its capital program ... This is to ensure that a burden of debt is not unduly placed on future generations ...

This government does not care—

*(Time expired)*

### Bundaberg Electorate, Economic Recovery



**Mr SMITH** (Bundaberg—ALP) (2.21 pm): How good is the Palaszczuk government's strong economic recovery plan for regional Queenslanders! Because of its strong health response to COVID-19 the government is delivering a strong economic recovery for regional Queensland and the great community of Bundaberg. When it comes to investing in our regions it is only the Palaszczuk government that truly leads the way. We are seeing that in droves in the Bundaberg region.

One good news story is the ongoing \$42.5 million work along the Isis Highway to make it safer and smoother for commuters, families who come for holidays and the 1,000 heavy vehicles that travel along that road every single day. In addition, there are works along Princess Street and Bargara Road. This is a \$3.5 million investment into a high-use local road, but during the election the LNP announced a funding cut of \$2.5 million.

In Bundaberg we have so many good news stories about the community groups, charities and volunteer based organisations that keep our communities safe, strong and united as we recover. It was amazing to visit Sue Tasker from Angels Community Group to announce that her organisation can continue to invest in young workers through the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. Thanks to a \$267,000 investment by the Palaszczuk government, Angels Community Group will provide on-the-job training and support to 12 trainees for the next six months. This is a perfect example of how our economic recovery plan is delivering for Bundaberg through community engagement, Skilling Queenslanders for Work and the creation of jobs.

Whilst speaking about the success of Skilling Queenslanders for Work, I am also proud to report that I had the honour to attend the RecLink graduation of 22 Bundy locals who completed a Certificate I in Construction or Conservation and Land Management. The graduation was held at Community Lifestyle Support. I am happy to say that I was not able to meet all of the 22 graduates because some of them had already found employment and were already busy at work that day. These are great stories of how, when a government backs in regional Queensland, regional Queensland grows stronger each and every day.

I might also add a great story that was told to me last Saturday night. Fans of my Facebook page—I am sure there are plenty over there—know that on Saturday night I can often be found at the Autobarn Carina International Speedway. Barry, Sean, Dave and all of the team have done a great job getting the speedway back up and putting on a fast, fun and family-friendly night out. Last Saturday night I asked photographer Rebecca Corbett how she enjoyed the small business roadshow that was hosted in Bundaberg by Minister Farmer. Rebecca told me that she was able to network at that event with a local education institute and walked away with new and ongoing three-day-a-week employment. She will teach courses in business to young regional Queenslanders, which will provide her with stability and create opportunities to grow future small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Works for Queensland is another great story all across regional Queensland but especially in Bundaberg. In the Bundaberg region, in the last two rounds of Works for Queensland over 3,000 jobs were created. These are local jobs for local workers. In partnership with the Bundaberg Regional Council, I am excited to see the projects and jobs injected that will be created by this new \$13 million round.

**Mr Tantari:** Jobs, jobs, jobs!

**Mr SMITH:** I take that interjection from the member for Hervey Bay. This government is about jobs, jobs and more jobs. When it comes to delivering for regional Queensland and Bundaberg the Palaszczuk Labor government is doing just that.

On a serious note—and I know those opposite will not want to interject—Betty Davies held the March 4 Justice vigil in Bundaberg. It was amazing to see so many strong women and young people in our community. We wore black to let all women know that violence against women, violence in the workplace, sexual harassment and sexual assault is not on. I would say to all those out there: please contact the police if you are in danger or come to my office and we will assist you.

*(Time expired)*

### Whitsunday Electorate, Tourism



**Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (2.26 pm): I rise today to draw to the attention of the government the Whitsunday region, which I believe they have forgotten. I believe they think that the Great Barrier Reef tourism industry and the tourism industry as a whole only exist in Cairns and not other parts of Queensland. I think that the current government has forgotten that they have been elected to represent all of Queensland.

The Whitsunday region represents 40 per cent of the \$6.3 billion Great Barrier Reef tourism industry. One in three jobs in the Whitsundays relies on tourism compared to Cairns, where it is one in six. Prior to COVID, operators were running at 90 per cent capacity. It is estimated that now they are running at an average of 15 per cent capacity across a fleet in both day and night markets. Our largest operator in Whitsunday is down 70 per cent due to international border closures.

We have had visits from the Minister for Tourism Industry Development and the shadow minister, the member for Cairns, to our region—not once, but twice—yet there is still no support, no funding and no advocacy from the government to support operators in my region who are currently only being supported by the private marina industry. If it were not for private marina owners in the Whitsundays I would have boats out on moorings that potentially could be washed up in weather events that will cost this state millions of dollars over the course of the summer months.

In my region 20 operators pay almost \$2.6 million in berthing fees, yet these same operators received only \$198,000 from the marina rebate scheme, which was completely flawed in the way in which it was constructed. There was a lack of consultation with both marine industry owners and operators across our community. That presents a shortfall of \$2.38 million. Cairns has been entirely subsidised 100 per cent—

**Mr HEALY:** We own the marina!

**Ms CAMM:** I will take that interjection. The Queensland government do own the marina of Cairns but that does not prohibit them from engaging with any other marine operator. It does not prohibit them from engaging with any other private marine operator in the same way. They could come and negotiate and see what could be done to support our marina operators.

Of the 37 operators from one marina precinct, only half were able to use the rebate to pay a portion of their marina fees as the eligibility was flawed—that is, the fee was not based on per metreage because whoever came up with the rebate did not even understand how the marine industry operated. Instead, it was a flat rate of up to \$20,000, and operators had to pay their berthing fee first before being able to claim. Therefore, mum-and-dad operators in the Whitsundays—not multinational foreign owned operators, like we see in Cairns—had to go to the marina owners and ask for support.

The Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association has written to the Premier, the minister, the assistant minister and the Treasurer to request that the marina berthing fund be re-established, that further funds be put in there and that the eligibility criteria be reviewed based on metreage and commercial operator fees. It is not sustainable to expect the private industry in the Whitsundays to subsidise because of the nepotism of this Labor government in the way it conducts itself across our state. It is almost pork-barrelling. It is appalling.

**An opposition member:** Not 'almost'.

**Ms CAMM:** I will correct the record: it is pork-barrelling. It is absolutely appalling. My local RTO, Whitsunday tourism, has put together some numbers and facts. It has stated that the Whitsundays has received \$1.2 million, compared to \$27.8 million in subsidies across the tourism industry in the Cairns region. The Queensland government's Cairns Holiday Dollars program effectively supports the industry of Cairns, while it robs operators in the Whitsundays and stops them from getting back on their feet. I urge the Labor government to enter a dialogue with the people of the Whitsundays because it has become clear that they really do not care.

*(Time expired)*

### Coronavirus, Vaccine



**Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (2.31 pm): I rise today to speak about the COVID-19 vaccination rollout in the Torres Strait. Before I start, I would like to acknowledge the Palaszczuk government for implementing tough measures in Queensland to protect Queenslanders and especially vulnerable communities in my electorate of Cook. These measures have worked. In my electorate we have had zero COVID cases. In the most vulnerable communities of Torres Strait and Cape York, there have been zero cases of COVID-19, which is a great achievement due to this government's response to COVID-19.

This government made sure we worked closely with local leaders, and that is something I am really proud of. That collaborative effort across all levels of government has ensured the safety of all of our communities. There is a large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Cook

electorate with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, blood pressure problems and renal failure. The list of underlying chronic diseases is extensive and it needs to be brought into this conversation when we talk about the types of measures we take to safeguard communities.

We are not out of the woods yet. I had the privilege of visiting my home in the Torres Strait last week to hear about the vaccination rollout across three communities that we have identified as being the most vulnerable. I want to particularly mention Saibai Island. Saibai is only four kilometres from Papua New Guinea and that puts people living in the community of Saibai at a very high risk of getting COVID-19. Right now, we cannot take anything for granted. There are a large number of cases in Papua New Guinea, and the Premier stated this morning there are currently 3,574 cases, including 120 of its hospital staff. With the Torres Strait Treaty, there is movement of people back and forth. Even though there is no current movement of people, we need to make sure that every measure that is put in place acknowledges all the factors that put people at risk.

This vaccination rollout will safeguard communities like Saibai. It will safeguard people with chronic diseases. It will provide immunity so that people can fight COVID-19. This is a potential outbreak in Papua New Guinea, and it could be a potential outbreak here in Queensland. The Palaszczuk government has done an amazing job in keeping COVID out of our communities, and the vaccination rollout in the Torres Strait is just another example of the good work that this government is doing.

I support the Palaszczuk government with this vaccination rollout. I would like to encourage families back home and say that this is going to keep us safe. We need to trust our medical experts with the advice they are giving us. We need to trust that this vaccine will get us out of the woods. We need to trust that this government is doing all that it can to protect communities right across Queensland, in the Cook electorate, in Cape York and in my home of Torres Strait.

### Premier and Minister for Trade, Email Accounts



**Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (2.35 pm): I think the Premier protesteth too much. Since I tabled in the estimates hearing in December 2020 an email allegedly sent on a private email account from transport minister Bailey to the Premier's private email account discussing the ideology of a possible DG candidate and their suitability for the role—clearly a work related issue—we have seen the Premier duck, weave and hunker down, refusing to answer questions. The more the Premier pretends there is nothing to see here over the email scandal and refuses to answer basic questions in an open and accountable way, the more this issue smells.

It raises the very real spectre, as I will explain shortly, of subversion of the right to information process as well as the issue of the Premier misleading the House. Without clear answers to straight questions, the Premier's reluctance to be open and accountable just draws greater attention to the disparity between her claims of openness and integrity and the reality of a government cloaked in secrecy and Labor-aligned lobbyists and union officials with the inside connection to decision-making.

There is an old saying that it is the cover-up that will get you sometimes more than the original error. The Premier has refused time and again to answer questions, to release the emails at the heart of this issue or to come clean about why she is so determined to keep things in the shadows, and we have to ask why. That is the biggest unanswered question and it will not go away until this parliament and the people are treated with respect and get straight answers rather than ducking and weaving.

Why does it matter? It is because this issue is about integrity. It is because government decisions made in the dark are a corruption risk. I want to address the issue. In February 2017, the Premier told this parliament that she did not use her private email accounts for government business. In the same year her Minister for Transport revealed he had been caught out using his private email account for government work and was described in a subsequent investigation by the CCC as 'foolish' when he tried to delete these emails. The Premier did not sack him. I believe now that she failed to act to discipline him appropriately because she also had been caught up in this email scandal—which to a reasonable person would appear to have had work related content.

I believe she has misled the parliament about that, judging by some of the emails released since then, and they were not released by the Premier but by the boss of the CCC. One of these emails on the Premier's private email account appeared to be Minister Bailey writing to her on his private email account to follow up with her DG. However, the Premier has since taken to brandishing advice from the Solicitor-General, which does not clear her as she told one media outlet. That is not the Solicitor-General's job. He provides opinions.


His opinion in fact raises more questions, as we found out in this morning's question time. Firstly, the Solicitor-General's advice is an opinion, but it is not the one that counts in relation to the Public Records Act. It is the State Archivist who, interestingly, had a very different opinion about what were state records under that act that should have been kept. The State Archivist had a different opinion from the Solicitor-General, and it is the opinion of the State Archivist that matters.

Ministers are bound by the Public Records Act and that means having respect for the State Archivist. I believe it is time that the State Archivist has an enhanced statutory role so they can report directly to this parliament and to the parliamentary committees as well as to the minister. That is another issue that we will pursue further. I do believe it is unfortunate that the State Archivist's role appears to have come to an end on the same day that we saw the Solicitor-General's advice presented to the Premier. She subsequently tabled that advice the next day.

Let me address another issue because the Solicitor-General's opinion raises more questions than answers. It revealed that he was also referencing so-called legal advice, whether or not it was independently sought. Who engaged Kerri Mellifont we do not know. Interestingly, enough, it was regarding emails that were apparently the subject of an RTI lodged by the opposition. Who engaged Kerri Mellifont to provide this advice? The Premier will not answer that question. Whether it is a minister or a department, it is not normal process for RTI to seek external legal advice. Who engaged her? We do not know; the Premier will not answer that. It was interesting that that advice was dated only days before the department released its RTI response to the opposition. There are more questions than answers. This smells. This is a cover-up and it is a subversion of the RTI process as well.

*(Time expired)*

### Federal Parliament, Workplace Culture

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.40 pm): The last few months have been traumatic for Australian women. Last night's revelations that men employed by the Australian Public Service have been performing lewd acts on women MPs' desks only further added to the horror and shock that we have all been feeling. Yesterday it was revealed that male coalition advisers were performing solo sex acts in Parliament House and swapping photos with colleagues. Why would these men do this? Did they think the woman MP was hot? It was clearly a power trip for them to hang their penises out over a woman's desk and try to show off that they consider themselves more powerful than her. It is absolutely grotesque. However, women experience this kind of male power trip behaviour all the time and I believe all of the women who have come forward and told their story are courageous.

After these shocking allegations were aired it was confirmed the staff member in question has been sacked. The woman MP was offered a token gesture of support, just like Brittany Higgins was given a brochure. However, Nationals MP Michelle Landry said that while the behaviour was unacceptable, she felt 'bad' for the sacked man.

**An honourable member:** What?

**Ms LAUGA:** What? It shows that so many people in Canberra, including the federal member for Capricornia, just do not get it. This morning the member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, the assistant minister for children and families, said—

I was horrified when I saw that last night. I think there is a real behaviour problem in this place and that we have to address it.

I am certainly strict about what goes on in my office. I don't think people should be here after hours unless they are working and there needs to be a strict code on that.

In saying that, the young fellow concerned was a good worker and he loved the place. I feel bad for him about this, but it's unacceptable behaviour by anyone and it should not happen in workplaces like this. This is the federal parliament of Australia and people should behave themselves.

The minute she started referring to this man as a 'good worker' is when the member for Capricornia lost all credibility. It is all well and good to say, 'I'm appalled,' but she said, 'In saying that,' and turned her horror into an excuse. Why is she defending him? She has effectively defended the indefensible. She clearly knows him.

It is all well and good to care about the mental health of colleagues. I challenge whether the member for Capricornia even knows the mental health of the perpetrators. Did she call them? The standard we walk past is the standard we accept, and the member for Capricornia's comments demonstrate the National Party's deep feelings of just brushing these matters off. She is defending the disrespect of women. She is brushing off and defending the disrespect of the parliament of Australia.

She is defending the disrespect of a woman elected democratically by her electorate. These acts showed a deep disrespect for the people of Australia, and the comments of the member for Capricornia that, 'This man was a good worker,' and that he loved the place are just absolutely deplorable.

It is just like last week. When asked about the March 4 Justice where tens of thousands of Australians marched to send a message to Canberra, the member for Capricornia called it a witch-hunt. I believe that when politicians speak off the cuff, as the member for Capricornia has been doing a lot lately, they often say how they really feel and what they really think. The member for Capricornia's comments go to the heart of how the National Party and the LNP actually feel about the treatment of women.

There is no place for disrespect of women in our parliaments, in our workplaces, on our Australian streets or in our homes. Everyone is sick of it. Women are sick of it. We are sick of the dick pics, the revenge porn, the harassment and abuse if a woman rejects a man, particularly online. We are sick of men like these who perform these lewd acts over a woman's desk at work, film it and share it. We are sick of being groped, touched up, assaulted, harassed, raped and murdered.

I say to these men: stop hiding, step up and get out. As for the member for Capricornia defending men like this, she needs to apologise or resign immediately.

### Public Trustee of Queensland



**Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (2.44 pm): There is a group of vulnerable people, people who have been taken advantage of, people whose rights have been trampled. These are people who cannot march. These are people who cannot access Twitter. These are people who cannot even access their own financial resources. These people are the people subject to guardianship and administration orders under the control of the Public Trustee of Queensland. These are people who are truly vulnerable. These are people who truly need our care, support and compassion. There is clearly something rotten with the Office of the Public Trustee here in Queensland.

In the last 12 months we have seen an Auditor-General's report into the Public Trustee's handling of complaints about the service it provides. That report, tabled in this place in September 2020, examined seven areas of complaints handling by the Public Trustee. What were some of its key findings in respect of those who are vulnerable, those who cannot march, those for whom no-one else chooses to speak in this government? The report states—

The Public Trustee of Queensland ... does not measure or report on response times and, therefore, does not know how many complaints it completes within target time frames.

PTQ's complaints management system is not properly designed for people with impaired capacity.

It is not easy enough to navigate or be understood by its customers ...

...

PTQ has proper complaints management policies and procedures but they could be written more clearly.

...

PTQ's complaints management information ... system is not fit for purpose.

...

PTQ has a team of people to coordinate and monitor the complaints management system.

However, most complaints are handled by regional staff. These staff are not sufficiently trained in complaints management ...

PTQ does not know if its complaints management system is meeting the needs of its customers—

because it never evaluates it. It goes on—

PTQ does not seek feedback from customers about its handling of complaints.

PTQ's complaints data is not good enough to analyse how well its systems and processes work. Current information does not help PTQ understand and identify what it can improve.

What a damning report that is. Now we have the 360-plus page report of the Public Advocate into the fees, charges and practices of the Public Trustee, and that report makes damning reading. Case studies referred to on page 2 of the executive summary highlight the problems. The report states—

Case study 1—\$30,000 inheritance gone in 2 years and house not maintained ...

Case study 2—Fees charged to manage assets that were managed by a third party ...

Case study 3—Charged two fees for unnecessary financial advice ...

Case study 4—High earning shares sold and cash invested in Public Trustee investment ...

Case study 5 ... Public Trustee opposes client's appeal because he 'lacks capacity' ...

Case study 5 (part 2)—Public Trustee resisted appointment of alternative administrator who wanted to make a claim against it for lost funds ...

The damage is being done to vulnerable Queenslanders. The report makes 32 recommendations and the response of the Public Trustee clearly shows that it does not accept much of the Public Advocate's conclusions and findings. In the main, the recommendations of the Public Advocate go to the fees and charges regime of the Public Trustee, which is opaque and unclear, results in double and sometimes triple charges for clients and the cross-subsidisation of services by charging some clients to whom it owes a fiduciary duty more and others less.

There is to be yet another review of fees and charges. How long will that take? Will it be this year, next year or the year after? Who is conducting this review? What will they be considering? Quite simply, it is not good enough, particularly when the Public Advocate says the government needs to act swiftly to ensure the Public Trustee immediately ceases all practices that constitute breaches of fiduciary duty and other unacceptable practices. Last year the Public Trustee reported a loss of \$11 million.

The former public trustee and Labor mate Peter Carne was stood aside and issued a show cause notice, quitting only after pocketing \$385,000 for not working for a year. Other experienced staff have left and there has been no appointment of another Public Trustee since, leaving the acting Public Trustee to deal with this mess.

These and other issues go to the very heart of the Public Trustee's operation. For years now, the Labor government has passed the buck when it comes to complaints about the Public Trustee. Rather than undertake a full and independent review, this lazy government has languished behind the claim of the independence of the Public Trustee. In the time that this government has failed to act, many clients and their families have continued to suffer—stonewalled, complaints unanswered, requests for information stymied and process used to frustrate answers being given to legitimate concerns. This is a government that issues a one-page response to a 360-page inquiry and ignores the hard questions. It is a response that is not even on the department's website. No longer can this shameful state of affairs be swept under the carpet. It is time for a thorough, independent and comprehensive review of the operations of the Public Trustee in the 21st century.

## Renewable Energy



**Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (2.49 pm): As has been said a few times in this place, Queensland is a renewable energy powerhouse. Our existing power stations are ready to help power the nation and our renewables continue to power the entire country. Since the Palaszczuk government was elected, renewables development has been booming. Some 44 large-scale projects have come online or are being built, injecting \$8.5 billion into the Queensland economy. This investment has created over 7,000 jobs in construction alone. Almost all of these jobs have been in regional Queensland. We boast five out of the top 10 solar suburbs in Australia, with rooftop solar being the biggest generator in the state. In fact, I am advised that North Queensland on its own is the third-highest renewable energy generator in the world. We have reached an important milestone on the way to achieving our renewable energy target, hitting 20 per cent at the end of last year. We are well on the way to achieving 50 per cent by 2030. For 30 minutes last November we even hit a high of 60 per cent of our electricity coming from renewables.

We are committed to powering ahead in the delivery of cheaper and cleaner energy and we are already getting results. Last financial year we had the lowest average power prices on the eastern seaboard. The Australian Energy Market Commission forecasts a further 14 per cent reduction in power prices in South-East Queensland over the next three years. Our renewable energy generator, CleanCo, is further boosting our levels of publicly owned clean energy, with 400 megawatts from the MacIntyre Wind Farm, which is under construction.

We certainly are not going to stop there. We are investing \$145 million to establish three renewable energy zones in North, Central and Southern Queensland. These zones received expressions of interest for 192 projects, representing over \$90 billion in potential investment and 57,000 jobs. The message is clear: people want to invest in Queensland and invest in our renewable energy potential. They want to create jobs in regional Queensland through a renewables boom. We will also deliver \$500 million through our Renewable Energy Fund, giving our publicly owned generators the chance to invest in more publicly owned renewable energy assets.

This does not all happen by accident. It is a direct result of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to delivering cheaper and cleaner energy. We built this from the ground up, as those opposite failed to deliver a single renewable energy project when in government. Over 1,300 jobs were lost in the renewable energy sector under the LNP. Its three years of inaction took this state backwards and cut off Queensland's renewable energy industry at the knees. After now seeing, under the Palaszczuk Labor government, the jobs that can be created by the renewable energy industry and the low power prices it delivers, surely those opposite would get on board. Surely they would support more renewables in Queensland. Sadly, they continue to spout their anti-renewables rhetoric or say nothing at all.

The member for Callide continues to call renewables a fantasy, even paying during the election campaign for social media ads against renewables. He continues to come into this place and undermine job-creating renewable energy projects in this state, including in his electorate, particularly in regional Queensland. The LNP is completely divided on energy and has no plan or intention of supporting the development of cleaner and cheaper energy.


We have the member for Callide—for now at least; we know that he wants to become the federal member for Flynn—attempts to run the LNP agenda on renewables, with nothing but silence from the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister. I am advised that the shadow minister has not even mentioned the word 'renewable' since he got the portfolio! In fact, the only time he has talked about energy in this House was to back in the member for Callide's attacks on renewables. He failed to call him out. It makes us wonder who the shadow minister really is. While the LNP tries and sort out what side of history it wants to be on, the Palaszczuk government will continue to invest in renewables and deliver cheaper and cleaner energy.

## CHILD PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 643, on motion of Ms Linard—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (2.55 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This important legislation is an instrument to safeguard our most vulnerable Queenslanders from evident abuse and neglect, sometimes at the hands of the people who should have their best interests at heart. This is something that none of us can tolerate. I have listened to many members speak on the bill. Ignoring politics, I can only say how confronting and complicated this issue is. My heart goes out to the children, to the professionals who work in child safety and to those families that are affected.

The objectives of this bill are to: enhance the approach to permanency under the Child Protection Act; clarify adoption as an option for achieving permanency for children in care as part of the suite of alternative long-term care options; and clarify the importance of and promote alternative permanency options for children subject to a child protection order granting long-term guardianship to the chief executive.

There are some very basic concepts that are thematic in this legislation. Who is a child? A child is an individual under 18 years. What is harm? Harm is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Who is a child in need of protection? It is a child who has suffered significant harm, is suffering significant harm or is at risk of suffering significant harm.

The government, the opposition and the committee consulted many different groups with regard to this issue. It is such a broad issue. Some of the peak bodies that were spoken to included: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations such as the Palm Island Community Company and the Kalwun Development Corporation Ltd; some child protection organisations; the Queensland Family and Child Commission; Micah Projects; PeakCare; the Queensland Law Society; the Bar Association of Queensland; and the Benevolent Society. A range of government and non-government agencies were instrumental in formulating this bill.

The bill includes minor and technical amendments to the Adoption Act. Consultation was undertaken by the Australian government in relation to the placement issue which informed the need. The bill's objective is to enhance the approach to permanency and clarify that adoption is an option for permanency for children in care by providing it as a third preference in the order of priority for deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child, except for an Aboriginal or Torres

Strait Islander child. The act is to be administered under the principles in part 2, division 1 of the act in terms of achieving permanency for a child and that, for ensuring the wellbeing and best interests of a child, the action or order that should be preferred is one that best ensures the child experiences or has relational, physical and legal permanency. Legal permanency may include a long-term guardianship order, a permanent care order or an adoption order for a child.

In deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child, the following principles apply. The first preference is for the child to be cared for by the child's family. The second is for the child to be cared for under the guardianship of a person who is a member of the child's family, other than a parent of the child, or another suitable person. This could include a child protection order granting long-term guardianship of the child or a permanent care order. The third preference is for the child to be cared for under the guardianship of the chief executive as a ward of the state. Adoption is not an option. However, the bill amends the principles to provide amendments for a child who is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child. The third preference for deciding if an action or order achieves permanency is that of adoption.

Section 7 removes adoption as an option as it is not part of Aboriginal tradition or island custom. Adoption of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child should be considered as a way of meeting the child's need for long-term, stable care only if there is no better option. Consistent with this safeguard, the bill acknowledges the ongoing impact of historical practices and addresses the ongoing need for cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and by providing that section has an order of priority for achieving permanency for the child. The bill clarifies that, in the hierarchy of actions or orders, the main principle for administering the act is the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child. These things, both through childhood and the rest of the child's life, are paramount. The best option for achieving permanency for an individual child will always be based on their individual circumstances and needs.

The number and proportion of children in the child protection system subject to a long-term child protection order has increased substantially in recent years. However, this increase has largely been in child protection orders granting long-term guardianship of a child to the chief executive. This is the last priority for achieving permanency for a child in Queensland's existing permanency hierarchy. The objective of clarifying the importance of and promoting alternative permanency options for children subject to a child protection order will be reviewed two years after a long-term order was made. This review must consider whether permanency for the child would be best achieved by an alternative arrangement as provided.

The bill does not require that adoption be considered or expedited after two years. There was some concern with some members about adoption being forced on people. That is not the case. The bill requires the chief executive to review the case after two years and consider whether there is a better way of achieving permanency. If adoption was identified for the child it would be considered, including all of the protections and safeguards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The bill makes a lot of minor and technical amendments to clarify the role of child safety workers whilst also understanding the many different challenges within that field. Each individual case is different. All are confronting. All are life changing for everyone involved. This bill aims to streamline the department's work and make clear different key responsibilities. We have long needed this change so that it can fit in with the different cultures and needs of our people. I support this bill and commend it to the House.



**Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.04 pm): I welcome the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, as will many of my constituents also. It has been a long time coming, and they rightly feel that way. It is shameful that it took the horrible death of Mason Jett Lee to address this issue. The issue was a source of rising concern under the LNP government nearly 10 years ago. The Carmody commission of inquiry dug deeply into the issues and the Labor government has had over half a decade to act on the 121 recommendations in that report but has failed to do so. The Carmody report stands out in my mind because its central concern was the child. It recognised what child development experts know well and what many of us as parents know instinctively: a child needs love. This is not just sentimentality from a father; children's need for love has long been scientifically recognised. Tragic case studies from Eastern Bloc orphanages post World War II show us that children who lack a bond to at least one primary caregiver die young. They just fade away in what is called a failure to thrive.

In order to develop normally, children need to attach to at least one primary caregiver. Most children will have a firm network of attachments with parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Their babysitters and class teachers are also a part of this network, but right from birth they must have attachment. This bond is so important for the child's wellbeing that if the biological parents cannot provide it we should be seeking to provide an alternative through adoption.

The Carmody commission recommended this eight years ago. It stated that the Queensland government should routinely consider and pursue the use of adoption in cases where reunification with parents is no longer an option. Not only has nothing been done in relation to that recommendation; it almost seems as if the department was intent on the opposite course. Who can forget the evidence of one of the caseworkers who were meant to protect 22-month-old Mason Jett Lee? They said in evidence that they did not think that the protection of Mason was the primary concern. We can all be a bit gobsmacked by that. After all, we call these public servants child protection officers, but the evidence highlighted that other goals routinely took priority, from attempts to rehabilitate a drug addicted mother and her boyfriend and obviously the philosophy of keeping the family together.

The household that Mason Jett Lee died in did not warrant the description of family, but this is how we have lost our way, and in doing so we forget that childhood cannot be put on hold. We just cannot hit the pause button while other secondary daydreams are pursued. For children, growth and development are imperative. Human biology provides development windows for the development of muscle and coordination, for the development of speech and even the child's development of its own theory of what is right and what is wrong. A child who does not get to open one of these windows may be forever disadvantaged in that regard. This is why we put such emphasis on early childhood education. This is why when we see development problems we know the best intervention is early intervention, yet in the case of children like Mason Jett Lee we seem to have been doing the opposite of early intervention.

Tragically, since this government was elected in 2015, little Mason was only one of 16 children who have died while under the care and supervision of the Queensland government. In fact, 13 of those children have died since Mason died. This should lend us a sense of urgency with this bill. I welcome the bill as an attempt to find a more child centred approach where the safety and welfare of the child are the very core of every action undertaken for that child, but it has been terribly slow. A question on notice from the member for Currumbin during the committee investigation into this bill asked how many adoption requests have been rejected by the department in the last five years. The answer was—

It is not possible to apply to adopt a child in care.

How can this be our policy when we know that children need attachment to survive and stability and permanency to thrive? We know this scientifically. We know this from horrific historical example. We know this as human beings ourselves. Yet the department is happy to state that children are routinely being denied a loving and permanent home.

With such an ideology driving the decision-making, it is not surprising to read that only 34 children were adopted in Queensland over the past year. The *Brisbane Times* reports that is an 80 per cent plunge from two decades ago. Only an ideology can achieve such a dramatic change. This is clearly ideology before everything. Of those 34 adoptions, 11 children were adopted from overseas, 11 were local adoptions to known caregivers and 12 were local adoptions to adoptive parents with no prior contact or relationship. About one in 10 adoptees in Australia are younger than one year old, while about 28 per cent were aged between one and four years old.


Mason Jett Lee would have fallen into this category. He was not even two years old when his mother's boyfriend struck him so hard it killed him. If Mason Jett Lee had been placed permanently with loving and competent caregivers it is likely he would still be alive today. The outcomes were never going to be good leaving him where he was. The best outcome would have been delayed and impoverished development. Tragically, we know what the worst outcome was. I make this point because the committee submissions show significant opposition to this bill.

The committee heard evidence from groups like Adoptee Rights Australia. They argue that there are significant long-term negative outcomes in adoption. I do not accept that this is an inevitable outcome of adoption. Nor do I accept it is the universal outcome of adoption. For people born in Australia in 1960 or earlier, adoption was far more common. Many members of those generations will have friends or family members they knew were adopted. It would seem the outcomes for those adoptees were better than the outcomes for their peers in orphanages and boys' and girls' homes.

We can look at the historic record and learn from it. Having said that, I would point out that this bill only adds adoption as one option for achieving permanency for a child. It adds what is not currently there. By establishing adoption as an option, the bill does not remove other options. In fact, it specifically places adoption as the third option and then only for non-Indigenous children. If the child is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, adoption is established as the fifth and last option for permanency.

This brings me to my final point: in addition to giving adoption legitimacy within our child protection system, this bill is important because it places an emphasis on the child's need for attachment, stability and permanency. These changes are important. However, adoption should not be

seen as the closing of a case. The department should continue to work with the adoptee and the adoptive parents to support the success of the placement and should have a monitoring role for some years. We should continue to research and learn so that we can give children in Queensland's child protection system the very best options for their situation. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (3.13 pm): I rise in support of the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. We live in ever-changing times, particularly within family units. Last week in my contribution I mentioned that family units are very different and the influences in society are very different than they were back in the fifties, sixties, seventies and eighties. Families are impacted by a range of different influences, including the prevalence of alcohol and drugs. The same is true for our children today as it was back then: it is important to have a safe, stable and loving home and to be surrounded by people who care about you.

Sadly, we know that this is not true for all Queensland children. Over the past three years I have had the privilege of meeting a number of foster carers and kinship carers in my electorate. I take this opportunity to put on the record my deepest and heartfelt thanks for the important work they do in our communities. They are very special people. They open their hearts and their homes to help and care for children to grow up in safe and stable, caring environments where that did not exist previously. Some do this for as little as two days, some do it for two weeks and some do it for years. From the conversations that I have had with those carers I know that these reforms are important to ensure that, where there is opportunity for permanency, we provide that as a lever.

I also acknowledge the many child safety workers across Queensland. They are faced with some of the most complex and distressing circumstances. They work tirelessly to provide these children with the best opportunity for a better life. I would like to thank my team at the Bayside Child Safety Service Centre. I know that they do an outstanding job in my community.

This legislation responds to the Deputy State Coroner's findings from the inquest into the tragic death of Mason Jett Lee. The coroner's report is distressing and it is disturbing. No child should ever experience what Mason Jett Lee experienced. The Palaszczuk government is committed to doing everything it can to strengthen and improve the child protection system to support vulnerable children and families now and into the future. Recommendation 6(b) was that the government consider whether the Adoption Act 2009 should similarly reflect the 2018 amendments to the Adoption Act in New South Wales, expecting children to be permanently placed through out-of-home adoptions within 24 months of entering the department's care.

The Child Protection Act 1999 promotes positive, long-term outcomes for children in the child protection system. Amendments were passed to the act in 2017 to reinforce the importance of achieving permanency and stability for children. These amendments are focused on achieving permanency for children in care, ensuring early planning for permanency and having that front of mind when those case plans are put together, and establishing permanent care arrangements for children who are unable to be reunited with their family. We know the ultimate goal is to do that where we can.

The proposed amendments and the findings of the inquest reinforce the importance of achieving permanency. We know there are circumstances where this is not simple. Consultation with stakeholders in the committee's work reinforced the complexity of this recommendation, in particular for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The bill aims to implement the intent of recommendation 6(b) to enhance the approach to permanency under the act whilst being responsive to stakeholder feedback that was received.

The bill will amend the act to clarify that adoption may be considered as an opportunity for achieving permanency for children in care by including adoption as a third preference in the permanency hierarchy for children other than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and that that be the last preference for those children, the first preference being for the child to be cared for by the child's family, the second preference being for the child to be cared for under the guardianship of a family member other than the parent or another suitable person. The second part is to require the chief executive officer to review the case plan for a child subject to a child protection order, granting long-term guardianship of the child to the chief executive officer within six months of the order reaching two years, and to consider whether an alternative arrangement would be best to achieve permanency and to be focused on the child and their needs.

We must be vigilant in the ongoing monitoring of these case plans to ensure the best possible future trajectory for these children. The act is underpinned by the principle that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child, both through childhood and for the rest of the child's life, are paramount.

This bill does not change that fundamental premise for the child. The bill strengthens existing safeguards and makes it clear that although adoption is currently an option and is the third preference for achieving permanency for other children, it is the least preferred option for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.


The bill also inserts a note into the act explicitly referencing the safeguards that currently exist. The practice reforms include responding to recommendation 6(a) and 6(c). That work is underway. That is the development of an internal permanency strategy with quarterly progress reporting to the director-general; reviewing implementation of the 2018 permanency reforms to date, including the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle; the establishment of a new chief practitioner, an important role within the department with responsibility for overseeing permanency outcomes; and conducting an audit of case plans.

As I said, we need to remain vigilant on those case plans for all children in care to make sure that we better meet their permanent needs. Implementation of the bill includes updates to procedures, policies and practices. It is important that we communicate these with the family: with the children, with young people, parents, carers and partners.

In addition to this important legislation, the Palaszczuk government will continue to invest in strengthening the child protection system. We are investing more in frontline support officers, increased family support and the coordination of services. Having travelled last week on the youth justice bill, I know it is important that we are focused on how we coordinate and best deliver services.

Our Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019-2023 plan builds on the strategic direction published in the Supporting Families Changing Futures: 2018 Update and it outlines priorities for the final stage of the reform program. The strategy is centred on wellbeing outcomes: safe, secure and stable; healthy; learning, earning, developing and participating; belonging and identity. We know how important those outcomes are and we have just heard contributions from members that talked about all of those aspects of a young person's life. Taking a centrist wellbeing approach better articulates our work and the outcomes we want to see for Queensland children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability. It is more meaningful for them and it aligns with our state's strategy.

The saying goes that it takes a village to raise a child. The safety of our children is everybody's responsibility. This is important legislation. It is important work of the government. We must continue to work with our families and we have to work together if we ever want to solve some of these extraordinarily complex and challenging problems. As with all complex issues, by working together I know that we can make a difference for vulnerable young Queenslanders who need our help. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (3.20 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I would like to reflect on 2012-13 when I was called upon to be the assistant minister for child safety. During that 12 months I had the privilege of visiting child safety service centres across the length and breadth of Queensland. In fact, I visited 32 of the then 43 centres across the state. I spent days on the road with child safety officers visiting some of our most vulnerable communities, including some Indigenous communities on the cape, communities west of Rockhampton and near Kingaroy, as well as many child safety centres here in the south-east.

The work that our child safety officers do across this state cannot be understated. The contribution that they make to looking after our most vulnerable and providing alternative pathways for young people who are in less than safe and often neglectful environments is incredible. It places a heavy toll on many child safety officers and the teams that work with them. Therefore, at the outset it would be remiss of me not to thank all of those people who work so hard and so tirelessly. Many of them have been there for decades, while some last only a few years because of the heartache and challenges that go with the role. I thank every one of them.

This bill seeks to outline a pathway for more adoptions and it promotes the concept that adoption is an option. I refer to the department's media handout of June 30 last year in which child and family performance statistics were highlighted. Statistics listed under the heading 'Complexity' refer to the prevalence of risk factors within households where a child has experienced significant harm or was at risk of harm: 67 per cent of those parents had a current or past drug or alcohol problem; 56 per cent had a current or previously diagnosed mental illness; 54 per cent of those parents had a criminal history; 51 per cent had experienced domestic and family violence within the past year; and 43 per cent of those parents had been abused as a child. In fact, three out of every four households—75 per cent—had

more than one of those risk factors compared to 70 per cent in the previous period that those figures were monitored. To me that highlights why a system of permanent guardianship or adoption as an option is important.

Every child needs and deserves a stable home. I recall as a young father being given advice by older and wiser owls of the day that the best thing you can do is provide your kids with a stable routine and a secure home environment so that they know where they belong, they know what the rules are and they have boundaries in their lives.


Madam Deputy Speaker, I note your role on the committee and in the statement of reservation you highlighted this very important statistic: almost 25 per cent of children in care have had at least six placements and six per cent, or 626 children, have had between 11 and 20 different placements. That sort of change does not provide a child with any sense of security or belonging. It subtly says to the child that they belong nowhere and that no-one wants them. However, there are many families that do want them. As recently as last year, as well as in previous years, people who have had a fostering role with young children have come to my office and they have pleaded with us and the department to grant them guardianship. They have said that, while they would be happy to work with the birth parents of the children and provide access, they simply want the right to provide that child with a secure and permanent home environment, which is incredibly important.

I want to provide a little bit of context because sometimes we talk about these children as though there are just a few of them and sometimes we talk about them as though there are a lot of them. It is important to understand that, according to the last report on the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs website, 11,323 children are subject to orders that require them to live away from home. That is a lot of kids. I do not have the regional statistics, but on a pro-rata basis that means that on the Gold Coast about 2,000 kids—the entire school population of Southport State High School—are not living in their normal home environment. It is beholden on us as a government, as an opposition and as the parliament of Queensland to work much harder in this space to deliver better outcomes for our children.

To give a bit of a history lesson, when we were in government we initiated a program called fostering families. Three trial sites were nominated at the time. The program was about providing intensive family intervention to specifically target neglect. It was not about sexual abuse or physical abuse; it was about working with families where there was neglect or an inability to properly look after children. Over a period from about 2012 to 2014, three trials were conducted in different areas of the state. During that time we saw a 30 per cent drop in the number of children required to be removed from their families. I think that is significant. It really saddens me that we have not been able to pick up and run with more prevention programs such as fostering families to deal and work with families at the start of the problem rather than when, sadly, it has become too late.

Another thing that concerns me, and I am sure there is not a member in the House who does not share this concern, is the number of intakes that are received through the department responsible for child safety. That number peaked at June 2020 and I believe that it increased further during COVID. It represents about 353 phone calls or emails a day, which is about 15 phone calls or emails an hour, from people saying, 'I am really worried about a child at my school', 'I am really worried about a child with my next door neighbour' or 'I was at the shopping centre the other day and saw a family that I know and the kids are not getting the care or the support that they deserve.' I know it is easy for an outsider to look in and make all sorts of assertions and that is why they are investigated, but even after that about half of those reports of concern are actually substantiated and require some intervention from the department of child safety.

While I have some reservations around the hierarchy of principles that the bill is seeking to impose, I am certainly pleased that we are at least making some steps forward to develop legislation that will provide for more adoptions or, at the very least, longer term guardianship arrangements for some of our most vulnerable children. We do not want to cut them off entirely from their families, but when we look at the 11,323 children who are currently living away from home we know anecdotally that about 75 per cent of them have come from situations which would almost be prohibitive, if not impossible, to return them to in any normal circumstance. Therefore, we do need to look at more progressive ways to attend to the needs of our children.

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.31 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the bill. I start by paying tribute to all who work in child protection in Queensland. As we heard earlier, we have about 3,000 workers looking after approximately 11,000 kids in care. These are workers like the member for Cook.

I pay tribute to her role in this parliament and to our government's achievements in passing the meriba omasker kaziw kazipa bill. This is a huge reform that recognises traditional practices and people's birthright and also contains safeguards. It is a very important part of our reform in this area.

I want to deal with some of the issues raised by members opposite in this debate. This bill is partly in response to the coroner's recommendations following the death of Mason Jett Lee. This tragedy happened in the area where the member for Morayfield and I live, in Caboolture and Burpengary. When looking at issues caused by profound poverty, disadvantage, neglect and family breakdown, it is fine for LNP members to drop into our communities, harvest this information, then come in here and pronounce their opinions, but quite a few of us on this side of the House live with these experiences. It is happening to the families around us. It is happening to the kids who play with our kids at our local schools. It is happening to the people we talk to at the school gate. I say to the member for Scenic Rim: do not say to us, 'Don't politicise this.' I live these issues every day; they happen around me and our family all the time. I emphasise that we do not pass through these communities just to harvest information about people's personal stories.

One matter that is crucial and well emphasised in this bill is the issue of safeguards. It is really important, especially with regard to our First Nations people and to the issue of permanency of care and adoptions. The LNP have been making it clear from their speeches that they want to see more adoptions. With regard to adoption, caution is always needed. We need to be very careful to avoid breaking any links between birth parents and their child.

I point out that caution is needed because we know what happens with coerced or forced adoptions. I refer, of course, to the stolen generations. The federal department's website states—

Since colonisation, numerous government laws, policies and practices resulted in the removal of generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities across Australia. Thousands of children were removed by governments, churches and welfare bodies to be raised in institutions, fostered out or adopted by non-Indigenous families, nationally and internationally. They are known as the Stolen Generations.

... The removal of children broke important cultural, spiritual and family ties and has left a lasting and intergenerational impact on the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Affecting anywhere from 1 in 10 to 1 in 3 children, there is not a single Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community who has not been forever changed.


We know that that led to, on 13 February 2008, then prime minister Kevin Rudd finally giving an apology to the stolen generations—probably one of the greatest moments we have seen in federal politics in recent times.

Caution is always needed when dealing with the issue of adoption, as I said, not only because of the coerced or forced aspect of it but also because of the secrecy that used to surround it. That is equally damaging. This is part of my family's lived experience as well. I know two people who, as adults, found out they were adopted. One of those is my aunt, Sandy Griffith, who found out at the age of 58 that she was adopted. It happened like this: when my grandfather lay gravely ill, he asked my father to keep her adoption a secret and to never tell her. My father then became an integral part of that secret; however, he had known since he was a child. He had been sworn to secrecy all those years. Then I found out as an adult, so I became part of that secret as well. After my friend's experience, I told my father, 'You need to tell your sister and tell her everything.' I made him go down to where she lived and tell her the true story of where she came from. I am so proud of my Aunt Sandy; she handled it so well. One of the benefits of being told is that she has discovered a whole new family.

That illustrates the result of the adoption system as it was in the 19th and 20th centuries, when we saw the forced adoptions of the stolen generations and systematic secrecy. These adoptions happened to people of my age. They may have been the children of teenage mums. That led to devastation not only for the birth parents who never really recovered from it but also to the children who do not know their history. That underlines why safeguards around adoptions are so hugely important.

In the past, those in charge were quick to pass judgement on working-class people and how they should be raising their children. They were all too quick to take away the children, yet they were not too quick to try to address the real causes of family dysfunction: poverty and disadvantage. Turning that around is the real battle—the abuse, the poverty and the disadvantage, but always the poverty—changing the structure of our families in our communities. We need to ensure that all Queensland families have jobs, decent wages, great schools, hospitals and health care around them. The most lasting impact we can make is to help and protect children who are at risk of disadvantage, abuse and neglect.

Finally, I pay tribute to all of the foster carers in Bancroft who selflessly open their homes, their families and their lives to children who really need love and care in their lives. I mention in particular Veronica, who comes into my office quite regularly, sometimes with a new foster-child she has in her home. She tells me the stories of what her foster-children have been through and the stories of what her family and household are going through. It always impresses me and never fails to remind me who the real heroes are in our community. I say to all of the child protection workers and foster-parents throughout Queensland: you are as important as anyone else in this state. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.39 pm): I too rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I was a member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee in the last parliament. It was a very interesting experience to be involved in the process of considering this bill. I acknowledge the work of my colleagues on that committee—the members for Toohey, Macalister, Mansfield, Mirani, Lockyer and, at one stage, the member for Currumbin.

I start by making some observations about some of the things other members have said in the chamber today. The first thing I will address are some of the words of the member for Mansfield. I like the member for Mansfield and I value my friendship with her, so what I am about to say is not a personal attack on her. It is a rebuttal of some assumptions I hear from those on the opposite side of the House about the LNP's relationship and credentials when it comes to the child protection system.

I was watching in my office when the member said that our perception that the child protection system is broken indicates an affront to the 3,000 workers in Queensland who undertake child protection duties. That is not so. The government is responsible. I cannot see a single minister on the other side of the House who would look me in the eye and say, 'The buck does not stop with me.' Of course, the buck stops with the minister. Failings in child protection are a matter that the government has to accept responsibility for.

The member for Bancroft spoke as though the LNP rides in like a census taker to impoverished areas and then departs with its statistics in hand to brandish here in the House. That is also not true.

**Mrs Frecklington:** I have one of the lowest socio-economic electorates in this House.

**Mr LISTER:** I take that interjection from the member for Nanango. That is an excellent point. There is nothing about the election of members like the member for Nanango or myself as the member for Southern Downs—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr LISTER:** Could I ask for some protection, Madam Deputy Speaker, because this is a serious matter?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Gerber): Order! Pause the clock. Members, please cease your interjections.

**Mr LISTER:** I see nothing in my election or the election of members like the member for Nanango which disqualifies us from having a valid view on child protection. I too have communities which have low incomes. In fact, it is the Greens and the Labor Party in this state that represent the most affluent communities. I can see members around the chamber who represent electorates which have wealthy communities and affluent suburbs where everybody drives four-wheel drives and their children go to private schools. I represent people whose opinions are valid. To haughtily chastise the LNP as being out of touch with the causes of poverty does this state a disservice and it ought to be called out.

I am glad to see in this bill that the adoption of children has been given an increased priority. We all understand that children who are in the care of the state, are cared for by foster carers and have a variety of foster carers do not have the stability they need to do all the things we talk about—that is, thrive and become the good citizens of tomorrow and have the opportunities they want. Kids need stability. It follows quite obviously therefore that adoption is something that should be available to them. Where the line is drawn as to how easily adoption should be able to occur will always be a matter for debate in this House. I do not think it can be said that there is not enough caution in deciding when to take children from an abusive environment and permanently give them to a loving family that will cherish them and give them the very best opportunities in life.

I wonder how much of what I hear from constituents about adoption and the extraordinarily difficult process that that is stems from hand-wringing on the part of the government when it comes to the issue of taking children away from their natural parents. I think more emphasis needs to be placed on the good of the child because if they are in a druggie's house, if they are being abused, if they are


not being given the love, attention and opportunities they deserve then they are primary victims. I think the rights of the child to have those opportunities and to be taken out of an environment where they are imperilled should always be seen as the most important consideration.

The LNP has a very proud history of performance in the child safety field. It is no small thing that it was a government from this side of the House that instituted the Carmody commission of inquiry. That is why we are here right now—eight years down the track from the final report of Mr Carmody QC. It has taken too long for us to reach the point of legislative reform. I do not say that the Labor Party has sat on its hands deliberately because out of hard heartedness it does not want to do the reforms that are necessary. I just think it wrings its hands too much. In the process, while worrying about the things it does, children are suffering. I think we need more action and to show a bit of leadership. I think that that has not been happening. That is probably why, in my opinion, we have seen terrible failures in the child protection system in this state.

Obviously we grieve for Mason Jett Lee and children like him. I listened to the shadow minister, my honourable friend the member for Whitsunday, when she said earlier that 53 children known to child protection in Queensland died in 2019-20. I am not an expert in this field, but that sounds like a pretty high number. Any more than zero is something we have to do something about. We need to take a good hard look at how we run child protection to make sure that we are not absorbed in the symbolism and disinclination to disoblige birth parents who do not look after their kids. We need to put the kids first and make sure our attentions are devoted to making sure they have the opportunities and the life they deserve.

In my electorate, I am fortunate to have excellent staff who have been able to help me with child protection matters that have come in my direction. As members of this House, we all know that this is a very difficult matter and often not a matter which is appropriate for members of parliament to deal with. I acknowledge my staff: Ian Jackson, Virginia Marsden and Ryan Burton-Ree. Ian and Virginia, in particular, have given me some stories about the things they have had to deal with over the many years they have worked in that office.

It is a corrosive thing for our society that children are left to grow up in fraught circumstances. We owe it to them to do everything we possibly can. I support the bill. I ask the government to please take on board the messages I have put forward.

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (3.47 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 which specifically seeks to increase the rate of permanent adoptions from the child protection system in order to improve welfare outcomes for Queensland children in care. Broadly speaking, child protection, above all else, is about protecting children from harm. I acknowledge toddler Mason Jett Lee and the other Queensland children known to the department of child safety who have lost their lives at the hands of their carers.

I previously worked closely with victims and perpetrators of child abuse. I have been confronted and deeply affected by heinous, unfathomable crimes committed against defenceless children. These are difficult experiences for frontline workers—cold, hard, sinister truths that many in this chamber have not been exposed to and hopefully never will be. This is why I feel for the workers who face the incongruence of a child's innocence and a parent or caregiver's malevolence every single day, sometimes with one hand tied behind their back. I think about the 21 staff referred to in Deputy State Coroner Bentley's report following the inquest into Mason Jett Lee's death and the fact that they had not performed their duties adequately.

In 2016 Mason was hospitalised for what the attending doctor described as the 'worst injuries' he had ever seen. Mason was sent back home to his parental abusers and three months later he was dead, having been bashed and drugged by his caregivers. Astonishingly, the inquest found there had been no follow-up from the department in the three months between this red flag and his death.

I am genuinely worried for the mental health of the departmental officers involved. These individuals sadly now personify the under-resourced and under-managed Queensland department of child safety. In my opinion, they have been working in a failed and broken system and no-one has yet taken ultimate responsibility for overseeing the breakdown of that system. No-one was held accountable—no-one disciplined or demoted, not even moved aside as a token sign of respect.

The public sector watchdog said child safety officers suffered 'manifestly inadequate' consequences over Mason's death but, as to the source of the blame, tellingly, the government swiftly committed to the addition of 550 new staff. Clearly the child safety unit was manifestly understaffed. Clearly the government manifestly failed in its duty to prioritise and manage the size of this critical workforce.

To the rest of us watching on, not much seems to have changed, leaving us to question the government's commitment to and, indeed, ability to overhaul the child protection system. In fact, we are here today discussing the best ways to get children out of the system—before discussing the urgent reforms required to improve life for children in the system. This fact alone suggests that not even the government has confidence in its own ability to provide better protection for children in its care.

The Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 reflects just one of six recommended reforms made by the Deputy State Coroner on 2 June 2020; namely, recommendation 6(b), which provides—

The Government consider whether the Adoption Act 2009 (Qld) should similarly reflect the 2018 amendments to the Adoption Act 2000 (NSW), expecting children to be permanently placed through out of home adoptions within 24 months of entering the department's care.

This echoes the 2013 Carmody commission of inquiry recommendation—an inquiry established by the LNP—which recommended that the government routinely considers and pursues the use of adoption in cases where reunification is no longer an option. This was one of 121 recommendations made. Just on that note, the Mason Jett Lee coronial inquest reported that select key findings from the Carmody commission of inquiry seven years ago still have not been implemented by the Palaszczuk government. This is proof that this government and its child safety system is failing Queensland children.

It begs the question that, without the findings and recommendations of the coronial report, the government would not have lifted a finger to help the most vulnerable children in care of the department. This record of inaction brings us to 21 February 2021, when a small but important step was taken towards improving welfare outcomes for children in care. This is when the parliamentary committee recommended the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill be passed with the following objectives: enhance the approach to permanency; clarify that adoption is an option for achieving permanency as part of a suite of alternative long-term care options; and clarify the importance of and promote alternative permanency options for children under a long-term guardianship order.

Under the current system, adoption is not mentioned as a principle to best achieve permanency for a child. During consultation on the bill, the committee heard that current academic and research literature supports adoption as a means of achieving permanency for children where unification is not deemed in the best interest of the child.

The committee also heard that, since the recommendation was made by the Carmody inquiry seven years ago to pursue adoption where the child is no longer safe, only 10 children were adopted from the child protection system. Only six of these have taken place over a five-year period under this government. Madam Deputy Speaker, I put to you that when the government knew better they did not do better—too many lives have been lost.

As of 30 June 2019, there are 10,296 children subject to child protection orders in Queensland, and we should all be rightly concerned for their safety. As a parent of two young girls who thrive on consistency, healthy boundaries and routines, it makes sense to me that fewer placements are better for children in the state's care and that long-term arrangements promote a greater sense of security, stability and belonging. Those opposite know that only too well, preaching on the department's website—

To grow up happy and healthy, children need permanency in their lives. For children to feel a sense of permanency, they need to know where they will be living from one day to the next, and from one year to the next.

It beggars belief that, while permanency is a primary goal for the department, the mechanisms to help achieve this are only being implemented retrospectively and well after the claim. In fact, the Auditor-General's report tabled on 4 August 2020 found that, despite the department's view that permanency was a benchmark for success, almost 25 per cent of children in care have had at least six placements, with six per cent—that is, 626 children—having between 11 and 20 placements. These are simply horrendous statistics if the goal is permanency.

Clause 8 of this bill clarifies that adoption is now an option for achieving permanency for children in care by providing adoption as the third preference in the order of priority. As such, the principle that the child be cared for under the guardianship of the chief executive becomes the last preference in deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child.


When deliberating the bill, the committee heard mixed views. Of the 39 submissions received, many stakeholders were supportive of the bill's intent but questioned aspects of the proposed provisions. For instance, the Bar Association of Queensland noted that, as the bill currently stands, there is no preference to 'permanent care orders in the principles' set out to achieve permanency for a child. Stakeholders in support of the bill include Adopt Change Ltd, Jigsaw Queensland Inc. and the

Queensland Alliance for Kids, arguing that the prioritisation of adoption over long-term guardianship by the department's CEO, children will be offered legal stability within a family which might mean that they can not only survive but be given the best chance to thrive.

As published in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the children's version, it states in article 3, in perfect child-like simplicity—

Governments should make sure children are protected and looked after by their parents, or by other people when this is needed. Governments should make sure that people and places responsible for looking after children are doing a good job.

Fundamentally Queensland Labor is not doing a good job if this is the litmus test. I, together with my LNP colleagues, will hold this government to account so that they better protect vulnerable kids and improve both transparency and accountability. It is clear that Labor does not have a plan to overhaul the system, but the LNP does. Should this bill be passed? Yes but in the absence of anything else before us. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (3.56 pm): I rise to speak in support of the bill. As previous speakers have indicated, the origins of this bill lie in the dreadful death of a child—Mason Jett Lee. I know how much his death has shocked all of us. It is our collective duty to do whatever we can to prevent deaths of more children in care.

As members will know, the major provisions of this bill have arisen from the recommendations of the Deputy Coroner, and these recommendations were adopted in full by the government. I am heartened that the opposition have said they will support this bill—hopefully without amendment. It is to their credit that there can be bipartisanship on such an important issue.

Those of us who were members of the 56th Parliament will recall that on 17 June last year the Premier asked the then leader of the opposition to work with the government and the minister for child safety to develop a new bipartisan approach to child safety in Queensland. She said—and I quote from *Hansard* on 17 June 2020—

Today I say to the Leader of the Opposition that my government is willing to work with those opposite. What I am suggesting today is a new approach to child safety in this state. What I am saying to the Leader of the Opposition today is that I am asking those opposite to work with my government, and let us get it right ... In a spirit of bipartisanship, I ask the opposition to work with the Minister for Child Safety ...

I know that the former minister for child safety, youth and women and minister for the prevention of domestic and family violence, the member for Bulimba, last year exchanged correspondence with the member for Mudgeeraba and the member for Burnett, who was at that time the shadow minister for child safety, youth and women and shadow minister for the prevention of domestic and family violence. I am also aware that a couple of meetings were held, including one between the then minister and the then shadow minister which included some key child protection stakeholders. Then, as we all know, the parties began to move into election mode. It became understandably more difficult to have a discussion about bipartisanship in the middle of the election process.

With the election in 2020, machinery-of-government changes and ministerial appointments behind her, the new Minister for Child and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the member for Nudgee, sought to re-open bipartisan discussions between the new shadow minister for child protection and shadow minister for the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence, the member for Whitsunday. I congratulate the member for Whitsunday on her election to parliament and her appointment as shadow minister. I know that she and Minister Linard have had formal and informal discussions about the child safety system and the capacity for bipartisanship.

While the vote and debate on this bill are ideal opportunities to demonstrate bipartisanship on child protection issues, there are a few things which are important about that prospect. Firstly, the child protection system must give primacy to, and be focused on, the needs of children. The Palaszczuk government remains committed to a service delivery model that best protects our children and young people. These amendments to the Child Protection Act and the Adoption Act are advanced in a way consistent with that principle, and it is not intended that this principle will in any way be undermined or amended by this bill should it become legislation. In particular, I note that the principles set out in section 7 of the Adoption Act and section 5C of the Child Protection Act both relate to the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and are not in the slightest wound back or reduced in force.


Secondly, the Palaszczuk government has implemented significant reforms while operating in an increasingly challenging child protection environment. The demand for child protection services is increasing. The constellation of problems with which families and children arrive at the doorway of the child protection system is increasingly complex and more of those families and children are presenting with multiple risk factors.

Thirdly, pursuing an approach of bipartisanship does not mean that we surrender these principles. While our approach to child protection is quite different to that of the LNP, it does not mean there is no scope for agreement provided there is goodwill.

Fourthly, while these discussions have occurred—and I trust will continue to occur—and while bipartisanship in discussions is a necessary and welcome step, the leadership of the LNP has not in any way that I can identify actually committed to trying to achieve full bipartisanship on behalf of the children of Queensland. Perhaps further discussions between the new minister and the new shadow minister, the member for Whitsunday, are necessary before the opposition is ready to take that step, but I am sure that the whole of Queensland would appreciate hearing such a commitment from the opposition.

In the meantime, the Palaszczuk government continues to press ahead with necessary changes to, and the resourcing of, our child protection system. For example, on 4 March this year Minister Linard announced 154 new full-time-equivalent child safety staff. We all know that more child safety staff engagement between children, families and child safety officers will see better results and a safer environment for our children. We all know how hard child safety work is, and I hope child safety staff know how much their efforts in the most difficult and sometimes harrowing circumstances are appreciated by the members of this House.

This bill does not constitute a stand-alone initiative. The Palaszczuk government has adopted all of the recommendations the Deputy State Coroner made at the same time she recommended changes to the adoption laws, and their implementation is either completed or well underway. In addition, the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs has made many changes to support the implementation of those recommendations. I hope this bill is an opportunity for the opposition to demonstrate more than bipartisanship in their approach to child protection. I hope that any support they can offer for the bill is the start of constructive bipartisan engagement, and I urge all members to support the bill.

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (4.04 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. This bill seeks to address an essential aspect of the child protection system; that is, giving vulnerable children in the child protection system the best opportunity for a stable and supportive environment by moving adoption up the list of priorities for achieving permanency for children in care. This bill offers these highly vulnerable children legal stability within a family, meaning they have the opportunity to not only survive but to thrive. This is but one aspect of reform to the child protection system that is well overdue. I have spoken to many carers and foster carers who wish they could adopt the child in their care. Children themselves desire to be adopted by the families they live with and given stability in the knowledge that they can put down roots without the fear of being ripped from the place they call home. But the system makes it hard to do so, so I would implore the government to do more to support the objectives of this bill in practice and at a departmental level.

As a member of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee that examined this bill, a question I asked during the public briefing held on 27 July 2020 exposed the shocking truth that in the last five years under the Palaszczuk Labor government only six children have been adopted from the child protection system—six in five years. It has become evident that Labor's child protection system is broken and needs a complete overhaul. This is not a reflection on the carers within the system or a reflection on those workers who give of their lives to the children within the system. This is a reflection on the government because, as the member for Southern Downs said, the buck stops with the minister. Too many vulnerable children are falling through the cracks, bouncing from foster home to foster home, desperate for stability in their lives.

As shadow assistant minister for justice and youth, this bill is extremely important in order to achieve a sense of permanency for children in state care. A permanent and safe home is something that I believe every child deserves to have, but more needs to be done. The department of child safety, youth and women notes, 'To grow up happy and healthy children need permanency in their lives. For children to feel a sense of permanency they need to know where they will be living from one day to the next and from one year to the next.' This means we need to create a supportive system that limits, or even prevents, the number of times foster-children are moved on from home to home.

Despite the known fact that children need a permanent living arrangement in their lives, the Auditor-General's report, tabled on 4 August 2020, found that almost 25 per cent of children in care have had at least six placements and that an alarming 626 children have had between 11 and 20 placements. That is just appalling. The Labor government has been letting our children down. Imagine

the stress and anxiety these children feel and deal with on a daily basis not having a place to call home, not knowing whether they can even unpack their belongings. These figures highlight the instability in the child safety system and the desperate need for reform—reform that was needed years ago.

It was, of course, an LNP government in 2013 that established the Carmody commission of inquiry. The current 2020 recommendations of the Deputy State Coroner—which this bill responds to—were part of the 121 recommendations made by the LNP commissioned inquiry back in 2013. The findings of the Deputy State Coroner of Queensland, which were delivered on 2 June 2020, follow the inquest into the tragic death of 22-month-old toddler Mason Jett Lee. The findings of this inquest were truly shocking. No child should ever have to endure what that precious little boy went through. The Palaszczuk Labor government failed little Mason in every possible way, and since then the community has demanded that more be done to protect children in state care.

Ultimately, the inquiry by the Deputy State Coroner resulted in six recommendations. All six were accepted by the government. This bill responds solely to recommendation 6(b), which essentially provides that the government consider that children be permanently placed through adoption within 24 months of entering the department's care. The policy objectives of the bill, by enhancing the approach to permanency under the Child Protection Act, clarify that adoption is an option for achieving permanency for children in care. This is welcomed as part of a suite of alternative long-care options available for children in care.

The LNP supports the need for this bill to pass because it highlights the importance of and promotes alternative permanency options for children under long-term guardianship orders. It is important to note that, while early adoption creates a deep sense of belonging and acceptance which contributes profoundly to healthy identity formation, it is not clear that long-term fostering reliably engenders these same feelings. Fewer placements are unequivocally better for children in care. The Labor government finally need to stop moving kids around like they are playing a game of chess. These are children who rightfully deserve a permanent home or the chance to be adopted into a permanent living situation. It is about time the Labor government did more to protect them. Without this bill, adoption is not mentioned as a principle to best achieve permanency for a child.

The bill amends the key principles so that they now read in order of priority as follows. Priority 1 is that the child be cared for by the child's family. Priority 2 is that the child be cared for under the guardianship of a person who is a member of the child's family, other than a parent of the child, or another suitable person. If the child is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, the next priority is for the child to be adopted under the Adoption Act. The last priority is for the child to be cared for under the guardianship of the chief executive. However, if the child is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, the last preference is for the child to be adopted under the Adoption Act.

Submitters to the legal affairs committee raised concerns pertaining to the impact of adoption on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, noting that Indigenous children are 9.7 times more likely to be in care than non-Indigenous children. From the submissions, I note that adoption is not part of Aboriginal tradition and island custom, and that it was recommended that adoption of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child be considered as a way of meeting the child's need for long-term care only if there is no better available option. The bill seeks to give effect to this through the order of priorities.


Of the 39 submitters to the bill, many stakeholders were supportive of the bill's intent but some questioned aspects of the proposed provisions. For instance, the Bar Association of Queensland noted that the bill as it currently stands has no reference to permanent care orders in the principles set out for achieving permanency for a child. Stakeholders in support of the bill include Adopt Change Ltd and Jigsaw Queensland. Ms Sarah Wilson, a kinship carer for two young children, expressed her support by saying—

We want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for advocating that adoption be a viable option for children like our 2 year old and 4 year old. They deserve to feel safe and secure their whole lives.

We aren't trying to erase their past. We are trying to give stability and security to their future because we think this is what will give them their best chance at thriving.

It is at this point I wish to place on the record my disappointment that more to reform the child protection system has not taken place. It was revealed last week that 53 children known to the child protection system died in 2019-20. That is 53 children in the one year. Nine died as a result of assault or neglect. Eight died from suicide. Labor's child safety system is broken and needs a complete overhaul. Too many vulnerable kids are falling through the cracks. How many more reports or inquiries that highlight this broken system need to be undertaken before the Palaszczuk Labor government takes action?

The coronial inquest into Mason Jett Lee reported that select key findings from the Carmody inquiry from seven years ago have not been implemented in any real sense by this Palaszczuk Labor government. The LNP is determined to change the system to protect vulnerable kids, improve transparency and accountability, and ensure parents are accountable. Vulnerable kids do not need any more reviews or inquiries. It is time to take real action to protect these kids. I support the passing of this bill because all of our children deserve the very best opportunity to grow up happy and to grow up healthy in a permanent environment which they can call home.

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (4.13 pm): I rise to contribute to the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. From the outset we must acknowledge that we have failed too many children in our community. While the impetus for this bill was the all-too-short life and horrific death of Mason Jett Lee, we must acknowledge that, sadly, Mason is not the only child who the current system has failed. To me, this issue is above politics. Yes, as the coroner's report showed, many people failed to keep Mason safe and failed to keep at least another 15 children safe in this state. Quite simply, that record is not good enough.

It is not good enough that we are seeing continual failings. It is not good enough that the recommendations of the Carmody commission of inquiry were largely ignored. It is not good enough that Queensland children—some of whom are the most in need of support—are not sure where they will be living tomorrow, next week or next year. Most of all, it is not good enough for Queensland and it is definitely not good enough for our children.

I will not be opposing this bill and I hope that this bill is a symbol of hope for those children who most desperately need it. I hope this bill shows that this government, and this parliament, now see the importance of providing stability and, most of all, safety for our children. Regardless of where they live, their cultural background or their circumstances, Queensland's children must not only be safe but feel safe if they are to achieve their full potential. Children in the care of the state deserve to be and feel safe. Children need to feel safe instead of fearing someone will break into their home or that they will be harmed. Children need to feel safe on their way to and from school, and all children need to know that as legislators we will do whatever is needed to keep them safe. That starts here today in this chamber.

Mason Jett Lee's story is a horrific one. It is one that we cannot forget and one that we definitely cannot ignore. I note that the Child Protection Act 1999 was reviewed from 2015 to 2017 and that reforms included inter alia: new permanency principles; case planning requirements, including early planning for permanency; a limit on the making of successive short-term child protection orders that extend beyond two years unless it is in the child's best interests; and the introduction of a new child protection order—a permanent care order.


We are talking about the rights of children here and it should always be about what is in their best interests. That includes considering whether adoption is an option for achieving permanency for children in care. Of course we would all like to think that the first preference when considering permanency is for the child to be cared for by the child's family. However, experience shows that sometimes that is clearly not in the best interests of the child. For that reason, we need procedures, processes and legislation in place to act quickly and decisively.

I am concerned that the number and proportion of children in the child protection system subject to long-term child protection orders has increased substantially in recent years, with significant numbers of child protection orders granting long-term guardianship of a child to the chief executive. It is worth noting that this is the last priority for achieving permanency for a child in Queensland's existing permanency hierarchy.

I note that section 51VAA requires the chief executive to review the case plan for a child two years after the long-term order was made. Once again, I certainly hope that the best interests of the child are first and foremost when conducting these reviews.

On too many occasions, I attended incidents where children lost their lives, and I can tell the House that it is the most horrific incident an emergency service responder can ever attend. It is absolutely earth shattering for the responders; it is earth shattering for the families and the members involved. We need to make sure here today that we start this step towards protecting our most vulnerable in our community. I implore all members of this House to do their utmost for Queensland's children. Across the chamber, we may disagree on issues and we may disagree on the best way to address them, but every single one of us must make a stand for our children, not just today but every single day.

We have lost too many children. Their potential will remain untapped. But today we can all commit to protecting and ensuring the safety of our children not only through this bill but in so many other ways. Madam Deputy Speaker, your children, my future, the future of children like Mason Jett Lee and the future of all Queensland children depend on it. I am pleased to support the bill before the House.

 **Mr SMITH** (Bundaberg—ALP) (4.19 pm): Child safety is something that is very close to my heart. I know there are members in this House who are former police officers, former paramedics, former nurses and other frontline service workers who have had to face the horrible atrocities that are sometimes inflicted upon children. During my time as a teacher I had students who were 12 years old come into my classroom with their head down and refuse to look up at the board for the whole day because they did not want to expose to their classmates the bruises around their eyes. I have had students who wore long-sleeved jumpers in the middle of summer because they did not want to show the bruises, the burnings and the markings on their arms. I have had students answer the phone in class to which I have said, 'You need to put your phone away,' and they would say, 'Sir, I haven't spoken to my mum in three days. I'm not putting this phone down.'

I have had to write mandatory reports when a student came to me to tell me that there was a paedophile in their house, that that paedophile had been courting them and that they were waiting for me to return from my sick day because I was the only one they trusted to tell. Child protection is something that is very, very dear to my heart.

Every child deserves a childhood free from violence and abuse. Every child should feel cared for, protected, safe and able to reach their full potential. For Queensland children in out-of-home care, permanency means not only legal permanency but also permanency in relationships and stability in living arrangements. It means they are able to grow up in an environment where they feel safe and are loved. That is why we are proud that the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 delivers the intent of recommendation 6(b) of the Deputy State Coroner's report into the death of Mason Jett Lee and clarifies and enhances Queensland's approach to permanency.

The Child Protection Act includes a hierarchy of preferences for deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child. The bill proposes amendments to the existing order of preference by providing that adoption is a third preference for children other than Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the bill provides that adoption is the last preference for achieving permanency. This recognises that adoption is not part of the Aboriginal tradition or Torres Strait island custom and should be considered as a way of meeting the child's need for long-term, stable care only if there is no better available option.

The first preference for every child remains for the child to be cared for by the child's family. The second preference will continue to be for the child to be cared for under the guardianship of a family member who is not a parent of the child or another suitable person. Where possible, this means safely reunifying children with their birth families and returning them to an environment where they can be loved and nurtured as all children deserve.

To keep children safe in their homes, the government has made significant investment in early intervention. In 2020-21 the government allocated \$124 million to family support services, including \$59 million for 43 intensive family support services who provide intensive case management for families; \$41 million for 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family wellbeing services who provide culturally safe support for Indigenous families; \$17 million for 17 Family and Child Connect services, which link families with advice and suitable support services; and \$6.7 million for 15 Assessment and Service Connect services to help make sure families are able to access the right service at the right time and in the right place by referring them to supports early on when they come to the attention of the child protection system.

Where children cannot safely live with their birth families, the decision about who will care for them throughout their childhood is critical. Where reunification is not possible, the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs looks for other permanency options which can include measures such as long-term guardianship orders—LGTOs—permanent care orders and adoption. In 2019-20 there were more than 6,800 children on LGTOs. This includes more than 1,650 LGTOs to a relative or another suitable person—an almost four per cent increase from 2018-19.


A child being cared for under the guardianship of a relative or another suitable person is the second permanency preference for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children. As at 30 June 2020 there were also 44 children on permanent care orders, which provide permanent stability for children in care without severing a child's legal relationship with their parents, siblings or extended family or changing a child's legal identity. Only the Director of Child

Protection Litigation may apply to the Childrens Court to vary or amend a permanent care order. To do so, the director must be satisfied that the guardian is not willing or able to protect the child or is not complying in a significant way with their obligations under the act.

The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs has completed a review of the case plans for children in care who are under three years of age. A review of the implementation of the 2018 permanency enhancements for the Child Protection Act 1999 has also been completed and the outcomes of this are being used to inform further system improvements. Other permanency initiatives include the My Home program. This program recruits permanent foster carers from the adoptions expression of interest register and suitable adoptive parents register who can provide stable, long-term homes for children who are in the child protection system where reunification with their family is no longer possible.

Outcomes from My Home placements have shown children having positive family contact, significant reductions in their trauma behaviours, positive school engagement and strong attachments to their new carers. The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs is seeking referrals to place children with these permanent foster carers as part of phase 2 of the program. Permanency initiatives like these are critical to ensuring that every Queensland child has the opportunity to grow up in a safe and loving environment.

I am proud to be a member of a government that is committed to delivering for Queensland children. I want all of those children whom I have taught in the past and with whom I have shared this experience to know that I still see your face and remember your story while I support the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020.

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (4.27 pm): I rise to speak to the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. There are over 10,500 children in out-of-home care in Queensland. We know that removing a child from their family can have lifelong ramifications in terms of employment, education, health and wellbeing. These young people often have limited ongoing engagement in education, end up homeless or in insecure housing, come into contact with the justice system as children and adults, and can be estranged from their families, communities and culture.

I would argue that instead of moving to elevate adoption as a pathway for kids in care, we should be talking today about how we can be expanding and deepening early intervention and support for families and children. I echo the calls of advocacy organisations such as Sisters Inside, Association for Adoptees, the Australian Association of Social Workers and the Create Foundation, who hold grave concerns around the elevation of adoption within permanency principles. The Human Rights Commission notes that there is insufficient evidence to justify the changes and instead recommends a focus on early intervention to prevent removals.

The 2020 Family Matters report that looks at over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care describes that 84 per cent of child protection funding is being channelled into services focused on removal of children and only 16 per cent is going towards prevention, support and reunification of families. Both Labor and the LNP bear responsibility for this grave underfunding.

In elevating adoption, the bill overlooks the potential negative impacts of adoption. Family based care is a fundamental human right and is acknowledged in international and domestic law. Adoption can sever connections to biological families and, as Sisters Inside note, for the majority of cases permanent separation between children and their families is not the best outcome for children, families or their community.

Adoption already exists as an option under legislation for children in care, but this bill elevates its importance and diverts attention away from those early supports that would strengthen the preference for children to be cared for by their families. While the bill considers the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the bill makes no consideration for children of other cultural backgrounds and the risks of separating migrant and refugee children from their families, communities and culture. The importance of family and cultural connection is rightly recognised in this bill for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. There should also be consideration for children from all cultural backgrounds.

We note that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander placement principle is currently applied in patchy and inconsistent ways. My office has been in communication with an Aboriginal family where the second youngest daughter remains in the care of a non-Indigenous family despite the mother having care of all of her other children. The Human Rights Commission notes that there have been no

improvements in the last five years with respect to the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being placed with kin. Stability for these children remains poor, even with the passing of this bill.

The two-year time frame also does not take into proper consideration the amount of time that families may need to establish stability and safety. This two-year period is particularly insufficient when the resources required to support families are often not available. The Australian Association of Social Workers notes that funding continues to be inadequate to provide the comprehensive services for families with complex needs as was evident with Mason Jett Lee's family. Intergenerational trauma, abuse and neglect requires significant support. When this is not provided, children will revolve through the child protection system. The Create Foundation also sought the voices of young people who felt concerned that two years may not be long enough to support families for reunification. They quote young people, saying—

Depending on issues like drug and alcohol or domestic violence, it may take longer than two years for rehab ... for ... reunification process ...

and—

Only having two years seems like a short amount of time to prove that they're capable.

Australian research demonstrates that with the appropriate support and interventions families can and do improve their capacity to care for their children, but without these supports families can be set up to fail. Sisters Inside also note that this elevation of adoption will disproportionately affect families who are in prison, who deserve the opportunity to access services and reunite with their children.

Rather than elevating adoption as an option for children in care, we urge the government to fully invest in measures that will support families and bolster the first option to ensure that children can stay with their families. There needs to be proper early support and intervention services for families that are struggling. Today I have heard members on both sides of this chamber talk about how addiction is driving up the need for child protection services, but I do not think I have heard members of the government or the opposition talk about properly funding public drug and alcohol rehabilitation services here in Queensland or about the pressing need for mental health services in our state.

Alongside ensuring availability and access to free, publicly funded rehabilitation and mental health services, Queensland families need the government to properly invest in holistic early intervention supports for families. Families must be able to access this support before they reach a crisis point. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and for families from migrant backgrounds, these supports must be culturally appropriate.

There needs to be urgent investment in public housing in Queensland. There are nearly 50,000 Queenslanders waiting for public housing, including 15,000 children and their families. Building appropriate social housing across Queensland would help thousands of Queensland families—thousands of children—and provide the kind of early intervention we urgently need. There needs to be investment in genuinely free essential services, easing pressure on families in financial distress. This needs to include fully funding our state schools, abolishing all school fees and introducing school breakfasts and lunches to ensure the food security of all Queensland children. We need more trained support staff in the child protection system. We also need a permanent increase to welfare payments for parents and families, given the strong correlation between poverty and child welfare.

This bill acknowledges that the system has failed so many families but does nothing to address the glaring shortcomings in the child protection system or the underlying drivers that put families in contact with this system. We know from history that simply taking children away from marginalised families does not support marginalisation. The stolen generation is undeniable proof that this creates significant intergenerational trauma and leaves inequality intact.

Queensland is a wealthy state. The government must do better to meet people's everyday needs, to address those underlying drivers of disadvantage that so directly affect families and children tied up with the child protection system. We could be providing these essential services and support to Queensland families and be world leaders in child welfare. Instead, we run the risk of letting down families who were never given the chance, time or support to reunite. For these reasons, the Greens will not be supporting this bill.



**Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (4.35 pm): Former US President John F Kennedy once said—

Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future.

These words resonate with me as I stand today to speak on the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. We in the House are the humble few who have been chosen to help guide our state to a better future and we need to take this statement for its real worth. Queensland's children are indeed our most valuable resource and one of our most vulnerable. It is our role to protect this resource and provide it with the best chance for success. Under the Palaszczuk Labor government, we have failed to do so.

Each of us has read the harrowing findings of the inquest into the death of Mason Jett Lee and shuddered at the staggering failures which allowed this tragic incident to occur. What is worse is that this tragic death is not an isolated case. At least 16 children known to the department have perished since the Palaszczuk government was elected in 2015. Clearly, our child safety system is riddled with failings, leaving our most vulnerable at risk. Children continue to fall through the cracks, and this needs to change. Hopefully, this bill will go some way to forcing that change. I thank the Community Support and Services Committee and my former committee, the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, for their consideration of the bill. My thanks also go to the 39 submitters to the bill and all those who contributed and have brought this legislation to this stage.

From the outset, I will be joining my colleagues in the LNP in not opposing this bill. The Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill seeks to deliver on a recommendation made by the Deputy State Coroner in its report on the inquest into Mason Jett Lee's death. Of the six recommendations made in the deputy coroner's report, this bill responds solely to recommendation 6. This recommendation suggests that the government consider whether the Adoption Act would similarly reflect the 2018 amendments to the New South Wales Adoption Act, expecting children to be permanently placed through home adoptions within 24 months of entering the department's care.

I thank the LNP members of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee—the members for Southern Downs and Currumbin—who provided a statement of reservation in the previous term which was also included in this committee's report. I note that the member for Currumbin was elected or, more appropriately, appointed to office on 28 March 2020. I note that just four months later, on 27 July that year, the member asked a very important question to the public inquiry: how many adoption requests for children in care have been rejected by the department in the past five years? The question exposed the shocking truth that in the last five years only six—yes, six—children were adopted.

I know, and any reasonable person would know, that adoption is not a solution for all of these cases, but for adoption not to be considered an option to assist in finding a solution of permanency is a real oversight. I recognise the many submissions from adoptees and the representative organisations of adoptees representing over 12,000 individuals outlining their concerns over adoption and problems that they have encountered including mental health issues and over-representation in suicide statistics.

I recognise these real concerns over problems encountered by some of these adoptees, but I also ask these adoptees and their representative agencies to consider that, over the past seven years, only 10 children have been adopted. With contemporary parenting measures and the situation of currency, it is hard to argue that, with such low numbers, they have a lot to say. The existing system closes this pathway and opportunity for loving couples who, for one reason or another, would seek to adopt a child to have that opportunity. I support this aspect of the bill which does not force adoption as an opportunity but does unlock it as an option.

As the member for Southport outlined earlier, this is not a small problem. Across Queensland almost 11,500 children are subject to orders that will see them live in a residence outside their family home. As the member for Currumbin also outlined, in 2019-20 some 53 children known to the child safety system died. Not enough is being done. I also note the member for Gregory's contribution where he articulated the finding of studies that recognise the need for a child to be loved and nurtured by at least one parent in order to progress. If they are not loved or nurtured, then that child is likely to fall into the category of failing to thrive. In my previous life as the officer in charge of police at Laidley I can say that I have witnessed many children who would fall into that definition as failing to thrive, but for many in this House this may well be a foreign concept.


I want to take a moment to thank my parents, John and Joan McDonald, for the love and nurturing that you have shown me and my five siblings—two brothers and three sisters—and now myriad grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Thank you for your love and guidance and for being a wonderful example as role models.

As I said, in my previous role I have witnessed firsthand the vulnerable children in the child protection system. I give thanks to the police and child safety officers who work with these vulnerable children. Every child deserves to have a stable home and I know that police and child safety officers have that goal in mind.

To speak about the specifics of this bill, I note the changes to the principles of achieving permanency for a child. Under the current system, adoption is not mentioned as a principle. This will now be an option and I look forward to the minister detailing the statistics in the next 12 months to see what this legislation and its implementation will bring about. I also want to take the time to thank those foster carers in my community for the work that they do in caring for children in need. I have personal experience with many of those parents and I can tell members that a number of these parents have turned around very troubled youth and some of those troubled youth are now actively engaged in work and setting out on forming a family of their own. Many have been and are critical of this government's performance in child safety.

I note that on the department of child safety, youth and women website it says that to grow up happy and healthy children need permanency in their lives and that for children to feel a sense of permanency they need to know where they will be living from one day to the next and from one year to the next. However, the Auditor-General's report tabled on 4 August 2020 found that almost 25 per cent of children in care have been in at least six placements, with six per cent—that is, 626 children—having between 11 and 20 placements. Labor's child safety system is broken and needs an overhaul. Too many vulnerable kids are falling through the cracks. I recognise the sensitivities in this bill with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adoption being a lesser priority.

The LNP in government did establish the Carmody inquiry, with many recommendations still outstanding. After what I have heard today, I am hopeful that the new minister and shadow minister will see some further progress on these recommendations through a bipartisan approach. For too long politics has been an impediment. Children—vulnerable children—deserve better.

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (4.44 pm), in reply: I want to thank all members for their contributions to today's debate of the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I believe that every person in this chamber wants the best possible outcomes for Queensland's children. That is what this bill is about—permanency and stability for children. Many members' contributions during this debate on both sides of the House have respectfully acknowledged the challenging work of child safety officers. Others opposite, including the members for Whitsunday, Currumbin, Lockyer and Southern Downs, have levelled the usual, unimaginative LNP criticisms at the Queensland child protection system and those who work within it that the system is broken and failing.

What does not help children in care and the people who support them is to call the system within which they live, work and dedicate their lives 'broken'. No review into the department of child safety shares the opposition's view that the system is broken—not the Auditor-General, not the Queensland Family and Child Commission, not the Deputy State Coroner. Is the system broken? No, it is not. Is it a system under pressure? Yes, it is. It is true that 92,000 children across Queensland are known to Child Safety each year. It is true that one report is made every four minutes to my department. That is more than 129,000 a year. Child protection notifications are up and children in our care are up, and children are staying longer. Today two in every five children who come into care have a parent who uses ice. Three out of every four households we work with experience domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues, criminal histories and other key risk factors.

Last week the Queensland Family and Child Commission annual report into the deaths of children and young people was tabled. Queensland child mortality rates continue to fall. Most children, including children known to Child Safety, die due to disease, birth defects and accidents. Of the 378 children who tragically died during 2019-20, 53 were known to the child protection system in the year before their death. While none of those 53 were in the care of the department, they at some stage came to the attention of the department, even if only through a phone call at the time of death. Sadly, this is not surprising. As the QFCC report indicates, children known to Child Safety are often affected by significant disadvantage, abuse and neglect before coming to the attention of the child protection system as well as the multiple risk factors present in their families.

The tragic, complex and difficult nature of the work of my department provides no shortage of material for those opposite to politicise—and politicise they do—but, as I have said before, no amount of politics in here will change the life of a child out there. What does change the lives of children out there? Investing in Queensland's child protection and family support system changes the lives of children. Hiring more child safety officers changes the lives of children. Supporting frontline child safety and support staff working in my department changes the lives of children. Encouraging more kin and family carers and foster carers to support vulnerable children in need changes the lives of children. Seeking to continuously improve the system, including through better permanency outcomes, changes the lives of children.

I want to take this opportunity, as I do every opportunity I am afforded, to acknowledge the dedication and passion of our frontline child safety officers and support staff, foster carers, kin carers, our partners in the non-government sector and my department which supports their work. Many dedicate their professional lives to working with vulnerable children and do so quietly and respectfully inside people's homes. They have my thanks and they have my support.

Travelling across Queensland, meeting with and listening to these frontline workers in child safety and youth justice, listening to the thoughts and concerns of children in care and foster-carers, is without doubt the greatest and most meaningful part of my role as minister for children. Our child protection system has the full commitment of our government. We have made an unprecedented investment in child safety since 2015, in both funding and additional staff. We have implemented the biggest ever reforms to Queensland's child protection and family support system over the past five years. Record investment in early intervention programs is about working to support families in crisis earlier and responding to children at risk. We have invested over \$850 million since 2015 and funded more than 550 new child safety staff.

As a result of these investments recommended under the Carmody inquiry, 1,500 fewer children have come into care. However, what the Carmody inquiry did not foresee is the increasing complexity of families and a worldwide pandemic which has exacerbated many of these factors for vulnerable families. While my department does not create the complex circumstances that lead to children needing our assistance—violence in the home, drug and alcohol addiction, mental health issues—we do respond to those issues. When the phone rings my department answers and my department responds. We as a government will always make the difficult decisions needed, advance the legislative changes required and make the investment essential to ensure that the Queensland child protection system is continuously improving and responding to the needs of vulnerable children and families. This bill aims to continue that work.

As I have said, the Child Protection Act 1999 recognises the importance of permanency and stability for children. This is not just legal permanency but also permanency in their relationships with people of significance to them and stability in their living arrangements. Adoption is already one option available for achieving permanency for a child who needs long-term care. The bill proposes to enhance the approach to permanency under the Child Protection Act and clarify that adoption is an option to be considered as part of a suite of long-term options available. The bill also proposes to clarify the importance of and promote alternative permanency options for children under a long-term guardianship order to the chief executive.

The members for Whitsunday and Maiwar raised concerns about children's voices in decision-making. We understand that children are experts in their own lives and I agree that children's voices are a critical part of the decision-making process, which is why section 5D of the Child Protection Act provides principles about exercising powers and making decisions. These principles include that, to the extent that it is appropriate, the views of relevant people should be sought and taken into account before a decision is made under the act.

The member for Whitsunday raised the number of children who are subject to a child protection order granting long-term guardianship to the chief executive. As I have advised, reforms to the act made in 2018 included requirements for all case plans to include goals and actions for achieving permanency. The case plan identifies the goals to achieve permanency for the child, including reunification, the actions that need to be undertaken, time frames and the people responsible or services required for undertaking them. Where a child is subject to an order granting long-term guardianship to the chief executive, it is because that has been determined to be the most appropriate option for that child.

The member for Maiwar stated that stakeholders have raised concerns that two years is not enough time for children to be reunified with their parents. The bill does not impose a two-year time limit for reunification of a child with their family. The bill requires the chief executive to review the case plan for a child who is subject to a child protection order granting long-term guardianship to the chief executive two years after an order was made. This review must consider whether permanency for the child would be best achieved by an alternative arrangement.

The order of priority for deciding whether an action or order best achieves permanency for a child will continue to provide that the first preference is for the child to be cared for by their family. The bill will not change this. In practice, case plans are reviewed in collaboration with the child and the child's parents, guardian or the child's safety and support network. As part of the review, child safety officers will also meet with service providers, other family members, people who the child has a significant relationship with, any legal representative of the child, the Public Guardian and, if the child is an

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, an independent Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity for the child and anyone else who may make a useful contribution to the review. For all case plans, Child Safety must gather information and assess progress towards the case plan goals and explore any barriers or other services or options if the needs of the child or family have changed.

The member for Southport discussed the need for programs focused on prevention. The Supporting Families Changing Futures reform program is focused on delivering the right services at the right time to support families and keep children safely at home. The 2020-21 state budget invested \$166.6 million to implement the Supporting Families Changing Futures reforms. This forms part of the government's total funding package of \$517.5 million over four years commencing in 2019-20 and \$2.4 million per annum ongoing to continue Queensland's family support and child protection reforms. It is a general principle of the Child Protection Act that the preferred way of ensuring a child's safety and wellbeing is through supporting the child's family. As I have mentioned, it is also the first preference for deciding whether an action or order achieves permanency for a child that the child be cared for by their family.

The member for Maiwar also discussed the statutory review of the Adoption Act which must commence later this year. I would like to be clear that the review that is due after November this year is a review of the operation of the act. It must include a review of the effect of the Adoption Act on parties to adoptions and their families. Given the importance of these reforms it is not appropriate to wait. We are taking action as soon as possible to implement the intent of the Deputy State Coroner's recommendation 6(b) from the findings of the inquest into the death of Mason Jett Lee.

As outlined in the explanatory notes to the bill, targeted consultation was undertaken with key child protection, adoption, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and legal stakeholders. We consulted with our key stakeholders, including the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak, the Queensland Family and Child Commission, Micah Projects, PeakCare Queensland, Queensland Foster and Kinship Care, the Benevolent Society, the Queensland Law Society, Legal Aid Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service and the Queensland Human Rights Commission. I thank these important stakeholders and, indeed, all stakeholders who made submissions to the bill.

Again I extend my thanks to the Community Support and Services Committee for its examination of the bill and recommendation that it be passed. I also thank the former Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for its consideration of the bill, as well as all the honourable members who contributed to today's debate. Finally, my sincere thanks to the officers of my department here supporting passage of the bill today, particularly Claire in the advisers' box. I commend the bill to the House.

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


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 10, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (4.59 pm): I move—


That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### Long Title

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (5.00 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from 11 March (see p. 593).



**Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (5.00 pm), continuing: We are back on the tracks. Before we adjourned I was explaining in very simple terms to the mob opposite why they lost the election and how the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer were a tower of strength during COVID and also during the election campaign. Before I go on to thank others, I thank Team LNP for being on the side of Team Saunders. They gave me a candidate who was a gift that kept on giving. I also thank the federal member for Wide Bay: Llew, thank you, mate! You were the fifth column in my office all the time and I really appreciated it.

I would like to thank other people who helped immensely during my campaign. In particular, I thank my daughters, Ashleigh Jane and Melina Maree, who are a tower of strength for me. I know where they get their intelligence from and I know it is not from me. They are highly skilled young women and it is a pleasure to work with them and their partners, Marty and Anthony. During the campaign I borrowed Anthony's ute. He said I drive it like I stole it. I thank my two daughters. They are wonderful young women. As a parent I am very proud of my daughters and very proud of their achievements in life. That is what parents do.

**Mr Harper:** They are probably proud of you too.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa: I think that they are—sometimes. I thank my wife. During the campaign she stood shoulder to shoulder with me. She is the rock behind me. I thank my family. They are amazing. I am very privileged to be not only a husband to my wife but also a father to my wonderful daughters. When we see what is going on now with young women, I shudder to think that that could happen to my daughter. I am glad that people are standing up. It is about time that men stand up and become men. I am talking not only about what is happening in Canberra and around the state but also about domestic violence. I say to men: keep your hands in your pockets and be men. Be good citizens not only for your city or the town where you live but also for your state and your country.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has really delivered for Maryborough. It has been a great government for Maryborough. I want to talk about what the government has delivered in the past five years. I want to talk about how Maryborough has progressed, particularly in terms of Downer and the rail contracts that have come through from the work of the member for Miller, the Premier and the cabinet. That has kept our city alive. It has been fantastic to bring manufacturing back to regional Queensland. We build the best trains not only in Queensland but, I would say, in the world. When you see the NGR trains—

**Mr Harper:** You didn't get them from India, mate.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** No, we are refurbishing the trains; I take the interjection from the member for Thuringowa. The skill set at the workshop that is refurbishing those trains is absolutely amazing. There are so many things happening in Maryborough that, Mr Deputy Speaker, I may have to ask you if I can stay for another hour.

The Rheinmetall NIOA Munitions plant, which makes shell casings, is backed by the state government and the federal government. It is backed by state development and it is backed by Ergon Energy with power supply. It is a wonderful project for our city. It will employ a lot of very skilled workers. We have the train contracts. Other smaller manufacturing companies have started up and are now working with companies such as Downer. There is a great company in Maryborough, Allweld, that makes boats and ambulances and also supplies Ergon Energy. It is a fantastic small company that has now grown into a very good manufacturing plant in Maryborough city. Those things are happening through job-creation programs. In the years that I have been in politics the job creation that is happening under the Palaszczuk Labor government is absolutely second to none.

I want to talk about some of the infrastructure that has been built in my electorate. Let's close the door, make sure that the conductor has everyone on board and take a little train ride around Maryborough city. Firstly, let's look at the upgrades at Maryborough State High School, for which I thank the minister who has been amazing. Maryborough High is very special to a lot of people. It used to be a grammar school and is now a state school. It has some of Maryborough city's most iconic buildings.

**Mr Ryan:** And an excellent principal.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I take that interjection from the police minister: the school does have an excellent principal. He is a good bloke. The money injected into that school by the Palaszczuk government has lifted Maryborough High to the levels at which it should have been. That school now

has over 1,150 students, up from 550, because of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to education. All of our primary schools have benefitted from upgrades to car parks and the installation of nearby traffic lights. This government is committed to education, health care and creating jobs. It is a traditional Labor government, as far as I can see.

Next on the tour is the Howard police and fire station, which represents a huge investment in a regional town in my electorate. I was with the police minister when we opened that complex, which replaces a police station that was over 100 years old. The officers had to go outside to use the toilet. It is a very modern complex. We have upgraded the police station and the fire station. We have also upgraded the SES facility. It is a really great complex in a regional town in my electorate.

Now let's look at what we have done with the roads. At Burrum Heads all the roads and intersections have been upgraded. Serenity Drive and Drury Lane were a problem and we have fixed the turning lanes there. The intersection at the Yarrilee State Primary School will be upgraded with a \$20-odd million investment from the Palaszczuk government. That project has been talked about for years but who delivered it? Once again it was the Palaszczuk Labor government!

I can talk on and on about what has happened in the electorate in terms of job creation. I think that the best program that any government has brought into Queensland is the Works for Queensland program. It is a rolled-gold program that is enabling us to complete projects in the Maryborough electorate that council could only dream about because it could not fund them. Works for Queensland has come along and over \$50 million has been invested in the Maryborough electorate since the Palaszczuk Labor government was elected. Some of that money has been spent on footpaths. Maryborough has an ageing population so it is really great to see footpath and intersection upgrades. People can cross safely using islands in the middle of roads because of Works for Queensland. People can get out of their houses and walk or use mobility scooters to get into the CBD or to shopping centres. That is fantastic to see.

The Works for Queensland program allowed me to work closely with the mayor on one particular project. We have a great mayor and councillors in Maryborough city. I am talking about the water park, which is absolutely fantastic. That was a \$3 million investment from the Palaszczuk Labor government through Works for Queensland. While some people may not understand this, that park will transform entertainment for a lot of people. Families will be able to get together and enjoy the water park. The water park would never have been built without Works for Queensland. Works for Queensland is rolled gold.

People tell me that the Maryborough CBD is looking very good. The majority of the upgrades to the CBD have been funded by the Palaszczuk Labor government through Works for Queensland. When I think of how the city was five years ago and look at it now, I can see what a long way we have come and it is because the Palaszczuk Labor government has invested a lot in regional Queensland.

**Mr Healy:** Hear, hear!

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I hear the interjection from the member for Cairns. From the Torres Strait right down to Brisbane, we see not only roadworks but also hospital upgrades.

I move on to my hospital. The brand new A&E, which we opened in 2020 with the then health minister, is state of the art. The results of the \$12 million-odd investment in the A&E at Maryborough Hospital are eye-opening. To be quite honest, before it looked pretty shabby and pretty bad; now it is a very modern A&E. The health minister, the member for Redcliffe, had a great look at it when walking through it with me last week. She was very happy with the outcome, as are the staff and patients. We have seen a huge increase in the number of people going to the A&E. You know the old saying: if you build it, they will come. That is what has happened at the A&E in Maryborough.

Since being elected, we have upgraded the air conditioning and lifts at Maryborough Hospital. I know it is not sexy, for want of a better word, to talk about electrical work in a hospital, but we cannot have new equipment such as scanners and machines unless we do electrical upgrades. We have a great scanner there now.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has invested a lot of money in Maryborough Hospital, bringing it forward from where it used to be. As I have said to a lot of people, in that dreadful time between 2012 and 2015 you could not even get a bandaid at the hospital. Since the Palaszczuk Labor government—

**Mr Harper** interjected.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa. There were a lot of public servant sackings during their term of government. I thank the member for Thuringowa for reminding me of that.

I would like to thank my union. A very good friend of mine is Alex Scott from the Together union. Alex and I have been friends for a long time. I would like to thank Alex and Katie Flanders, the assistant state secretary. Another good person who has worked with me through my campaign from the Together union is Allison Finley-Bissett. At every campaign Allison takes leave from her work, rolls up her sleeves and works hard. I am a proud union member—I always have been—and I will die a union member. My wife tells me that I bleed purple, because I do bleed Together. I would like to thank all the Together people who have helped me since 2015, particularly in this last campaign. Their support was invaluable. I personally thank Alex, Katie and Alison Finley-Bissett for the great faith they have always shown in me as one of their members.

I will always look after my public servants. Some people say, 'We do not need public servants.' The public servants in my electorate are the frontline people; they are the people who take your blood at the hospital, the people who make sure your records are right, the people at the schools who make sure everything is done correctly. They are the people we rely on in our day-to-day life.

I would like to thank the member for Caloundra. I listened to his maiden speech; it was a great speech. I do a lot with corrections officers. I have a lot of good friends who are corrections officers. I really value the work they do in our community. I know that the minister does, too. The minister has been to the Maryborough correctional centre and has spoken to the officers in my electorate. I know that he has helped on many occasions. They are very good people who do a very dangerous job. I say to the corrections officers who stood by my side in the 2020 election: we made sure that correctional centres would not be privatised, that they would not have to buy their own uniforms and that wages would not be cut, which would have happened if the LNP had got into power.

When we go to work we may have a tough day, but at least we know what to expect; they do not. I have a lot of admiration and respect for corrections officers right across this state, particularly my friends who work in the correctional centres who, as I said, stood by my side. They are there all the time. I know that this government will always make sure corrections officers are looked after. It is great to be in the chamber with an ally and very good friend in the member for Caloundra. He and I have a lot of mutual friends in corrections, and it is great to be here with him.

The opposition still do not get why they did not win the election. They are still going on and on. They are not talking about the future. They are not talking about what Queenslanders want to hear. Queenslanders want to hear about what will happen when we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of jobs, health care and education. They want to be sure of what will be delivered. They place a lot of trust in this Palaszczuk Labor government. That is why we won the election. The opposition still do not get it. They can have inquiry after inquiry, but until they understand and think about Queenslanders the way we do and until they put Queenslanders first they will spend a long time on the opposition benches.



**Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (5.15 pm): It is such a great privilege and honour to continue to serve as the state member for Currumbin in the 57th Parliament of Queensland. I give this speech almost one year to the day that my Currumbin community first elected me to represent them. In my short time serving in this chamber I have stared down two elections: the by-election in March 2020, a bitter fight and a tough election battle from which I was fortunate to have emerged victorious; then, seven months later, I geared up again to jump into the state election in October. Being here in this chamber once more is a true privilege. The faith and trust the people of Currumbin have placed in me to represent them not once but twice in the one year is not lost on me and never will be.

I am not a career politician. I did not grow up with this in mind as my end game. I turned my back on a successful career in law—not an easy decision to make nor one that I made lightly. Ultimately, I took the leap of faith twice in the one year and I am standing here today with the great privilege and honour of representing my Currumbin electorate. I care deeply about my community and I want Currumbin to have a strong and fierce voice in this chamber. I will be that voice. I will do everything humanly possible to deliver for my community.

There is another reason I decided I must put my hand up and take that leap of faith and represent my party, the Liberal National Party, for the seat of Currumbin—a reason I have not yet voiced in this chamber. As a conservative, as a hardworking professional and as a young woman, I felt under-represented. This is as much a reflection on our society as it is on party politics. I was not involved in party politics before I took this leap of faith. I am glad that I said yes. I am glad that I am standing here in this chamber today, thanking the Currumbin electorate for electing me twice in the one year. I hope to raise up other women in politics and within my party so that we see many more women across

Queensland who can be supported to join our ranks and become strong voices in this parliament, representing their communities. Now, more than ever, it is important to have women involved in the decision-making processes of government.

I am lucky that I have had such strong women around me to encourage and support me in the initial stages of my journey in this place. It is at this point that I want to thank the former opposition leader, the member for Nanango. Winning the Currumbin by-election is testament to her leadership. The member for Nanango, as the former opposition leader, and the member for Everton, as the former deputy leader, could not have worked harder in their roles and I thank them for their efforts. I am so fortunate to have had the encouragement and guidance of the member for Nanango throughout 2020, and I am grateful to continue to be supported by her.

To the future, to the member for Broadwater, I congratulate our unopposed party leader—a leader I greatly admire and respect. Many of your words ring true for me. We will be a team that will be respectful and humble in opposition. Time and time again you are showing that you are a politician of conviction, continuously espousing LNP core values of a just and humane society, that family is the primary institution for fostering the values on which a cohesive society is built and equal opportunity for all Queenslanders.

I have always also been particularly impressed by the grassroots way in which our leader approaches policymaking and politics in general. I will never forget my first time doorknocking with our leader, the member for Broadwater. It was not for show. We did not knock on a couple of doors, take a photo for Instagram and then hang up our joggers. We split up. He took one side of the street and I took the other to maximise our efforts. We doorknocked from house to house for hours. The member for Broadwater literally sprinted between houses so we could talk to as many people as possible in the suburb. I still use his technique to this day. It means I arrive at people's doors a little sweaty, but boy do I get to talk to everyone!

I am grateful to the leadership for appointing me the shadow assistant minister for justice, youth, culture development and the night-time economy. I am passionate about each and every one of these portfolios. I will work hard to assist to develop policies within these portfolios—policies that will benefit all Queenslanders.

Most of all, the majority of my time will be spent serving the Currumbin community that elected me. That is what is most important to me. My greatest joy in this honoured position is that I have had the privilege of being involved in the majority of our local community and sporting groups. These groups make up the fabric of our community. They are filled with hardworking volunteers who spent hundreds of hours of their free time volunteering. Each and every one of them truly inspires me.

I want to place their names on the record. I wish I had the time in this chamber that would allow me to share all of their achievements as I am so proud of all of them. In no particular order, here goes: Allygators Rugby Club, a special mention because they have developed a fantastic program for girls to participate in; Coolangatta Bowls Club; Tweed Coolangatta AFL Club, I love your fighting spirit; Currumbin Eagles Junior Rugby League Football Club and Currumbin Eagles Senior Rugby League Football Club; Kirra Surfriders Club; Tugun Bowls and Community Club; and Tugun Rugby League Football Club—go the Seahawks.

Also, I give a big shout-out and accolades to: Palm Beach Currumbin Cricket Club; Coolangatta Croquet Club; Gold Coast Pickleball Association; Friends of Currumbin; Tugun Girl Guides; Bilonga Neighbourhood Watch—Anna, you and your team are doing a great job; Tallebudgera Valley Football Club, I love your passion; Currumbin Valley and Tallebudgera rural fire brigades, what can I say, you guys are absolute legends; Currumbin/Palm Beach RSL Sub Branch and Women's Auxiliary, beautiful and kind, an abundance of love, currently knitting and crocheting hundreds and hundreds of poppies for Anzac Day; Currumbin Creek Paddlers Club; Country Women's Association at Coolangatta, not your average CWA, focused on health education; Tugun Theatre Company, I love your shows; Fight 4 Youth—Leisa, you are one in a million; Carpenters Workshop at Elanora Uniting Church; PBC Chaplaincy Service, so valued by all who cross paths with you; Surf World Gold Coast, great tour guides; Youth Music Venture—Ian, you are an extraordinary person; Tugun Neighbourhood Watch; Marlin Waters Neighbourhood Watch; and Coolangatta Senior Citizens Club, affectionately known as the Cooly recreation centre, your resilience through COVID has not gone unnoticed.

There are more: Southern Beaches Community Garden, a shining example of promoting sustainability and passing on important life skills to the young; The Lioness Club of Palm Beach Currumbin; Rotary Club of Currumbin Coolangatta Tweed, passionate fundraisers; the Currumbin Volunteer Marine Rescue, never-ending sausage sizzles, more importantly providing a vital service and

saving lives; Tugun Progress Association, I admire your commitment to engaging the community, giving residents a voice; and U3A, the University of the Third Age, building friendships, keeping the brain active—Gail, you and your team are making a substantial contribution to the lives of mature people and your energy does not wane, and I can only wish to match it in my retirement.

As members know, I was lucky enough to spend my childhood within the beautiful surroundings of the southern end of the Gold Coast, having earned my bronze medallion at Vikings Surf Life Saving Club. Along with my parents, who instilled in me the importance of community and giving back, the mentors at the club cemented this philosophy: kindness, friendship, teamwork and, above all, service is the cornerstone of building a resilient, safe and connected community for everyone, regardless of position.

I make special mention of all the surf lifesaving clubs in my electorate: Currumbin, Tugun, Bilinga, North Kirra, Kirra, Coolangatta, Tweed Heads and Coolangatta and Rainbow Bay. Collectively last year they gave over 45,000 patrol hours, saving the lives of well over 60 individuals. On behalf of all my constituents, I say thank you for your service.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the incredible work and dedication of the staff and volunteers at the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital. Not only is the sanctuary the Gold Coast's most popular tourism destination; they are a shining example of a world-leading ecotourism experience.

My Currumbin community is also blessed to have the best little club in the world, the Currumbin RSL. It is loved by all who go there and they are leaders in sustainability. They are also supported by a large team of volunteers. Their veterans support centre plays a key role in providing meaningful services and programs for service and ex-service Defence Force members. The establishment of the Currumbin Young Veteran Support Services program is the first of its kind in South-East Queensland offering social, education and employment opportunities for young veterans—surely inspiring work.

Now, turning to the challenging job of opposition. Unlike the government, I do not get to deliver things for my community. I have to fight for them. Over the next four years I will work hard for my Currumbin community. I will keep this Labor government honest. I will fight to ensure the government delivers on its promises.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mrs GERBER:** Whilst all this might seem like the impossible while those on other side of the chamber jeer and laugh, I will apply every ounce of my spirit to that task, without fear or favour. We cannot allow the arrogance of a long-term government to prevail unchecked. This is particularly evident here in this chamber where my speeches, like just now, advocating for my community, are all too often met with rebukes and petty interjections from Labor members across the aisle. That just spurs me on to fight even harder for my community and for what I believe in.

In my maiden speech less than a year ago I said I would not sit by while the southern Gold Coast is neglected. This still rings true today. I am committed to seeing congestion on the M1 busted. Considering the time Currumbin constituents spend on the M1 to get to their workplaces, schools and homes, it is no surprise that Currumbin residents are frustrated. You would be too if you were losing hours each day, which equate to excessive amounts of productivity and valuable time with loved ones, and because of a government that cannot build vital infrastructure when it is needed.

This is why building the second M1 is so important. It is perhaps the most important congestion-busting project for our city. I am pleased that the state government has also committed to it. However, I am bitterly disappointed that it is set to be drawn out over eight years. The budget papers show that hardly any funding is allocated until 2022-23, with about half the project cost not being spent until 2025 and beyond. Ultimately, this means that under Labor's watch the second M1 will take eight years to build and meaningful construction will not start for another 18 months. Currumbin locals are facing eight years of unbearable congestion. Labor continuously plays fast and loose with the truth of its commitments, rolling them out at each election, but in reality it is the community that suffers when its promised commitments do not happen for many years.

We see the same delay with capacity building on our heavy rail network. Overwhelmingly, the Currumbin community wants heavy rail connected to the airport and yet this vital piece of infrastructure continues to be neglected. I will continue to fight for heavy rail to be connected to the airport and for a station at Elanora. We are also seeing this same delay when it comes to light rail. Light rail stage 2 finished construction in late 2017 and, years later, we are only now seeing the commencement of stage 3, whilst stage 4 is still in its planning phase. My office is inundated with inquiries, all saying the

same thing: why has the Currumbin community not been consulted? They want to know the impact of light rail on their neighbourhood and the specifics of the route it will take. I am listening to my community and I will continue to fight hard for proper community consultation when it comes to light rail.

I will lobby for improving local road infrastructure including Currumbin Creek Road. The government has committed to upgrading the intersection at Bienvenue Drive and Currumbin Creek Road, but much more is actually needed. The industrial estate of Currumbin Creek Road is in desperate need of an upgrade. The road itself services three schools in the Currumbin electorate, and it is dangerous for pedestrians and the children who make their way to school. Further, the intersection of Traders Way and Currumbin Creek Road is an accident waiting to happen. I will fight for this vital road upgrade.

I am committed to tackling crime in our local community, and this starts with fighting to keep the Elanora police beat in Elanora. Our local police beat at Elanora has been instrumental in curbing crime for more than a decade. The success of the program cannot be underestimated. The primary reason for their success is that the same police officers have taken responsibility for their area consistently and over a long period of time. Ultimately, the community trust those officers. It is this partnership with key stakeholders within the community, built by these officers over a long period of time, which makes the neighbourhood police beat at Elanora so successful. It is not acceptable, and very near negligent, for the state government to remove such a successful police beat from the Currumbin community.

At the last election I advocated for \$2 million to be invested in the Currumbin Beach Vikings Surf Life Saving Club to upgrade their clubhouse. I am glad the other side agreed with me. However, I am still waiting for the government to give specific details as to when the funds will be forthcoming—just another fight I am happy to take up for the Currumbin community.

I will always advocate for the safety of our community. I will protect our beautiful lifestyle and the way of life in Currumbin. I will fight alongside locals to stop inappropriate development. I believe my community understands that we must accept development, but I have heard loud and clear that any development must be in keeping with community expectations, meaning developments must have appropriate setbacks and the height and density of developments must be in keeping with the area.

Many of the schools in my electorate urgently need upgrades. The principals, teachers and support staff work tirelessly, particularly so during the last 12 months, and they should not have to put up with substandard infrastructure. I will continue to work very closely with these school communities as well as attend P&C meetings to hear firsthand concerns from the local parent community. For example, Elanora State High School deserves at least \$100,000 to purchase tools and equipment to provide vital skills for current and future students. I will fight for Elanora State School to ensure play areas are shaded. Just recently, I have led a school community driven initiative at Elanora State School to plant hundreds of trees, working collaboratively with Transport and Main Roads.

As I conclude, I want to take a moment to thank all of the amazing volunteers—easily 150 or more who supported me in seeking to represent my beautiful home of Currumbin and, in many cases, campaigning in an election for the very first time. To each and every one of you, I say thank you. You are greatly appreciated and I would not be standing here today without your support and dedication. I wish I could name you all. We had so many laughs which, at the end of a very long campaign, gave me so much strength.

There are a few I would like to put on record as going above and beyond—the glue, keeping everything ticking along. Your friendships are invaluable to me. From the bottom of my heart thank you so much Ben Naday, Roger Emmerson, Murray, Mary and Peter Flynn, Jackson Franks, Chris Manwaring, Maryanne, Joe Nowak, Robyn Pierce, Zac Revere, Andrew Rowe, Rene, Diana Traversi, Derek and John Williams and collectively the assistance from the Tweed National and Liberal branches, along with support from Senator Amanda Stoker and Senator James McGrath and their volunteer teams.


To my electorate office team of Josie Kay, Aaron Payne and now Bronte and Amy: they go above and beyond, regularly helping out at community events and initiatives in their own time. Josie Kay deserves special mention. She has been with me since the beginning. I give thanks every day for how lucky I am to have her on my side. She is unparalleled in her commitment to serve our community and I could not do this job without her.

To my parents, my sisters, my brother, my cousins, my aunties, my uncles and my best friends—you all know who you are—thank you for being so proud and happy to be wearing a Laura Gerber T-shirt on the campaign trail, for stepping in and supporting my children when Dan and I could not be

there and for campaigning alongside me through rain, hail and sunshine. There is literally no better asset on a campaign than your family and best friends, and I am so blessed to have an abundance of both. I would not be here today without their love and support.

Finally, to my husband—my task of representing a whole community is not easy on those who matter the most to you. At times I am away from my husband and my children more often than I am with them. To Dan, Lily and Thomas, you will always be my world. I will always be just a mum trying to be a politician, trying to be of service to my community—and that would not be possible without their support.

Finally, I reiterate the commitment I made to the people of Currumbin in my maiden speech. I will use this platform to improve our community. I will not waste a single opportunity to represent you. I will work hard for the whole of the Currumbin electorate to ensure our community remains the best place to live, to work and to raise a family for many generations to come, so help me God.

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.35 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker Lui, I start by congratulating you on your successful re-election in your beautiful electorate of Cook, which our former health committee was able to visit. I am looking forward to giving my contribution in the address-in-reply debate for a third time. I hope members enjoy it as much as I am going to.

I would like to start by acknowledging our fantastic Premier. Despite the knockers from the state LNP who included many former frontbenchers—some sitting a little further back this time and some still there with the same arrogance and negative attitude and those down south, the likes of ScoMo, Hanson, Palmer and the New South Wales Premier, who all lined up to push us to open the borders; some 64 times, as we know, by the member for Nanango—the Premier was resilient and withstood the push, which I see as bullying, and on the sound advice of our fantastic Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, kept us safe.

Our Premier does not mind a fight. She steadfastly took them on and stood her ground in Queensland and, along with her Deputy Premier, listened to that advice. I think Dr Jeannette Young should also be commended. She definitely helped keep us safe from COVID-19. When the rest of the world continues to suffer the dreadful effects of COVID-19, Queensland is in an enviable position because we acted early and put our people first. I have said many times in this House that you cannot have an economy if you do not have your health. Now a year later here we are rolling out the vaccine. What an achievement!

I recall a speech I made during the previous term in March 2020. I remember following the contribution of the member for Glass House, who said at the time, 'The worst is over.' 'Good grief,' I remarked. How could he say that when millions since have died or been affected by this global pandemic?

The arrogance remains in the LNP—zero humility. Nothing was learnt after the election—some things stay the same—despite the predictable knifing or demise of the former leader of the opposition for the ambitions of Newman's former minister, the bloke who cut and run from Mundingburra. He has form. He took out the former female member for Broadwater to suit his insatiable appetite to be leader. Only time will tell if he has the stamina to last four years because, as we know, the LNP have plenty of form when it comes to replacing their leaders. Isn't that right, member for Clayfield? The member for Broadwater is a pretender. He is the great pretender in Mundingburra. He used to say that he stood up for North Queensland; these days he wears a Titans jersey—but I digress.

I must acknowledge the good people of Thuringowa who put their faith in me for a third term. I will continue to deliver. I have 108 million reasons to stay the course this term including, Minister, the infamous Riverway Drive stage 2! I will be busy over the next four years ensuring that all of the commitments are delivered and making sure people in my electorate have a strong voice in parliament and get their fair share.

I would like to acknowledge and thank: my campaign team, my strategic advisers Steph Naunton and Dolan Hays; campaign manager Roslyn Mellon; my electorate staff Thelma Richards; my ALP organiser Jane Webster; my core team, including Young Labor, who brought a real enthusiasm and energy to the team; my field organiser Adam; my assistant doorknocker Dillon; and Alex, who I am sure is still No. 1 phone caller in the state and who literally made thousands of calls. I thank you each for your amazing dedication and drive to succeed. We did it! I also want to thank the nearly 100 volunteers and branchies who helped doorknock, make phone calls and volunteered to hand out how-to-vote cards.

Speaking of branchies, I will digress for a moment because it turns out that one of our branchies is quite the wordsmith. Everyone in Thuringowa knows that the *Townsville Bulletin* does not like to print my stuff. After the last election I tried to get a letter printed on Riverway Drive stage 2 talking about the \$95 million we were able to secure for it. We would send it weekly and they still would not print it, but they always published the LNP chief letter writers who put in all of the usual negative stuff with their negative spin. That is what they do. I thought I would entertain members with a poem that John Mellon, a branchie, has written for us. It is called *And the Wheels Keep Turning*—

In 2012 they sat on the wall  
 In 2015 they had a great fall  
 All Rupert's printers and all Rupert's men  
 Couldn't get the Tories back up there again  
 2020 comes up and the promises flow  
 And all Rupert's army are go-go-go  
 The word's got around, there's strife on the street  
 Rupert's army in overdrive with deadlines to meet  
 The printers are printing with hardly a spell  
 The election is nearing, it's easy to tell  
 More teachers, more coppers, more nurses as well  
 Delivered by Labor and there's much more to tell  
 But Rupert's prime print omits all these things  
 It's on with the stories with negative stings  
 The common sense governing ... on show by Labor  
 Outshone Rupert's negative ... churned out by his paper!  
 The worker can rest and plan well ahead  
 Their job is still safe and their kids have a bed  
 But Rupert continues to print based on fear  
 It's all that he knows ... it's all that he'll hear  
 I thank God for the sense displayed by the masses  
 We are once more safe from the government's slashes!

I thought that was the axe he experienced after the Newman government, when we saw thousands of people lose their jobs in so many industries and services across our state. As I said, together we did it. I have to say that, compared to 2015 and 2017, it was one of the lowest campaign periods I have experienced. It was truly gutter level stuff by the Katter party candidate, the One Nation candidate and the LNP. They went incredibly low, but do you know what?

**An opposition member:** You got lower.

**Mr HARPER:** We went up. I am back here for a reason. I will take your interjection, because the LNP on that side are over there for a reason. No-one is listening to them at all.

I also want to thank the United Workers Union; Gary Bullock and Matt Lawrence, thank you for having faith in me. I have been a union member now for 35 years—31 in that particular union. They put their faith in me to get the job done, and I will continue to get the job done to represent our hardworking members. Thanks also to the RTBU and QCU for your support. To Jules Campbell and the entire team at the ALP office I say thank you. To the entire team in the Premier's office I also say thank you. We did it in Townsville against all odds.

I want to acknowledge the former member for Mundingburra, Coralee O'Rourke. Thank you for your personal friendship, which will continue. My 'little mate' is tougher than many people know. She is one of the most compassionate and kindest people I have ever met. It is great to see that Mundingburra is still a Labor seat, and I congratulate Les Walker, the member for Mundingburra, and Scott Stewart, who is now the Minister for Resources. That is an excellent portfolio for North Queensland because we

have direct links with the mighty North West Minerals Province and coalmines in Central Queensland. The member for Mackay recently opened the Olive Downs mine, supporting our hardworking local miners. Congratulations on winning your seats, but I congratulate all new members here in the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as you know, you simply cannot do this without the love and support of your friends. I have some great friends, and I would like to place on record my thanks to a couple of fellow ambos, Jason Dutton and Mark Hancock. They come up from Brisbane and help out each time. Mickey Paulsen and Dave Cole, thank you for helping me and my family get through that recent election and travelling up to help me win. It means so much that we keep delivering for Thuringowa. Ken and Shirley McElligott, thank you. I have often said that I just wanted to match Ken's three terms in government as the member for Thuringowa. You both continue to provide great counsel and support, and for that I am extremely grateful. To my former ambulance mentor, Eddie Blain, and his wife, Heather: even as you both head to your 80s you just keep turning up. I thank you for your continued support and friendship.

To the people of Thuringowa I say thank you. I am humbled. Thank you for entrusting me again with the opportunity to keep delivering for our community.

I want to talk about one of my favourite projects, one that has been a catalyst for development and delivered \$50 million in job-generating projects. You would not believe what that particular project might be. It is in the Upper Ross and of course it is Riverway Drive. Stage 1 is something I am very proud to have delivered. I did not do it without the amazing support of Minister Mark Bailey. We delivered further election funding to get stage 2 done. You are my favourite roads minister, Mark Bailey, because working with the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, you got a further \$75 million for that critical infrastructure project, taking it to a total of \$95 million.

There are actually going to be two major infrastructure projects because Townsville's main water pipeline, which delivers 70 per cent of Townsville's water from the mighty Ross River Dam in Thuringowa, is nearing or at the end of its operational life. Members may recall that part of that section of pipeline burst last year and our entire North Queensland capital city of 200,000 could not even shower for a couple of days as Townsville made urgent repairs to the pipeline. We could not do the road without fixing the pipeline. We are working very closely with Townsville City Council, but I am going to put a call out. I had a meeting with the federal member for Herbert just before the election after we got the funding for the road, and what a waste of time that was. He was about as handy as a hip pocket in a singlet. He did not even know about the pipeline. He had no knowledge of it.

**Mr Saunders:** An ashtray on a motorbike.

**Mr HARPER:** I take the interjection from the member for—what is that place you are from? Maryborough, where you build trains. Thank you, mate.

It was only weeks out from the failed Thuringowa LNP candidate spruiking that they got \$75 million from the federal government when in fact it was our hard work that did it. Let's be honest about this federal member. He has little knowledge of anything in Townsville. This is the same bloke who promised \$195 million for the Haughton water pipeline yet did not deliver it and we had to fund it. The irony is that this is a critical pipeline and it delivers 70 per cent of Townsville's water, so I am putting it on record again and I say to the federal member: stump up. The minimum I want to see out of the federal member out of the \$195 million he promised for Townsville is \$20 million to help fix that pipeline. Work with council. Work with us. Let's get that done.

As we have seen, the federal member would rather play in local government and state government matters to deflect from his own poor performance. Stump up! He writes letters on issues relating to crime, blaming the state government, pulling cheap stunts just days out from Christmas, doing videos in front of my office trying to blame us for everything. It was all deflection and nil substance. He is all bark, no bite; all swing, no punch. Weak as water. Well, stump up and follow up on what we are doing in the electorate.

I have committed to a number of election commitments in Thuringowa. Something that is very important to me—and I will speak to the others in a moment—is to get the work finished we are doing around end-of-life care and voluntary assisted dying. With our former health committee doing stacks of work, having interacted with thousands of Queenslanders and after 40-odd public hearings, we heard they just want to have a choice, so I welcome the QLRC review update which was tabled recently. Let's finish this important work.

I want to finish on a high, on a positive. Thank you, Thuringowa. Let us get on with delivering the following projects. The Kirwan Health Campus will receive a \$40 million redevelopment. I look forward to working with the health minister on that. We have some great ministers in this place. They just want

to help deliver these very important projects. The police minister, Mark Ryan, is delivering the new Kirwan Police Station, with \$30 million committed for that. I thank Minister Grace for the Thuringowa hall.

We heard the member for Maryborough say all the good things that the schools in his electorate were getting. There is \$5.7 million for a new hall for Thuringowa, and I look forward to seeing that delivered. The Weir State School is getting a new fence and tuckshop. The Townsville Ring Road is a massive job-generating project—with 400 jobs and \$230 million going into that. I am waiting for a business case to come back on the 1300SMILES Stadium to see if it stacks up so we can deliver something very special for our emergency services. They are all job-generating projects.

I always put my family last. If I started with family, I probably would not get through these speeches. I really have to thank my wife, Amanda, and Michael, Mitchell and our beautiful daughter, Ashleigh Kate. 2020 was a crazy and intense period. Right near the election period we also had a school graduation for Mitch, he turned 18 and I had the election to get through. I love you guys. I think the world of you. This week I am actually not going to be home for my wife's 50th, which I will make mention of on Thursday. I would love to be there and celebrate that, but we will do something special. All of the members here know that it is our families who stand behind us in times of great challenge and we would not be here without them.

**Mr Hart:** Go home for your wife's birthday.

**Mr HARPER:** I will take the interjection.

**Mr Hart:** I'll give you a pass out to go to your wife's birthday.

**Mr HARPER:** I will try to get there. That is one of the nicest things I have heard him say. Words alone cannot express my gratitude to my family. I know I say each year that I will try to find more time, but I want to put it in context. The year before last—because last year was all about COVID—I was away 29 weeks with the sittings that we normally do and then adding the health committee work, which was a massive body of work. That is a long time to be away from your family. You often know that because when you go home the dog starts growling at you. I have to say, 'It's me. It's me.' If the dog does not recognise you, you are in big trouble.

There is a seemingly endless demand on me to help so many in my community. The work in the electorate office piles up, and of course we have our very important work that we do in the various committees in this place. That is what I signed up for, but it should not mean putting my family second. I feel like I have already missed out on watching my kids grow up over the last six years or missed out on things like birthdays, as we all do, and I am really sorry for that. I cannot promise that I will deliver more time to be with my family in this term, but I am certainly going to give it a go because we need to find balance in this place. They are always put second. There is always something going on in our electorates that puts our families second.

We all need to strive a bit harder in this place to try to find time for a work-life balance. I see Madam Deputy Speaker Lui nodding her head. We are all like that, but we are doing important work here that means jobs for people in our communities, it means addressing the issue of homelessness and it means making sure our schools have all the right facilities in them. I am so proud to see that my former school, Heatley Secondary College, got \$12 million worth of work that QBuild was also working through. That is all done now so they have a new performing arts centre.

I have spent a bit of time with QAS in my volunteer capacity so that takes up some hours as well. I thoroughly enjoy that. Madam Deputy Speaker, if you are ever down there, I invite you to come along and have a look at the new ambulance station. There would not be too many MPs in this place—albeit the almighty Bruce, the member for Maryborough, who mentioned fire, ambulance and police in his contribution—who could say they have delivered stations for all three of those services. I might be a little biased here when it comes to emergency services, but I got a new ambulance station, I got a new police station and I got a new rural fire station. We have the ability to deliver more for our electorates over the next four years.

I look forward to working with all of you, particularly those members on this side of the House. We have great ministers and we are led by a great Premier who continues to put people first and put our safety first. We have the vaccine to roll out throughout the year. I would like to get all members up to my electorate on a bus at some point and get along the infamous Riverway Drive stage 2 when we deliver that over this term. I see the transport minister nodding. We are going to do that. It means supporting jobs in our electorate. I thank the people of Thuringowa. I am here to humbly serve them, and I look forward to working with them over the next four years.



**Mr BOYCE** (Callide—LNP) (5.55 pm): I rise to deliver my address-in-reply speech. I take the opportunity to congratulate every member of parliament on their re-election to the 57th Parliament. I remind all of my parliamentary colleagues that we are all here for the same reason—to represent the people and to make decisions in the best interests of the people. We must be rational, particular and concise and take into account the ramifications of the decisions we make.

I quote Robert Louis Stevenson: 'Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is thought necessary.' We should all dwell on that thought for a while, I think. I am an Australian and I reaffirm my allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Commonwealth of Australia. To sit in the people's house of the 57th Parliament of Queensland is an honour and a responsibility that I take very seriously.

The electorate of Callide has chosen me as its elected representative—an honour bestowed on only a few. I most humbly thank them for putting their trust in me. To the people, I say this: having had the experiences of my first term in parliament, the way is often not clear, the process is often complicated and, in many cases, one is left contemplating what is the best decision to make. With this in mind, I draw inspiration from people like the Venerable Fulton Sheen, who said—

Moral principles do not depend on a majority vote. Wrong is wrong, even if everybody is wrong. Right is right, even if nobody is right.

I hold to this principle. The decisions I have made have at times not been easy; however, they have always been in the best interests of the people I serve.

I would like to take the opportunity to make mention of all the people who gave their time to set up and man all the polling booths and pre-poll booths in the Callide electorate. I extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to them. Being elected depends on volunteers. Their efforts go largely unrecognised but they are crucial. I would like to make special mention and recognise my Callide office staff—Leesa, Kellie and Anne—for their diligence and support. Without them, the Callide office would not function. To my long-suffering wife, Terri, thank you for your never-ending support and patience.

There have been some anomalies in the postal voting system that in my opinion need to be addressed. I fielded many complaints from people all over the electorate who did not receive their postal votes on time or in some cases at all. It is clear that the postal system does not work as efficiently as it should. I had one lady ring me to tell me that her postal vote arrived in the mail on 16 November. We witnessed an example where, had as few as five people voted differently, the election result would have changed, so it is most important that our voting system works efficiently and properly.

My electorate of Callide covers an extensive area of Central Queensland which is dominated by the agriculture, mining and resources, and energy generation industries. There are obviously many small businesses that service these major sectors, and many of them are mum-and-dad owner-operators. I have travelled some 270,000 kilometres around the electorate, including driving to Brisbane for parliament, since I became the LNP candidate for Callide in July 2017 and up until the October 2020 state election.

The issues that concern the people of the electorate are huge, varied and unfortunately do not concern the day-to-day lives of many Queenslanders, but they should. The Paradise Dam issue, water security, water pricing and water infrastructure are front and centre of the many issues that I deal with. The Bundaberg area produces 25 per cent of Australia's fresh food produce. There have been hundreds of millions of dollars of agricultural investment which has been put at risk due to some seriously bad decisions made by the Queensland government. Those opposite are going to rue the day they let 100,000 megalitres of water go out to sea in the middle of a drought.

Paradise Dam will be out of water in the coming weeks if there are no significant inflows into the dam reservoir. The government will learn very quickly that you cannot make it rain. The agricultural area of Bundaberg is facing the prospect of little or no water allocations for the foreseeable future. Some people are contemplating the possible likelihood of financial ruin. The economic future of business is under question and business strategy is that of damage control, all because of an incompetent Labor government that has presided over the biggest infrastructure failure in Australia's history since day one. The construction was questionable, its management was questionable and the deconstruction was questionable. I believe it is the Labor Party's Machiavellian holy maxim that some men should be ruined for the good of others. It will be interesting to see the imminent legal class action unfold and how the government will defend its actions.

In the recent state election the member for Bundaberg, the honourable Tom Smith, campaigned on providing jobs for the people of Bundaberg. There are now hundreds of jobs at risk because there is no water in Paradise Dam. What I would like to know is the alternative job prospects he has in mind for the people of Bundaberg and how he might deliver them.

The 56th Parliament saw the introduction of reef legislation, which will regulate agriculture up and down the inland coast of Queensland. It is my opinion that the legislation is based on flawed, manipulated, untested and unproven science. It is ideologically driven politics from the environmental left. Dr Hardisty from the James Cook University in Townsville clearly stated in the federal Senate inquiry that they had never linked farming practices to reef water quality, yet we see a complete contradiction in the 2017 reef consensus statement where disproportionate blame is laid at the feet of agriculture for the perceived demise of the Great Barrier Reef.

In the recent budget delivered before Christmas I was amazed to find a document in the Service Delivery Statements from the environment office dedicated to how the government might prosecute people for noncompliance, yet there is nothing explaining how the government might help farmers and graziers navigate reef legislation and help them become compliant. I have attended several best management sessions prepared by the environment office recently. I was told by the office that I would not be able to attend these meetings as I did not meet their protocol. Can you believe that, Madam Speaker? I am in my own right a farmer and grazier in the Upper Dawson Valley. I am also the member for Callide who represents a large agricultural electorate; however, I do not meet the environment office protocol. Absolutely appalling! I have written to the environment office and asked for an explanation, but I have not yet received a reply.

This goes further. Regardless of the environment office's ideas of protocol, I did attend the meetings. To my amazement, at the Emerald meeting the department people asked if there were any sugar cane or bananas growing in the area. This displays their total ignorance and lack of knowledge with regard to cropping and horticultural practices of the area, the very subject that they were delivering their best management explanation about.

While the government has made an attempt at conveying the reef legislation message, it is clear that much more needs to be done. There has only been one meeting at Biloela for the entire Dawson Valley watershed, which extends from the junction of the Fitzroy River to the southern slopes of the Carnarvon Range north-west of Injune, a huge area with many small communities and hundreds of grazing, farming and agricultural businesses. There were only 30 people at the Biloela meeting.

Reef legislation will be complicated and erroneous for many in the agricultural sector and I implore the government to make more effort to help the people become aware, to navigate and to comply with the legislation. I recently read a letter written by 17th century philosopher Voltaire which seems strangely but entirely relevant. It states—

I believe that a sensible peasant knows more about agriculture than authors who from the seclusion of their libraries issue instructions as to how the earth is to be ploughed.

They are 300-year-old words that still carry relevance.

There are many subjects I would like to speak on which have had an impact on the Callide electorate: the closure of rural birthing facilities, the state's debt and how it is forecast to grow to approximately \$130 billion, the projected \$9 billion shortfall in road maintenance funding throughout the Queensland road network, the closure of agricultural colleges, youth crime, youth justice—the statistics are out of control and it is a system that is broken, leaving people living in fear in their own homes—bushfires, lack of personnel for harvesting small crops of fruit and berries, and the list goes on and on. However, I would like to devote the remainder of my time to making some comments about energy.

The Callide electorate is a huge energy provider for Queensland and Australia. We have two coal-fired power stations, Callide and Kogan Creek. There are also some of the largest solar and wind turbine operations in the state. Among them are AGL's Coopers Gap Wind Farm at Jandowae, the largest in Australia. The Callide electorate is home to a large proportion of the CSG gas industry, providing both industrial and domestic gas to Queensland as well as gas supply to the LNG facility at Curtis Island near Gladstone, which is exported to the world.

There is much talk about creating alternative energy sources, particularly around the production of hydrogen, the different methods of doing this and the economics and viability of using hydrogen as an alternative energy fuel. The Callide electorate has a major part to play in the production of energy for this state. This creates many problems and issues that concern the people of the electorate.

There are genuine concerns surrounding the possible future closure of Callide B Power Station. How will this affect the economy and the community of Biloela? Is there any job security? Is it possible to retrofit the power station to an alternative fuel source of gas, hydrogen and ammonia to keep it in service? These are some of the questions that have been asked by the people of my electorate.

There are two trial proposals to create hydrogen in the electorate, one at the Queensland Nitrates plant at Moura and the other at Kogan Creek Power Station at Chinchilla. Both of these proposals involve creating hydrogen via electrolysis, or water splitting, using electricity from solar and wind power. This gives rise to the term 'green hydrogen', a term which I question.

The sun and the wind cost us nothing and they have no carbon footprint, but the machinery that utilises the sun and the wind to create energy does. You need concrete, steel, aluminium, glass, plastic, copper, lead, zinc and a host of other rare earth metals to build this machinery. You need heavy industry, big ships and transport. All of this is built overseas. To argue that it is renewable and green is stretching the truth. It is smoke and mirrors; it is political hype and spin, designed to deceive the common man into thinking that it is something that it is not.

Recently I have heard the term 'hydrogen ecosystem'. This in my opinion is another misuse of the word 'ecosystem' designed to mislead. Can someone explain what ecosystem can survive in a hydrogen environment? There is going to be one built at Gladstone apparently, so we will wait and see what happens in that space.

As the government takes us into the future with a 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030, the production of alternative energy fuel sources such as hydrogen, the construction of huge wind and solar farms, the closure of some of our coal-fired power fleet and increased use of gas-fired power generation, what exactly will the cost of power look like for the average Queenslander come 2030? This is something I would like to know and this is something that the people of the Callide electorate deserve to know.

We have seen what has happened in the southern states with the closure of Hazelwood and Northern power stations—and the flagged closure of Yallourn and Liddell power stations—and how this affected the cost of electricity to the consumer. Are we to expect the same here in Queensland? Yes, I think so; we are travelling the same road.

In closing, I repeat what I said in my maiden speech: I have made a mound and I stand upon it. I will be on good terms with all persons as far as possible, without surrender. De omnibus dubitandum—question everything.



**Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (6.09 pm): It is a great honour to rise in this place as the member for Springwood in the 57th Parliament. It is also an honour to sit on this side of the House in a third-term Palaszczuk Labor government. Our community was unwavering in its support of Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk's economic recovery plan and a Labor government. Because of that, our government has been granted another four years to deliver for Queenslanders—four years to build back better after the COVID pandemic. I am humbled to serve the community in which my parents live and run a small business—the community where I grew up, where my wife grew up and where we are raising our kids. They were here on the first day of the 57th Parliament and heard His Excellency note—

The previous Parliament was an historic assembly—the first to sit for a fixed term, and with an expanded membership of 93.

This new Parliament also breaks new ground. It will be the first to sit for four years, with the next election to be held on the 26th of October 2024.

Listening to those words impressed upon me the opportunity the community that I represent has afforded me; in particular, the opportunity afforded me by those activists in our community who have campaigned for a better future for themselves, their families and our neighbourhood—a team of volunteers who again delivered a Labor government, one that is focused on putting Queenslanders first. I particularly pay tribute to that team of dedicated locals who care deeply about our community. There were hundreds who gave up their free time selflessly. It was because of them that our community will benefit. It is also because of them that our community is safe from COVID and that our economic recovery is on track. Of course, as others have thanked their families I want to thank my family, especially my wife, Kristie, who provided countless hours of support.

His Excellency clearly outlined our focus for this four years: that our local kids will have better schools and our sick better hospitals, that all of us will benefit from better roads and public transport, that our local businesses will be afforded the conditions to grow and to employ, that our natural environment and heritage will be protected and, most importantly, that we will support more jobs for Queenslanders. I am particularly proud of what the Palaszczuk government has already delivered for the community I represent and of its plan—Annastacia Palaszczuk's plan—that has secured their trust.

This term will continue the most significant investment in improving roads and public transport that the community I represent has ever seen. We will continue the full M1 expansion and the delivery in years to come of the busway to Loganholme, a project that has already supported 700 jobs. We will

keep our community safe on the roads by four-laning Beenleigh-Redland Bay Road. We will build cycling and active transport infrastructure along that route and the M1. We will deliver the second M1 south of the Logan River to the Gold Coast, getting people home to their families sooner and safer.

Thinking about families for a moment, I acknowledge the difference that a good education can make to a young Queenslanders' life. In doing so, I acknowledge the contribution of our teacher aides, school cleaners, teachers, principals, all of the school staff and of course our dedicated P&C representatives. I thank them for successfully bringing our local kids through the COVID pandemic. I mentioned earlier the important locals who assisted my campaign. I want to acknowledge the incredible leadership of my favourite teacher and principal—again, my wife, Kristie—who supports young Queenslanders in her school who come from the most difficult of circumstances.

For the schools in the Springwood community, we will continue to deliver the infrastructure and teaching support that those kids and families deserve. We will finish the prep and administration building at Mount Cotton State School and start work on a new oval as part of delivery of the master plan. We will upgrade the oval at Springwood Road State School, where I went to school. We will build a new hall at Rochedale State High School. We will finish the hall at Rochedale South State School. We will work with the southern Redland Bay community to identify where a future high school can be built for its community. A third-term Palaszczuk government will finalise air-conditioning of every classroom in Queensland and install solar panels on every school in the community I represent.

As we enter our third term, I think all Queenslanders agree that the focus on our health and continued success against the COVID-19 pandemic must continue to be a priority for our government. I acknowledge an historic Australian first, with a new satellite hospital for our community to take pressure off emergency departments and to deliver health care closer to home. I acknowledge the vision of the Deputy Premier on this particular initiative—one that will make a huge difference to the community I represent and to many Queenslanders. We will deliver the largest ever expansion of a hospital in Queensland's history at Logan Hospital. We will deliver a new hospital for the Redlands with more beds, nurses, doctors and midwives so that every new Queenslanders can be brought into our community with the very best care possible. That is in stark contrast to what was proposed by the LNP at the recent election.

Our community, though, campaigned hard for better emergency services. The result of that election means that our neighbourhood will be bolstered with emergency support, including a new fire and emergency services station that will service Mount Cotton, Sheldon, Daisy Hill, southern Redland Bay, Shailer Park, Cornubia and Carbrook. We will deliver 356 new firefighters across Queensland. We will deliver 2,025 new police officers and 475 paramedics so that whenever families need support they will be there for them—more frontline heroes. In contrast, under the LNP proposals there would have been far fewer. These hardworking men and women serving Queenslanders on our front lines would not be here were it not for the efforts of our great trade union movement. It has been the union movement standing shoulder to shoulder with the Palaszczuk government that has kept our electricity assets in state hands. They have ensured, with us, that more tradies in Queensland get paid in full, on time and every time. They have ensured that our families and loved ones get a world-class education and world-class health care.

I am also proud to serve in this government as the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and the Minister for Public Works and Procurement. I note that, for the first time in a Governor's opening speech, a commitment to the emerging growth commodity of hydrogen was listed as our government's top priority in the skills space. Delivering our plan for cheaper, cleaner energy to households and businesses by investing in and growing publicly owned electricity generation will mean Queenslanders will reap the rewards of owning their energy assets. They will also play a critical role in the growth of manufacturing and the sustainability of the resources sector in Queensland. In turn, that will support the hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders who rely on those sectors for work.

During this term of office our government will establish three renewable energy zones. We will develop a viable renewable hydrogen supply chain. We will decarbonise our economy. In fact, we will help entire nations decarbonise. We will grow job opportunities in the community I represent and in regional Queensland.


I have always said that government has the power to make an incredible difference through the way in which it invests taxpayers' money. Through our Buy Queensland procurement policy I am tasked to ensure taxpayers' dollars are spent in a way that delivers decent, secure jobs; in a way that supports

ethical businesses; in a way that delivers important outcomes such as protecting our environment; and in a way that ensures that those members of our community who are too often marginalised get the same opportunities as the rest of the community. Our government remakes that important commitment to Queenslanders.

I want to take this opportunity to finally note that amongst many other responsibilities that have been set for all government members His Excellency indicated that our government places 'the highest value on the service of the men and women of Australia's military'. I am honoured to have in my community a supportive and strong relationship with members of the Springwood Tri-Service RSL Sub Branch. Their sacrifice for the things that we in turn stand for will always be returned by our government in support for them, including supporting veterans into employment like the nine ex-service personnel who have just started careers with the publicly owned Energex.

This builds on the extra support the Premier announced during the state election for vulnerable veterans in our community and reaffirms our commitment to support sub-branches for their events and memorials. We also welcome the announcement by our Premier that this year's Anzac Day services may go ahead as usual. I think members of this House would join with me in hoping that the outpouring of support by those extra members of our community who lit up the dawn last year will not diminish.

His Excellency also noted that this place can be robust in its adversarial nature, but fundamentally we are all here to serve Queenslanders. I acknowledge the 10 new members who joined with us in this chamber for the first time this term and recognise the significant and historic contribution of some who have not. In conclusion, we came to office this term on a promise: our promise to put Queenslanders first and to deliver our economic recovery plan. That is what I commit to doing with all of the portfolio levers available to me as the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement, but what I commit to doing most of all and what I commit to delivering is as the member for Springwood.

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (6.21 pm): I rise to deliver my address-in-reply in this 57th Parliament. I start by congratulating all members who were elected to this parliament in this term. It is a difficult job that we all do. As the member for Thuringowa said earlier, we spend a lot of time away from home and it is a strange job that most people really would not appreciate. We all deserve a minor pat on the back for the job that we do. My electorate is only 30 square kilometres and consists of the traditional 36,000 voters, and I want to thank them for electing me again for my fourth term as the member for Burleigh. In fact, my wife told me the other day that at the end of this term I will be the longest serving member for Burleigh, so I want to thank them for that as well.

This election was probably one of the better elections that I have fought on a local level, so I want to congratulate and thank the candidates who ran against me: Georgie Batty, Scott Wallace, Ingrid Weber, Rachel Mebberson, Carlo Filingeri—I do not think I ever met him, but he ran—and also Wayne Bartholomew. I have to give a special congratulations to Wayne. I am not really sure that he wanted to be a member of parliament, but he put his hand up and he had a go. He put up a very successful campaign. He had assistance from the Premier's office and from unions, and this is probably the strongest campaign I have had run against me. The result at the end of the day was not what I would have preferred—it was a lot closer than I would have preferred—but I have to say that Wayne was very civil in our dealings, so thank you, Wayne. Some former Labor candidates have not been quite so civil.

**Mr Nicholls:** He'd only been in the Labor Party for a couple of months, mate. They hadn't trained him up at that stage.

**Mr HART:** This is true, and I take that interjection from the member for Clayfield.

Obviously there are a lot of people who help us out during an election. I apologise if I miss any, but I want to single out a few people who helped me at pre-poll. Pre-poll was huge this election and it is getting bigger each election, so it is a really important place to be. I stood there for the full two weeks and did not shake hands with every person who came to vote, which is what I normally do, but this year was different and I could not do that. To Matt Taylor, Judy Hynes, Brian Davidson, Ken Vernon, Karly Abbott, Nola Mattei and Robyn Harcourt from one of my Neighbourhood Watch groups, Greg Ingram, Bren Milsom, Ben Naday, Wendy Flett, my new friends Geoff King and Peter Woodhouse, Lachlan Hammet: those people helped me during pre-poll and I really appreciate it. They put in a massive effort, and we smashed pre-poll. That is where we won the election, so well done to them. To the 150 booth workers I had on election day, thank you for your support. Without you, I would not be standing here today.

To Warren Thomson, who stepped in as my SEC chair for the last year: Warren, I really appreciate the effort that you put in. I want to give a big thank you especially to my staff: Renee Whitehead; Anna Honeyman; Megan Williscroft, who helped out during the year; and Ethan Thomson, who helped out during the year. We all know that our staff do the majority of work in our offices. They are the front line. They are the ones that people come in and talk to and get solutions. Half the time I do not even know what my staff have done to fix things, but I know they are working because when I walk down the street people come up to me and say, 'Well done on fixing that,' and I always tell them that it was more than likely my staff who fixed it. Thank you especially to those ladies who work full-time in my office. Those girls have been with me now for six or seven years so my office has not changed that much, so thank you, girls.

I want to give thanks to my family, and again the member for Thuringowa mentioned that he missed his wife's birthday this year. I have missed my wife's birthday numerous times, but she has been there with me now for six elections. I lost two before I won the last four. Six elections is a long time. She has put in a big effort, as have my children, Tim, Jess and Hayden, and their respective partners, Aimie, Simon and Anna. My four grandchildren—Joshua, Isla, Cameron and Boston—came and helped on pre-poll and they did a wonderful job, so I thank them for their support as well. Without their love and guidance, we could not do the job that we obviously all do here.

I listened intently in 2015 to the Governor's speech. That was when the Governor said that the Palaszczuk government would be open, accountable and transparent, and things went downhill immediately after that speech because this government has been none of those things. It has not been accountable, it has not been transparent and it absolutely has not been open. I have gone back to being on a committee now when I have not been on a committee for over five years. The committee structure is made up of three non-government members and three government members, with the chair having a casting vote. I have noticed that what tends to happen in committees is that secrecy and lack of information is flowing through our committees, and that is a complete detriment.

Some of the biggest infrastructure projects in the state are happening in my electorate at the moment with the widening of the M1 from Varsity to Tugun. The Minister for Transport can reinvent history all he wants, but the LNP built that name that the minister cannot pronounce—Worongary—down through Mudgeeraba while we were in government. We all know that governments need to plan well ahead, so when the minister came into the ministerial office he found in the bottom drawer plans and organisation for the widening of the M1 further and in particular light rail.

**Mr Bailey** interjected.

**Mr HART:** I note that the minister is in the chamber, so I want to talk about light rail because that is, as the minister—

**Mr BAILEY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is suggesting that I took plans out of the bottom of a drawer left by the previous government. I find that personally offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): The member has taken personal offence and asked you to withdraw.

**Mr HART:** I withdraw.

**Dr Robinson** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. I had called the House to order, member for Southport, when you interjected after I was giving a ruling so I will put on you a warning.

**Dr ROBINSON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That was me who interjected, not the member for Southport.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you for your honesty. I will take the member for Southport off the warning and I will place you on the warning, member for Oodgeroo.

**Mr HART:** When I was the vice chairman of the Burleigh Chamber of Commerce I was on the original committee that looked at light rail. This is well before light rail was even built, while we were still thinking about stage 1. I can tell members from meetings with the minister for transport during the 2012 to 2015 election it had already been decided to take light rail stage 2 to Helensvale. There were plans in place. Those plans were in the bottom drawer of the minister's office, regardless of what the minister has to say on that issue.

It is really interesting that the government announced in March 2020 that they were releasing the multimodal study for light rail down the highway through Palm Beach. They said that this study had identified that that was the preferred route for stage 3 of light rail on the Gold Coast. The multimodal study that they released is only a snapshot of it. It is two pages. I will table that for the benefit of the members of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Document, dated March 2020, titled 'Gold Coast Highway (Burleigh Heads to Tugun) Multi-modal Corridor Study' [365].

To do my job as the member for Burleigh I thought I would have a look at this multimodal study. For years I have held the position that I did not support light rail going down the coast through Palm Beach. I instead wanted it to go out to Varsity Lakes train station and then down the M1. All members here know the position I have taken on that. I have an open mind. I thought maybe I can be convinced by that multimodal study.

I asked the minister if I could have a copy of that multimodal study. The answer was no. I then decided that I would put in an RTI and request that information, as the member for Burleigh, so that I could fully inform myself. The response was that it was not in the public interest for me to have a copy of the full multimodal study so that I could do my job as the member for Burleigh and educate myself on what might be the best outcome. I table the RTI response.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 8 February 2021, from the Principal Advisor (RTI and Privacy), Department of Transport and Main Roads, Ms Helen Adcock, to the member for Burleigh, Mr Michael Hart MP, in response to a right to information application for the full report of the Gold Coast Highway (Burleigh Heads to Tugun) Multi-modal Corridor Study [366].

I moved on from asking the minister and putting in an RTI request and I wrote to the minister. I think there is some value in reading part of what I wrote—

The reason I am seeking access to the full multi-modal corridor study is to inform my position as the areas representative and solely for that reason. Even you should appreciate that as a fellow Member of Parliament.

To that end, I again request access to the full Gold Coast Highway (Burleigh Heads to Tugun) Multi-Modal Corridor Study report. I am prepared to give you an undertaking that the report will remain confidential and will only be used to inform my position on the future light rail route.

I table that letter that I wrote to the minister.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 11 February 2021, from the member for Burleigh, Mr Michael Hart MP, to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Hon. Mark Bailey, relating to a request for the release of the full report of the Gold Coast Highway (Burleigh Heads to Tugun) Multi-modal Corridor Study [367].

I will also table his reply.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 8 March 2021, from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Hon. Mark Bailey, to the member for Burleigh, Mr Michael Hart MP, relating to a request for the release of the full report of the Gold Coast Highway (Burleigh Heads to Tugun) Multi-modal Corridor Study [368].

In his reply the minister outlined that this multimodal study was a technical report and that technical reports were not available to members of parliament. I was quite stunned at that. I must assume that the minister thinks that technical reports are beyond the scope of a member of parliament to understand. I was an aircraft engineer for 20 years and I am au fait with all things technical. The only reason I want to see the multimodal study is to prove that the minister is actually telling the truth to the Queensland parliament, to the people of Palm Beach and to the people of the Gold Coast, that this is the best route. The minister is not giving me the opportunity to see that. He is, in fact, denying the person who represents 36,000 people in my electorate access to full information.

At the start of my address-in-reply I said that this government is not accountable, it is not open and it is not transparent. Nothing could be clearer. This government is trying to railroad the people of Palm Beach with light rail that they do not want. They do not want light rail going down the Gold Coast and that message has been loud and clear. In his reply, the minister went on to attack me politically saying I lost margin because of my position. Nothing could be further from the truth. Somebody else put in an RTI application for the full multimodal study. Unlike myself they were given the scoping document for the multimodal study. It makes interesting reading. I table it for the benefit of members.

*Tabled paper:* Department of Transport and Main Roads, document titled 'Route Strategy Planning Study on Gold Coast Highway between Reedy Creek Connection Road, Burleigh and Boyd Street, Tugun' [369].

The front page of the tender document for the multimodal study is 'Route strategy planning study on Gold Coast Highway between Reedy Creek Connection Road, Burleigh and Boyd Street Tugun'. The whole plan was about the Gold Coast Highway. There was never any consideration given to any other routes. The minister has misled the parliament, has misled the residents of Palm Beach and has misled the people of the Gold Coast.

**Mr BAILEY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member's comment about me misleading the chamber I find personally offensive and I ask that he withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member has taken personal offence. I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr HART:** I withdraw. The document states in part—

The Gold Coast Highway planning that South Coast Region has that does incorporate light rail is preliminary only and would be a category A under the 'Approved Planning Policy'. This means that under the State Assessment and Review Agency (SARA), TMR may not have the opportunity to work with developers to preserve the corridor for the future Light Rail.

One of the reasons the multimodal study was undertaken was so that development could be increased through Palm Beach in my electorate. We are already seeing wall-to-wall developments happening through Palm Beach. This document leads to more development. I have made some inquiries with TMR about one particular building in Palm Beach which has had an approval put on it. I have been told that that building was never referred to SARA because there are no requirements down through Palm Beach. That development has been ticked off, as have a number of other developments through Palm Beach.

That leads me to what is happening in Palm Beach. It has been completely overdeveloped. The people in my area do not want to see that. Part of the reason for this happening is that the performance planning scheme that this government put in place leads the Gold Coast council to tick off on any sort of development, whether it is over density, the site cover is too much or the height is too high. Basically it does not meet any normal outcomes so the council is able to tick off a performance outcome. Putting light rail through Palm Beach will make this even worse.


In the few minutes left I will talk about the Burleigh Beach Pavilion. Back in 1953 there was a rock pool outside what is now the Burleigh Beach Pavilion which was much loved by the people of the Gold Coast. In 1983 that was removed and a building was built there which incorporated a pool. There were some commercial activities allowed in that leasehold because the pool was there for public use.

Over the years that facility has changed hands a number of times. It has been sold for millions of dollars and become a very valuable site. The current owner is trying to turn it into a hotel. It is covered by a state government lease from the Department of Resources. One of the lease conditions is very straightforward and unambiguous: the lessee must use the leased land for commercial business purposes, namely, for a swimming pool, kiosk, restaurant and an associated health facility purpose and for no other purpose whatsoever.

The owner is going through the process of having the building approved as a hotel. The people in my area do not want a hotel in the Burleigh Pavilion, they do not want it operating all hours of the night and they do not want poker machines there. I had an undertaking from the former minister for natural resources that should the hotel breach the lease the government would end that lease. Unfortunately that minister is not here anymore, but I have a similar undertaking from the new Minister for Resources and I will hold him to it moving forward.

Unfortunately I do not have time to talk about renewable energy and hydrogen other than to say that some of the things that the member for Callide said were very sensible. This government has moved far too quickly into renewable energy. A couple of weeks ago the Premier said that there are 7,900 megawatts built or committed, which is \$8.5 billion worth of investment in our electricity system, and she said that there are 7,000 jobs. What absolute rot! There are no jobs in the operation of renewable energy projects such as wind and solar farms after they have been built. There are jobs available only during the construction phase. I ask members this: if you spend \$8½ billion on renewable energy—and most of that is private investment—how do you think people will get a return? It is not via cheaper electricity. It will be via more expensive electricity, which is what we are seeing at the moment. Wholesale prices are lower but people's electricity bills are not. They are a wake-up to what is going on with this government and they will not accept it. At the next election they are gone.

*(Time expired)*

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (6.42 pm): I rise in reply to the speech made by the Governor when opening the 57th Parliament and I apologise to everyone for interrupting the lovely story that we were just hearing. I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we have gathered today and pay my respects to their elders both past and present.

I will begin where I should, which is obviously to thank the people of Cairns. This is the second time I have won the seat and I can tell the House that it was a tough gig. We had a battle out there, but I had some very strong support. I had strong support from business, from the tourism sector and from

the community sector. There are a lot of people who supported us and they are not just the party faithful, whom I acknowledge and I will run through a list of names in a moment. There was a really strong community push. When I got this job I made it abundantly clear that I came from the tourism industry. I wanted to make clear what we needed to improve our city. Obviously my Labor values intertwined with my commercial values made me a far more attractive proposition than those put up by the other parties. I acknowledge the other parties that contested the seat. Most of them were half reasonable, but I won and that is the way it is.

**Mr Krause** interjected.

**Mr HEALY:** That is an interjection so you have lost.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order! Comments will come through the chair.

**Mr HEALY:** I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I said, I want to acknowledge the party faithful. A huge number of people did an enormous amount to help me get here. I acknowledge the hours that we all spent door knocking and on the phones. The member for Burleigh touched on pre-polling, which is now a very important part of campaigning. We are seeing significant changes in the way people vote and pre-polling was fundamental for us. I acknowledge Tony Fulton, Robin and Glen Cleland, Paul Hiriyama—

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mr HEALY:** Yes, Tony is great. Owen Mallon did a fantastic job as did Max King and Alan Griffiths. I acknowledge the representatives from my union: Dave Hearse, Richard Billingham, Royce Grimwade, Sharon and Shannon Swanson. The AWU did a fantastic job and a range of other unions supported me. I acknowledge Susan Prince, David Anthony, Pat Bailey, Pamela Wilde, Rodney Meiklejohn—it was good to see Rodney; I had not seen him for a while—Peter Doyle, Bob Richardson, Michael Byrne, Jacob Wilson, Farah Tawfeek, Richie Bates, Jo ‘The Viking’ Crljen, Bob Paten, Chris Rollason, Trish Berrill, Wayne Costelloe, Judy Marshall, Cathy Lovern, Kesa Streiby, Stewart Williams, Mike Kyle, Colleen Duke and many more. That was just on pre-polling; on the day literally hundreds of people worked to support me. I cannot express strongly enough how much I appreciate their input and what they did for us.

As I said, ours was a grassroots campaign. There was a strong push by the LNP on the crime issue. It was very personal, but we grew above that and pushed what we knew was vitally important. I will address some of those issues in the coming 16 minutes or it might even be 14 minutes. We will see how we go. There is a little thing going on that I will explain to you later, Mr Deputy Speaker. It will all become very clear and highly entertaining.

COVID-19 presented us with a number of huge and unprecedented challenges. In my maiden speech I talked about what was going to be vitally important for Cairns. Obviously we have a \$2.8 billion tourism industry that is a huge employer of 25,000 people. Whilst we have some significant Australian organisations that invest in our region, one or two large international organisations also invest in our region. We need to be able to slowly move towards and create other industries, whilst ensuring that we keep our tourism industry.

Who could have imagined this thing that we now call COVID? Many in our community have had their lives turned upside-down. The livelihoods of families, friends and neighbours have been destroyed. It has been a tragedy. Many people have lost their jobs. A lot of regions have been impacted but none more so than my city of Cairns where the impact has been absolutely unbelievable. I have spent most of my working life in the tourism industry. I have worked with those people. They are mum-and-dad operators. Some people have their houses on the line. They work long hours. When the worst happened we tried to do everything we could. I am confident that as a government we have done a lot.

As I said the other day, I recognise the significant contribution that the federal government has made through JobKeeper. We all recognise the importance of that program, certainly for regional areas. I know of the blood, sweat and tears it takes to create memorable holidays and experiences. I also know that the industry will face more challenges moving forward, but I am confident that we will work our way out.

I acknowledge and thank the Premier and the minister for making me the Assistant Minister for Tourism Industry Development. While the role gives me a lot to do, it also allows me to be a voice for the tourism industry by giving me the opportunity to talk about what is important—and not just for Cairns.

I have been involved in international, domestic and local tourism. There is a wide range of areas covered by this complex industry. I am very pleased that the Premier has seen fit to put me in a position where I can work with the minister and the industry to ensure that we do all we can.

Things such as the \$10,000 adaptation grants have been helpful, as have electricity rebates, payroll tax deferrals and \$2 billion worth of cheap loans. All of those things were enormously helpful. When we look at the funding support for tourism icons we are talking about big employers that are fundamental drivers of the economy, especially in regional areas. By acknowledging them we ensure that they are in a better place from which to operate, which is a very sensible thing to do.

Alongside direct support for operators, we implemented the Good to Go tourism marketing campaign, which included Cairns, and a \$15 million aviation recovery program to facilitate travel to regional areas. As I have said many times in this chamber, I cannot stress strongly enough the importance of aviation, not just to regions such as Cairns. If we look at a busy year, about 2.8 million people travel and about 87 per cent of them use airplanes. Aviation is fundamental. International and domestic aviation are also crucial to the Whitsundays and the Gold Coast.

Aviation is absolutely fundamental to our state. Under this program we have leveraged Alliance Airlines to undertake a Sunshine Coast-Cairns route three times a week. These were just some of the support measures. They were very popular flights, well picked up by the industry.

Understanding how important tourism is to the Cairns region, the Premier, along with the minister for tourism, announced Labor's tourism policy in Far North Queensland. Our \$74 million plan, Rebuilding Queensland Tourism, continues the Palaszczuk government's record investment in our tourism industry by providing funding certainty for our tourism organisations to market Queensland to the world when the time comes. It is important to acknowledge that we are doing that now.

One of the great challenges at present is consumer confidence. In my short 56 years on this planet I have never seen consumer confidence so low. People will not book a holiday because they do not know whether they will get to the other end. I am not complaining about our policy of closing our borders—life comes first—however, it has presented enormous challenges, not only for the people of Cairns but also for the vast industry we have in this fantastic state. We are in a great position to rebuild it, but we need to slowly start doing that, and we are doing that.

The vaccine will roll out. There is no silver bullet. It will be a combination of federal, state and local governments working together and the people understanding the intricacies of what we need to do. We are slowly starting to rebuild and getting to the stage of moving out of it. Today I spoke to operators on the Gold Coast, in the Whitsundays and in Cairns. Hotels are slowly starting to see good booking numbers come through as a result of what the government has inspired. We are also seeing very early green shoots in business sector travel. That is an important factor. If we have another outbreak, that could be put in jeopardy. I accept that; we have to accept that. This is the real world and we need to acknowledge that. We are getting better with our contact tracing. People have a better understanding, so we are moving forward.

Last Friday I had a great opportunity in my role as assistant minister to go to Townsville. You do not hear people in Cairns saying that often, but it was lovely to go down to Townsville.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr HEALY:** I must say to the member that it was a beautiful experience. I met with a wide range of tourism operators there—day-touring products and hotels. Their occupancy rates are looking very solid and things are coming back. If you look at the demographics and how Townsville's market works compared with Cairns and how Cairns's market works compared with the Whitsundays, you see that there is a disparity. The beauty is in acknowledging that. We, the minister and certainly the Premier acknowledge those things. We are moving in the right direction and we are seeing consumer confidence slowly pick up.

The Wangetti Trail project is underway. It is a 94-kilometre trail. When tourism rebounds, that trail will be a game changer. It is unheard of anywhere else in the world. A mate of mine is a surgeon in Cairns and he told me that 94 doctors went over to New Zealand two years ago to go mountain biking. Mountain biking is huge. They are making a lot of money in the States. In areas where people used to go skiing, now people are mountain biking. It is the same thing in Jindabyne and places like that. This is the new tourism. We need to be aware—and we are aware—and we are moving into and investing in those areas.

**Mr Hinchliffe:** Not much snow in Cairns.

**Mr HEALY:** No snow in Cairns; correct. The reality is that we are moving towards new products and building these new activities that will capitalise on a new and emerging market. This includes continuing the work in our education sector. We have two universities and six English language colleges. That enables not only our tourism industry but also our agricultural producers to have access to a significant bank of labour. We do not have that at the moment. We are seeing what is happening. The minister and I have had a vast number of meetings with people in the last months. We acknowledge that the federal government is doing something with the Pacific Solution in relation to agriculture. There are challenges in a few areas, but we are aware of that. That is an area where we need to continue to grow to make sure we get students back. It is a multibillion dollar industry not only for Cairns but also for Queensland as a whole. When recovery happens, we need to make sure our representatives in the federal government are very aware that we are also very keen to get the students back not only in Cairns but also across the state.

As I said earlier, we cannot rely on tourism as our only industry. We need to rebuild tourism, and we will. There are a lot of very positive things. We also need to look at what we are doing to build new industries and create new career opportunities. When looking at where we have been allocating money—I acknowledge the Treasurer because when he was the minister for state development this is an initiative he was very keen on—the Cairns marine precinct reeks of opportunity. We are investing \$30 million to expand the facilities there which will enable our marine precinct to cater for the maintenance of more vessels. I accept that the federal government made changes to the coastal shipping act which allows for more whiteboats to come in. We are seeing it happen. It is a growing industry and we are facilitating that. Cairns has a huge opportunity to capitalise on that. As I said, we are investing \$30 million. We will have two jetties—one 75 metres and the other 100 metres—where we will be able to see and provide more work, which will be absolutely fantastic. We are working with Ports North to capitalise on this competitive edge. We are also seeing a few changes taking place in that marine precinct area. Cairns will be able to play a leading role in boosting Australia's naval capacity and preparedness. The precinct will elevate Queensland's status as a hub for large vessel technical repairs in the Southern Hemisphere. Our goal is to continue to grow that.

As we know, Cairns is poised to lead Australia's maritime sector. Norship marine, which is based in Cairns, has a 70-year pedigree in advanced maritime engineering and repair services, with clients ranging from defence to tourism, fishing and the resources sector. Through our Made in Queensland program we helped Norship obtain equipment that designs ship components as part of complex maintenance work. With this technology, Norship are now able to secure larger contracts. This is terrific. Norship has recently been sold in the Varley Group, a 100-year-old company operating out of Newcastle, Sydney, Perth—now operating everywhere. I had the pleasure of meeting their chairman and managing director recently. He has made their intentions very clear, and that is to expand. The shipbuilding opportunity is significant. We have a lot happening in that space. I think there will be a lot of very positive announcements. The key is to recognise what we need. A lot of people stand around and complain that they do not know what to do. This is an area where we will continue to invest and expand.

The Cairns region produces some of the best natural produce in the world. We boast world-class seafood, avocados, mangoes, melons, blueberries, citrus and vegetables. I have lobbied for our city to be the gateway for this produce to the Asian market. Admittedly, we have had a few challenges getting planes to go anywhere, but we know that in that market there is a growing middle class and they are hungry for quality Australian produce. I touched on this in my maiden speech. I was very pleased to announce that Cairns will be one of two regional distribution centres in Queensland, thanks to a multimillion dollar investment by the Palaszczuk government. Air Freight Handling Services is proposing to expand their facility located at Cairns Airport. A 3,400-square-metre facility will provide farmers with rapid access to freight. This means that farmers can transport food that is fresher and sell at higher values. This will supercharge our agriculture sector and support more jobs in and around Cairns. One in every five dollars of Australian imports and exports travel via an airport. The importance of airports, as I said earlier, can never be underestimated. Our proximity to the Asia-Pacific region, particularly Cairns, puts us in a unique and competitive position to take our food to market.

I would like to talk a little bit more about roads—we are building them everywhere—but the minister has left the chamber so I will talk about the JCU Ideas Lab. Another piece of the economic puzzle is innovation. Through Advance Queensland we are providing funding to innovative projects in Cairns to create jobs with export opportunities. Through a \$10 million commitment, Labor is proud to have supported the James Cook University Ideas Lab.

We are seeing significant investment in our roads. It is vital we continue to progress our major infrastructure that is building Cairns and our region and is keeping locals in jobs. It is vital that we build the essential infrastructure that a growing city and region needs. I am proud to announce that the Palaszczuk government has delivered more than \$1.8 million in road and transport upgrades in and around Cairns. This includes works packages along the Captain Cook Highway and Ray Jones Drive and will mean more lanes and the upgrading of the intersection. This is backing over 1,000 local jobs. We do not need to provide any examples to show that this government is absolutely focused on jobs.

I cannot say strongly enough that we are investing significant amounts in education. We know that the future of our country, state and city is in the classroom. They should be at home doing their homework about now. We have seen investment of over \$500,000 in the Cairns Freshwater Christian College, \$20,000 in the Cairns Community Kindergarten, \$11 million in the expansion of a very important multipurpose hall at Cairns State High School and \$1 million in Trinity Bay State High School for the refurbishment of industrial technology and design facilities. The list goes on.

Just as importantly, I want to talk about TAFE. I congratulate TAFE on picking up a \$36 million contract for the training and support of Navy crews of the Guardian class patrol boats. This is fantastic work. That is an example of the growing opportunities for our city and region in marine industries.

There are a number of other issues involving sport. The arts is a very important sector. We continue to invest in the arts. We have so many Indigenous players in my area, whether it be in theatre, art or a wide range of other activities. We continue to invest and acknowledge the importance they play in the arts sector. We have been assisting the JUTE Theatre Co. We have also been assisting the Cairns Regional Council with the arts.

I will finish by talking about our hospital. We continue to invest hundreds of millions of dollars into the hospital. What is vitally important to the hospital is the scoping document that is well and truly underway. It will look at the detail around the expansion to university hospital status. There has been the expansion of our cardiac service. We have completed the scoping document for the Cairns Health and Innovation Centre. Some \$3.8 million has been allocated to the emergency department for more doctors.

I am extremely proud to be the representative of the people of Cairns. I will continue to advocate and push hard for them.

Debate, on motion of Mr Healy, adjourned.

## ADJOURNMENT

### Joyce Newton OAM Memorial Bursary



**Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (7.02 pm): Tonight I have several special guests here in parliament. Ebony King is a year 12 student from Glasshouse Christian College. She is here with her mum, Jade King. Colleagues, if you have ever sampled finger limes as part of our cuisine at Parliament House, Jade is the grower of those finger limes. Welcome to Jade and Ebony. Ebony and Jade are also joined by my good friend Jen Tunley and her brother, Carl Newton.

I would like to welcome these three ladies and Carl, and acknowledge why they are here. Ebony is the winner of my second annual Joyce Newton OAM Memorial Bursary. To apply for the bursary, Ebony wrote me a 1,000-word essay on the importance of the New Bradfield Scheme to the state of Queensland. Now, to be blunt, the current government could stand to learn a lot from Ebony's contribution. She is as sharp as a whip and wrote convincingly on the many benefits Queensland would receive from building such a visionary scheme, but I will touch on that more a bit later.

The namesake of the bursary, Joyce Newton, was a passionate community advocate in Maleny, an LNP party stalwart and a dear friend to many, including myself. Sadly, she passed away in 2018 of motor neurone disease. Maleny has not been quite the same ever since. After her passing, I wanted to honour Joyce and her legacy. After putting my head together with her equally community minded daughter, Jen Tunley, the Joyce Newton OAM Memorial Bursary was born.

As well as reading part of Ebony's speech in parliament here tonight, she has also received a \$1,000 gift voucher to local Maleny business Concept IT and dinner in the Strangers Dining Room, which is waiting for her straight after this speech.

I want to come back to Ebony's essay, where she succinctly articulated the way in which the New Bradfield drought relief scheme would divert water from the high rainfall regions of North Queensland's rivers through to Western Queensland and eventually turn the region into a food bowl for greater Queensland and, indeed, Australia. She wrote:


The Bradfield Scheme as a drought mitigation strategy has the potential to be invaluable to Queensland, not just for farmers, but due to the possibilities of employment opportunities, state food security, hydro-electric power generation and reduced nutrient and sediment loading into the Great Barrier Reef.

She then continued—

In addition, and in contrast to drought mitigation, recent flooding in 2019 in large areas of Northern Queensland has highlighted the potential for the New Bradfield Scheme to potentially mitigate the damage from floodwaters on both agricultural land and coastal communities due to the planned diversions.

I am still proud to be part of a team that brought forward this visionary, state-building project to the last election. I hope that a future government will reconsider the New Bradfield scheme. Perhaps it will be young Ebony's generation that will drive the kind of change in thinking needed to push forward long-term endeavours like these, which will support many future generations of Queenslanders yet to come.

### McKenzie, Councillor R

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (7.05 pm): A couple of weeks ago we heard extraordinary revelations from the member for Redlands regarding a fake Facebook account, Scarlett Rivers, and an email that was aimed to damage the reputation and career of the wife of Councillor Lance Hewlett. It was revealed that the police traced the IP address of this fake email to the home residence of Councillor Rowanne McKenzie.

Since that brave contribution by the member for Redlands, Councillor McKenzie has been very quiet, refusing to answer any of the media's questions about this incident. I was very surprised to receive a concerns notice from Councillor McKenzie's lawyers last week. Just for sharing a news story regarding her integrity to the community that we both represent, Councillor McKenzie decided to bully me into silence through her lawyers and demand \$2,000. In response, I say to Councillor McKenzie: bring it on! Bring it on!


She refused to cooperate with police and answer their questions. She refused to answer any questions put to her by the media to defend herself with regard to this awful incident that has taken Redlands' politics to a new low. I highly doubt she will answer any questions from my QC when he cross-examines her in court. Again, bring it on.

I am not the only person Councillor McKenzie is trying to bully through lawyers to make them silent. The councillor has also sent a similar concerns notice to ratepayer, David Curtin, and also community group, Redlands 2030, for sharing the same story. I know Councillor McKenzie has only been in the job a year, but does she seriously think she can sue every Redlands' resident just for sharing a bad news story about her?

I will not be silenced by Councillor McKenzie. In fact, I will ensure that if the councillor does not resign for this disgraceful act, I will let every resident in her division know that she is a fraud and a fake and if she cannot cop some bad media one year into the job without trying to sue everyone, she is not fit to be an elected representative.

It goes to show the type of person Councillor McKenzie is—too weak to fess up to the media about what she has done, but instead tries to profit from this disgraceful incident by demanding \$6,000. I know that all three parties who have received these concerns notices will not be paying a cent to Councillor McKenzie. There may be more Redlands' ratepayers that Councillor McKenzie is trying to sue, whom I am not aware of yet. Councillor McKenzie, instead of bullying ratepayers behind lawyers and trying to make thousands of dollars out of Redlands' ratepayers due to your wrongdoings, how about you fess up to your crime and resign.

### Scenic Rim Electorate

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (7.08 pm): I stand in the House tonight to make representations on behalf of the Beaudesert Kingfishers Rugby League club and, in particular, urge the government to reopen and get on with delivering infrastructure grants for sporting clubs which have been frozen for the last few months or so. I make reference to grants from the Active Community Infrastructure fund. The Kingfishers put an application in for a grant towards the end of 2019 or early 2020 and they have been stranded in that process ever since.

It is a grant application that they put a significant time into in order to obtain funding to upgrade their amenities—their toilet and change room facilities—to cater for a very strong growing cohort of female Rugby League players and also to deal with the growth in participation around the Beaudesert region. Growth in participation has got to the point that Beaudesert cannot host regional or district carnivals for Rugby League because there is not enough space for people to get changed and, in particular, not enough female-friendly facilities.


I urge the minister to reopen those infrastructure grants and to provide grant funding for the Beaudesert Kingfishers. They have produced some wonderful Rugby League players over the years. They are the linchpin of our community. They have done all the right things by putting together a great application and they deserve some assistance in upgrading their amenities, which are well beyond needing an upgrade.

Another thing that is needed in our electorate is public transport for Tamborine Mountain. It is a large community. There are about 7,000 to 8,000 residents on Tamborine Mountain. In contrast to similar communities on the Sunshine Coast such as Maleny and Montville, Tamborine Mountain does not have any public transport, except for a limited FlexLink taxi service which takes people to Beenleigh Railway Station.

There is no reason why the TransLink network could not or should not be extended to Tamborine Mountain given the number of people who live there and the number of people who commute either to the Gold Coast, to Brisbane or to other parts of South-East Queensland for work every day. The Rotary Club on Tamborine Mountain has put together a terrific submission to government. Government should take that seriously and work with TransLink to expand those options on Tamborine Mountain.

Another issue that has been raised is when ambulances are taken away from Tamborine Mountain, Canungra and other small areas around the Scenic Rim for patient transport to the Gold Coast, Logan or Brisbane. The problem with that is that quite often those ambulances then get reassigned to other jobs while they are at those places. That means that our communities are left without an ambulance on the ground to serve people when their health is such that they really need one. This system might be all right for the city, but it is no good for the Scenic Rim and it should be changed.

### Redlands Electorate

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (7.11 pm): Following on from the member for Capalaba's contribution, on the adjournment last sitting week I asked: what was Redland City Council going to do? You cannot be a bystander on this issue. The standard you walk past is the standard you are prepared to accept. This is not a standard of behaviour anyone in our community should accept of an elected representative.

Redlands recently lost a stalwart of our community in Brian Osland. I would like to extend my sympathies to Deb Osland and her family on the passing of Brian. His contribution to our community was significant in so many ways but particularly through our Faith Lutheran community and also through footy. He loved his footy. He had a deep passion for our mighty Redlands Bombers. Brian was an incredible Redlander and he will be sadly missed.


In my last contribution on the adjournment I spoke about the youth crime forum. It was held last Monday in the Redlands. It was fantastic. It was extraordinarily well attended. I want to thank the speakers who came. Inspector Lindsay Kilpatrick was terrific in giving local knowledge and updates on the statistics of crime in our area. I also thank Assistant Commissioner Scanlon. I know that we are in good hands going forward to improve outcomes in youth crime with her lead role on the task force. She shared what she will invaluablely contribute to improving the situation going forward. I also thank Michael Drane, the leader in youth justice reforms from the department. It was a great night. I want to thank my community. Their valuable questions and contribution on the night show that we can all work together to make our community stronger and safer.

Lastly, as we head towards Anzac Day this year, I want to make special mention of my constituent Mr Herb Shapcott. Herb is 94 and was a member of the Australian armed forces in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, notably at Hiroshima. Herb recounts really amazing stories of his time in the armed forces. A few months ago he brought to my attention an important issue—the recognition of 69 BCOF servicemen on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial. Time has been of the essence to remedy this recognition. They are all in their mid-nineties.

I would like to thank the member for Aspley, Bart Mellish; the federal member for Blair, Shayne Neumann; and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Darren Chester, for working with me to ensure that we acknowledge their contribution and the contribution of all BCOF service men and women in our

community. They have been working together again with Herb. He cried when he read the letter from Mr Chester. The importance of the recognition for the other men he served with in Japan is extraordinarily important. I want to thank the member for Aspley for helping me get that underway. It was really appreciated and that recognition goes a long way.

### Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Project

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (7.14 pm): I want to raise an issue of importance for the Sunshine Coast, particularly for the Kawana community at the moment—and that is the mass transit plan being produced by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and the furphy of a consultation that they are about to embark on. The Sunshine Coast Regional Council have advised that they are putting nine options to the people, despite the fact that the mayor and local council voted against community consultation. Believe it or not, the mayor voted against any community consultation on this mass transit.

They have said to the community that there will be nine options available including light rail down the centre of Nicklin Way from Mooloolaba to Caloundra. That will impact businesses, small businesses and many, many residents. What the consultation fails to address is density. The council have deliberately left out consultation with the community on density. If light rail comes to the Sunshine Coast, so will come density—high rises and medium density. That is what is coming to the Sunshine Coast.

For the council to pay external consultants that they have hired to consult the community about the mass transit options but without including density is all planned to secure an outcome of light rail. If they ask: 'Do you support light rail on the Sunshine Coast?' people would say, 'Oh, yeah—sounds good.' But if they ask: 'Do you support light rail on the Sunshine Coast with 80,000 additional people living between Mooloolaba and Caloundra, with the congestion and no other transportation options?' then people might say, 'We don't think so.'

People support heavy passenger rail on the CAMCOS corridor to get people north and south. There is huge concern about the mass transit options. I congratulate the Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Action Group and the Beach Matters Group for the protests and the community forums they are doing. They are actually doing real consultation, which is what the Sunshine Coast Regional Council should be doing. The Sunshine Coast Regional Council have a predetermined outcome and it is all about light rail down Nicklin Way. Make no mistake: we will be making sure that the community know what that means for the Sunshine Coast. We love the Gold Coast, but if we loved it so much we would all move to the Gold Coast. We love our Sunshine Coast and we do not want it to change.

**Mr Langbroek** interjected.


**Mr BLEIJIE:** We are not moving to the Gold Coast, member for Surfers Paradise. You can stay on the Gold Coast. We love the Sunshine Coast. That is why we live on the Sunshine Coast and we want to preserve the natural amenity we have. We do not want to be the Gold Coast on the Sunshine Coast.

I also thank the Sunshine Coast India Association for their inaugural Holi Festival of Colours. I had a great time. I was covered in a tonne of coloured powder on the weekend. It completely wrecked the white shirt and the suit, but we had a great time. What a fantastic, positive festival it was despite the rain.

Also, the Minister for Housing should be distressed by the fact that she has not addressed the huge housing concerns we have on the Sunshine Coast. We have a housing crisis where people are living in their cars. It has to change and it has to change now.

*(Time expired)*

### Bundamba Electorate, Jobs

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (7.17 pm): It is a great pleasure to speak in this place just a few days ahead of the one-year anniversary of the Bundamba by-election held on 28 March 2020, when I was given the great privilege of becoming the member for Bundamba. I am incredibly proud to be part of such a vibrant, determined, supportive and resilient local community and equally proud to be their representative.

It has also been one year since our nation went into lockdown in response to the global COVID pandemic, and it is our state that is leading the country's economic and employment recovery. Queensland really is the place to be. Data released last week by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed more than 53,000 Queenslanders found full-time work during the month of February.


Queensland generated six times as many full-time jobs as New South Wales and four times as many as Victoria. This represented the biggest unemployment drop in Australia, and Queensland was responsible for more than 60 per cent of all full-time jobs created across the country.

We continue to be committed to a safe and strong recovery, delivering the skills and training Queenslanders need to gain rewarding, secure employment now and into the future. Locally, that means delivering record numbers of new health workers. Already this year we have welcomed 33 new intern doctors at Ipswich Hospital, and an intake of graduate nurses will soon join them. We are also committed to record numbers of teachers and more workers to support our frontline police, and our ongoing investment in world-class education is backing jobs for local tradies. That includes recently completed works at Riverview, Kruger, Goodna Special and Collingwood Park state schools, and it also includes the current stage 2 developments of the Ripley Valley State Secondary College and Ripley Valley State School.

We are also supporting our young people into trades with free TAFE and apprenticeships. While we continue to back Queensland workers, the Morrison federal government is ready to rip about \$22 million a week from our local Ipswich economy, scrapping JobKeeper and impacting more than 29,000 of our workers. JobKeeper continues to be a lifeline for many people across our local community who still need critical support. Stopping this support on 28 March—this week—as the Morrison federal government plans to do will impact about 7,700 Ipswich businesses and organisations. It is not only an issue for Ipswich. Scrapping JobKeeper will have a huge impact on communities all over the state because it is supporting more than 160,000 Queensland businesses and about 608,000 workers.

Here in Queensland at a state level we have done the heavy lifting and are leading the nation in our recovery, but prematurely cutting JobKeeper will put our safe and strong recovery at risk. The pandemic is not over and JobKeeper is essential during these unprecedented times.

### **Mahoney, Mr J and Mrs K**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (7.20 pm): I rise in the House tonight to speak about the most egregious abuse of government power that I have seen in my time in parliament. It concerns Mr John and Mrs Kathryn Mahoney, who purchased land as a retirement savings in Yamanto. It was zoned at the time future residential and therefore had great prospects for capital growth. In 1999 unbeknownst to them the Ipswich City Council rezoned the land to rural, which very substantially cut its value. Shortly after that the Queensland government resumed the land for the Centenary Highway extension which connects Springfield to Boonah Road at Yamanto.

The Mahoneys took the state government to the Land Court and won their case. The state government then appealed to the appeals court. Their learned representative adduced evidence which I allege to be false, saying that the noise corridors from RAAF Base Amberley meant that the zoning had to be rural. I say that is false. On the basis of that and other evidence the government won their case and were awarded costs against the Mahoneys which was, in my opinion, grossly contrary to the public interest considering they were individual citizens who had already won an appeal against the government.


I wrote to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads in these terms and I received an unhelpful reply. It was just a dusty response. I have written to the CCC concerning the matter of the Ipswich City Council's involvement. Given the alarming disclosures about the corruption and malpractice that occurred in the Ipswich City Council I felt it was neat and proper that the CCC investigate the matter again. I received a reply from them saying they were not going to do so.

The land in question has been now sold out from under the Mahoneys in order to fund the costs that were awarded against them for the Queensland government. I say this is an appalling abuse of the government's power. When I write to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads I expect that he will act in the interests of the public because that is what he is there for. He is there to represent the public and legitimate political interests such as the case of Mr and Mrs Mahoney.

Mr and Mrs Mahoney are devastated at the loss of their land, the loss of their money, and at the shenanigans and irregularities they faced along the way in their case. I am saying this in the House tonight because my predecessor, Lawrence Springborg, and I fought the good fight on this over several years. We feel that we have exhausted every possible avenue of review, but none of those entities have conceded there was anything wrong in the processes we have alleged are wrong. I ask the House to keep this in mind and to in future look after people like the Mahoneys.

*(Time expired)*

### Balmoral State High School


 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (7.23 pm): What I want to know is what does the LNP have against Balmoral State High School? In 2003 Campbell Newman tried to sell off one of our playing fields. In fact, it was just one of a number of playing fields he was after. We were lucky because, as we all remember, he actually tried to sell off whole schools. Our community was not going to have it. We protested, we phoned, we signed petitions, we did mobile offices and Campbell Newman relented. But he was not happy to let the school keep the playing field: out of spite he handed it over to Brisbane City Council in trusteeship for zero cost.

The school is growing and we really need that land back. The school wants the land back. The P&C wants the land back. The community wants the land back. In fact, almost 1,000 people from my local community signed a petition to the Brisbane City Council saying so. But the LNP is saying no and no-one can understand why. We live in a community where our local sporting clubs are bursting at the seams. We are an inner city electorate so there is not a lot of green space to go around. That is why we aim for multiple uses out of every facility, and that is why we have strategically invested in Balmoral high school as a means of providing outstanding sporting facilities for the students there and also opening up the grounds for use by the local community.

Up until the last election we had spent over \$5 million developing facilities there in the multipurpose sports hall, which is beautiful, and in new upgraded playing fields and facilities. Just with those facilities alone 15 different sporting clubs are able to utilise them, and I know there are more who are interested. We need all of the land that belongs to Balmoral high school not only to invest in its grounds for the future but to cater for its fast growing population. Everyone in my patch is so delighted that it is growing because it spent many years languishing. We are just so excited about seeing how it is thriving now and doing so well.

I am calling on the LNP Brisbane City Council to do the right thing and give that land back. I really want to thank the education minister for her pursuit of this issue. The education department tried to negotiate with the council in good faith so they would relinquish their trusteeship. They are refusing and no-one has any idea why they are being so unhelpful. Now the government has to seek to revoke the trusteeship under the Land Act. The department has dealt with few, if any, situations like this. It could take a really long time, six months or more, and that could blow out. We just want the LNP to give our land back. It belongs to Balmoral State High School. There is no reason for them to keep it except out of spite. Please like Balmoral State High School because it is a great school.

### Coolum State School; Coolum State High School

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (7.26 pm): While we are talking about the education minister, I want to talk about two great schools in my electorate. Coolum State School is one of the region's pioneering schools, celebrating its centenary in 2017. When it opened in 1917 there were 11 students. Today enrolment numbers sit at over 1,000. In that same time the local population has boomed and the school now services one of the fastest growing areas on the coast.

Over the past two years the hardworking school community, supported by Coolum locals, fundraised around \$400,000 of their own money to upgrade the school's electrical systems in preparation for the highly anticipated rollout of air conditioning. Last year we were told the tenders had been sent out and the school was on track to have their air conditioning installed over the 2020 summer holidays. Unfortunately, this never eventuated. Students, teachers and staff instead sweltered through another hot Queensland summer, and despite asking the minister for an update on when the school will be air-conditioned we still have no answers.


When the state government backflipped and announced its \$477 million Cooler Schools Program last year, nearly two thirds of all Queensland schools were already air-conditioned. Twelve months later Coolum State School is one of more than 1,000 still waiting. Why is it that Coolum State School, despite spending \$400,000 from its own fundraising to upgrade electrical systems, is still waiting? Why the delay? Last year we heard reports of schools that had received their new air-conditioning units, only to find they could not be switched on because their electricity networks could not cope. To make matters worse, existing fans have been removed in preparation for the air conditioning, leaving students sweltering.

I would also like to make mention of another outstanding educational facility in my electorate, Coolum State High School. In recent years Coolum high has grown from strength to strength and now boasts a number of excellent programs and has an outstanding record of academic, cultural, sporting

and educational achievements. Despite this performance and its recent growth the school lacks a purpose-built performance hall that can meet the needs of the expanding school curriculum and accommodate the entire school population. Last year members of the school community and the P&C launched a campaign to raise awareness of the need for this important new facility.

When the current principal, Troy Ascott, arrived at the school in 2017 there were only 980 students. This year the school has more than 1,400 students. Mr Ascott described how the school can no longer meet as one and how he has to divide the school in half just to have an assembly. Even then students have to sit on exposed concrete at the side of the undercover area trying to dodge bird droppings from the many birds who have now made the school hall their home. On behalf of both of these great schools I urge the minister to prioritise these infrastructure upgrades accordingly.

### Aspley Electorate

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (7.29 pm): ABS data recently released shows that Queensland was responsible for more than 60 per cent of all full-time jobs created in Australia in February. We lead the nation in replacing the jobs lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Last month we generated six times as many full-time jobs as New South Wales and four times as many as Victoria.

As we heard this morning from the Treasurer, total hours worked have increased to levels higher than pre-pandemic, but we know that sadly for many Queenslanders they are entering an uncertain period from this Sunday because this Sunday is D-Day for JobKeeper. We have seen the announcement of cheap flights from the federal government, which was welcome for Cairns being part of the initial announcement, but then they hastily had to add more locations. Townsville was lucky to make the list, but other areas like Hervey Bay have not been so lucky. The federal government needs to closely monitor the rollout to see if more needs to be done.

Since Queensland was first impacted by COVID-19, the Palaszczuk government has taken a sensible and strategic approach to combatting the global economic headwinds caused by the pandemic. Locally, in Aspley, our plan for economic recovery means that Aspley locals will benefit from upgraded roads and world-class infrastructure projects. Just last week, I met with Craigslea State High School staff and representatives from the sport and education departments to get the ball rolling on the brand new \$10 million volleyball centre of excellence. The new centre will cement Craigslea as the best volleyball school in Queensland and will establish the north side as a hub for volleyball development. I cannot wait to see some current Craigslea students in one of the 2032 Olympic teams, which will hopefully be in Brisbane.

Over at Aspley State High School, construction is well underway on the \$16 million sports hall and performing arts precinct—a project that will give a real lift to the whole Zillmere, Aspley and Carseldine area. The school community have done well. They have pursued this for many years. It is really great to see it come out of the ground. I am really proud of the sporting triangle we have made in this area. Between the Northside Indoor Sports Centre in Zillmere, Aspley State High School and the Carseldine sports precinct, we have great new facilities which have all been delivered or are being delivered since 2017.

Our plan for economic recovery will also mean safer roads in Aspley. Plans for the Beams Road overpass are in the final stages of development, while construction is already underway on stage 1 of this project—upgrading the Carseldine park-and-ride in the member for Sandgate's electorate. We have \$5 million for noise barriers in Bald Hills. I am really pleased that this election commitment is being rolled out. At my latest mobile offices in Bald Hills on Saturday, locals were very pleased to hear of this commitment, and I look forward to seeing it over the next few months as we progress the planning work. The LNP talked big on noise barriers, but they did not stump up a single dollar during the campaign. Let us not forget when they were last in government they actually scrapped already planned and scheduled noise barrier projects in the Aspley electorate.

Also in Bald Hills it is great to see that we are very close to seeing work commence on the diverging diamond interchange on the intersection of Gympie Arterial Road and Strathpine Road—

**Mr Hinchliffe:** And Hoyland Street.

**Mr MELLISH:** Or Hoyland Street if you live in the member for Sandgate's electorate. This innovative and exciting project will relieve traffic congestion on Strathpine Road in particular. A diverging diamond interchange is cost-effective to construct and it has less impact on local residents compared to a traditional interchange because it requires a smaller footprint.

The House adjourned at 7.32 pm.

**ATTENDANCE**

Andrew, Bailey, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Boyce, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Camm, Crandon, Crawford, Crisafulli, D'Ath, Dametto, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gerber, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hart, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Janetzki, Katter, Kelly, King A, King S, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lister, Lui, MacMahon, Madden, Mander, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mullen, Nicholls, O'Connor, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Skelton, Smith, Stevens, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Watts, Weir, Whiting