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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Tuesday, 11 May 2021

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TUESDAY, 11 MAY 2021



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 letters in respect of assent to certain bills. The contents of the letters will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the letters 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 Bill, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, was assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on the date shown:

Date of Assent: 23 April 2021

A Bill for An Act to amend the Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997, the City of Brisbane Act 2010, the City of Brisbane Regulation 2012, the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020, the Economic Development (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020, the Environmental Protection Act 1994, the Gaming Machine Act 1991, the Justice Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response—Proceedings and Other Matters) Regulation 2020, the Local Government Act 2009, the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, the Local Government Regulation 2012 and the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2014 for particular purposes

This Bill is 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

23 April 2021

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 23 April 2021, from His Excellency the Governor to the Speaker advising of assent to bills on 23 April 2021 [\[601\]](#).

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 Bill, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, was assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on the date shown:

Date of Assent: 30 April 2021

A bill for an Act to amend the Bail Act 1980, the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 and the Youth Justice Act 1992 for particular purposes

This Bill is 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

30 April 2021

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 30 April 2021, from His Excellency the Governor to the Speaker advising of assent to a bill on 30 April 2021 [\[602\]](#).

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

Absence of Member



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received advice from the member for Coomera that he will be absent from the sittings of the House from 11 May 2021 to 13 May 2021. The member's notification complies with standing order 263A.

Absence of Member, Proxy Voting



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, in accordance with section 20 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 and the statement I made during the previous sitting week, I advise that the member for Southern Downs has granted a proxy vote to the member for Toowoomba North to act as his first proxy and the member for Theodore to act as his second proxy for all divisions held during this week's sittings. The exercise of this proxy vote in each division will be evidenced on the division sheets with a 'P'.

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 Livingstone Christian College in the electorate of Coomera and Dutton Park State School in the electorate of South Brisbane.

PETITIONS

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

Atherton Tablelands, Road Infrastructure

178 petitioners, requesting the House to fast track the construction of a new road linking the Tablelands and Cairns and to ensure continued use of the Barron River Bridge at Kuranda [\[603\]](#).

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

Legislative Council, Referendum

Mr Andrew, from 940 petitioners, requesting the House to instigate a referendum on the reinstatement of the Legislative Council in the next term of the Parliament [\[604\]](#).

School Transport Assistance Scheme, Review

Mr Powell, from 610 petitioners, requesting the House to conduct a state wide review of the Queensland School Transport Assistance Scheme to create a more flexible school transport scheme [\[605\]](#).

Beerburrum Road

Mr Powell, from 215 petitioners, requesting the House to resurface Beerburrum Road between McDougall Road and Eaton Road and then return the speed limit to 100km/hr [\[606\]](#).

Vehicle Safety

Mr Boothman, from 492 petitioners, requesting the House to implement harsher punishments for motorists who do not secure their vehicle loads [\[607\]](#).

Broadbeach State School

Mr Stevens, from 87 petitioners, requesting the House to relocate the set-down / pick-up zones for Broadbeach State School [\[608\]](#).

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

Warrego Highway, Coal Road Exit Ramp

111 petitioners, requesting the House to fast track construction of an exit ramp to Coal Road Chuwar from the Warrego Highway [\[609\]](#).

Ipswich, Waste Industries

425 petitioners, requesting the House to legislate to give all Ipswich residents the same guarantee as “the Collingwood Park State guarantee” which is a compensation guarantee for any damage caused by waste Industries operations [\[610\]](#).

Waste Industries, Land Valuations

223 petitioners, requesting the House to class all land within three kilometres of waste handling facilities as valueless and apply no fees to the landholder; and that the waste industries pay local governments compensation for the losses in rates [\[611\]](#).

Palliative Care

7,866 petitioners, requesting the House to urgently address Queensland's palliative care deficit and to follow the usual Standing Orders when the “voluntary assisted dying” bill is introduced to Parliament [\[612\]](#).

Climate

538 petitioners, requesting the House to declare a climate crisis and act to save our state and planet [\[613\]](#).

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—

23 April 2021—

[564](#) Response from the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services (Hon. D'Ath), to a paper petition (3500-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(3), and an ePetition (3473-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 2,374 and 5,902 petitioners respectively, requesting the House to not move the quarantine system to the privately owned Wellcamp Airport near Toowoomba

27 April 2021—

[565](#) 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 (3472-21) sponsored by the member for Maiwar, Mr Berkman, from 10,838 petitioners, requesting the House to call upon the Attorney-General to reform the Birth, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act, remove the ‘trans tax’ and fix the Registry's processes

[566](#) Health and Environment Committee: Report No. 7, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled on 23 February 2021

[567](#) State Development and Regional Industries Committee: Report No. 8, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 27 November 2020 and 23 February 2021

[568](#) National Environment Protection Council—Annual Report 2018-19

[569](#) State Development and Regional Industries Committee: Statement regarding report by predecessor Economics and Governance Committee: Report No. 47, 56th Parliament—Report into the feasibility of introducing expenditure caps for Queensland local government elections

28 April 2021—

[570](#) Economics and Governance Committee: Report No. 7, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 27 November 2020 and 23 March 2021

7 May 2021—

[571](#) COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020, Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008: Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 38

[572](#) COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020, Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008: Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 38, explanatory notes

[573](#) COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020, Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008: Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 38, human rights certificate

[574](#) Queensland Government: Third annual progress report—Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, December 2020

10 May 2021—

- [575](#) Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal: Electorate and Communication Allowance Band Adjustment 2021, Determination 24/2021, 10 May 2021
- [576](#) Department of Youth Justice—Final report 1 July-12 November 2020
- [577](#) Legal Affairs and Safety Committee: Report No. 8, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 27 November 2020 and 13 April 2021

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020:

- [578](#) Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2021, No. 31
- [579](#) Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2021, No. 31, explanatory notes
- [580](#) Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2021, No. 31, human rights certificate

Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Act 2021:

- [581](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 32
- [582](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 32, explanatory notes

Health Legislation Amendment Act 2020:

- [583](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 33
- [584](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 33, explanatory notes
- [585](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 33, human rights certificate

Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011:

- [586](#) Hospital and Health Boards (Health Equity Strategies) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 34
- [587](#) Hospital and Health Boards (Health Equity Strategies) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 34, explanatory notes
- [588](#) Hospital and Health Boards (Health Equity Strategies) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 34, human rights certificate

Liquor Act 1992:

- [589](#) Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 35
- [590](#) Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 35, explanatory notes
- [591](#) Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 35, human rights certificate

Environmental Offsets Act 2014, Nature Conservation Act 1992:

- [592](#) Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 36
- [593](#) Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 36, explanatory notes
- [594](#) Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 36, human rights certificate

Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991:


- [595](#) Queensland Building and Construction Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 37
- [596](#) Queensland Building and Construction Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 37, explanatory notes
- [597](#) Queensland Building and Construction Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 37, human rights certificate

Legal Profession Act 2007:

- [598](#) Legal Profession Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 39
- [599](#) Legal Profession Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 39, explanatory notes
- [600](#) Legal Profession Amendment Regulation 2021, No. 39, human rights certificate

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Population Growth; Federal Budget

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.35 am): Many people are moving to Queensland for a better life. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show a net 9,800 people moved to Queensland in the December quarter. Putting it another way: every day another 100 people choose to be Queenslanders. This is the largest net gain in almost 20 years. Mr Speaker, how could you blame them!

Mr Stevens: They're escaping Victoria.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will take that interjection: they are. They are leaving Victoria to come here, yes—and New South Wales. For once there is agreement from the opposition!

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! It is great that everyone is getting along.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is the largest gain in almost 20 years. These 9,800 are in addition—

Ms Simpson: It is not unprecedented.

Ms PALASZCZUK: What did you want to say?

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am sorry. I am trying to give a ministerial statement.


Mr SPEAKER: Order! Premier, I will deal with the interjection, if you could please continue with your ministerial statement. The member for Maroochydore will cease her interjections.

Ms PALASZCZUK: These 9,800 are in addition to the 7,200 in the previous quarter and the 6,900 in the December quarter 2019. Thousands are moving to Queensland. Our economic growth is the fastest in the nation. We have the strongest growth in our economy compared with pre-COVID. We have 62,800 more Queenslanders in jobs than before the pandemic. That is more than double the growth in jobs in the next best state—Western Australia. Investment in new housing is up over 50 per cent over the year.


All of this is proof that our economic recovery plan is working. What better endorsement can you get than families leaving their home state for a brighter future here in the Sunshine State? Most of them are coming from New South Wales. It seems Queensland is the state Australia loves the most; Sydney is the city they leave the most!

I hope the federal government takes note of this population shift in tonight's budget. More people means more demand on our hospitals and health system, new schools, better roads and transport, housing and all of the things a growing state needs. All we ask for is Queensland's fair share. We expect nothing less. Unfortunately, that is not what we are hearing from the federal government. We are hearing of more funding for other states—New South Wales, Victoria and even South Australia. I am quite sure the Treasurer will have more to say about this shortly.

Coronavirus, Update

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.37 am): In terms of our daily COVID update today, I can confirm zero new cases. This is wonderful news. We now have only 17 active cases. There have been 5,334 tests in the past 24 hours. I do want to thank Queenslanders for coming out and getting tested. We have to keep that up. There have also been 159,797 total vaccines administered to date.


Coronavirus, India

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.38 am): Speaking of COVID, COVID-19 has changed the face of the world as we know it and taken the lives of millions of people around the globe. No nation has gone through unscathed. Currently, one of the worst affected countries is India. Last Thursday, there was a record high of 414,188 new cases. To date, 246,000 deaths have been recorded and, as we speak, there are more than 3.7 million active cases. These are horrifying statistics.

On behalf of the government, I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives as a result of COVID-19 and those who continue to be directly affected by the pandemic in India. More than 74,000 Queenslanders were born in India or have Indian heritage. These families make a huge contribution to our life, to our community, to our state.

Today I am pleased to announce that I will meet with a number of leaders from the Indian community here at Parliament House, including Mrs Archana Singh, Honorary Consul of India, to offer the support of my government. I will be joined by the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and assistant minister, the member for Jordan. Whether it is on the cricket field, over a meal or at a boardroom table, Queensland shares strong ties with the Indian community. We will do everything we can to support the Indian people during these incredibly difficult times.

Outback Queensland, Investment

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.39 am): We are building back better here in Queensland. Thanks to the way Queenslanders responded to COVID-19 and our record investment in infrastructure and jobs, we are building our economy while other jurisdictions are still focused on containing the virus. Nowhere is this truer than the outback. Last week I caught the *Spirit of the Outback* from Brisbane to Barcaldine before travelling to Longreach to host our community cabinet. Taking the cabinet to Longreach was a great chance for all of the ministers to talk to locals about how they are coping in the wake of COVID and what the Queensland government is doing to create jobs and improve the quality of life in the bush.

We had a wonderful time! I want to thank the communities of Longreach and Barcaldine, especially mayors Tony Rayner and Sean Dillon, for their wonderful hospitality. The people were fantastic and it was great to see the cabinet out there. In the last week alone we announced: \$1.2 million for major upgrades to the Isisford Weir; planning is underway for the \$2.7 million renal dialysis unit at the Longreach Hospital; and a new partnership with councils to deliver thousands of kilometres of wild dog fencing—once again our government is delivering for the bush.

I was joined by the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Agricultural Industry Development to announce that construction will soon begin on the \$3.2 million upgrade to the Western Queensland Livestock Exchange. I made that announcement while inspecting the Longreach Saleyards last week. There is also more than half a million dollars to deliver a long-term dinosaur tourism strategy. That is just the tip of the iceberg. We are also delivering fast-tracked infrastructure projects, including: the widening of the Barcaldine-Aramac Road; health and education projects such as Blackall's new \$20 million hospital and general practice; and more than \$5 million for projects in local schools.


After the community cabinet the health minister, the transport minister and the education minister stayed in the region and visited small local communities and engaged with their particular portfolios—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Chatsworth, you are warned under the standing orders. The Premier was talking about nothing controversial at that stage. Members, let's start the week off well.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is called delivering for all of Queensland. As I said, we met with the mayor of Longreach, Tony Rayner. How great was 'Smithy' from Outback Aussie Tours, Megan and Tiarne Otto from Jericho and Lynette Balderson from Barcaldine and their children, who lined the streets of Barcaldine on Labour Day for the Tree of Knowledge Festival, Sara and her daughter Harper, whom I met in Barcaldine at the town's biggest football game of the year where the Barky Sand Goannas had a mighty victory over the Alpha Brumbies—I did not see anyone from the opposition there—and Garry Edwards from AAM Investment Group, who is working with the state government to revolutionise the Longreach Saleyards. I am proud to say that we are making a difference to Western Queensland. We will continue to work hard to create jobs and opportunities for people in the outback.

Beef 2021

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.43 am): We were out in Longreach and then we went to Rockhampton.

Mr O'Rourke interjected.


Ms PALASZCZUK: That is right, we went to Rockhampton. The city of Rockhampton—all Central Western Queensland—and our beef industry can be enormously proud of last week's Beef 2021 event. It was three years in the planning after Beef 2018, but as a result of the impacts of

COVID-19 the planning window was so much narrower and really they pulled it off since October-November last year. Despite that, everything that was good about Beef 2018 was even better in 2021. There were record crowds of almost 116,000 people. I am advised that is 15,000 more than in 2018. The event area was 20 per cent larger than before. Rockhampton was just buzzing—the member for Rockhampton and the member for Keppel were very proud of that fact—and the outstanding quality of Queensland's cattle was proudly on show. We must never forget what our producers went through after 2018.

I congratulate the exhibitors, including our Queensland government staff. We were proud to support the event with \$1 million. It was well worth it, with an estimated benefit to the local economy of more than \$80 million. I understand that Beef Australia has engaged consultants for an economic impact statement. I am sure the findings will be very encouraging again.

Being there with so many of my ministers and MPs I was able to publicly thank the producers. They earn export income for our state. It was a wonderful opportunity. I warmly congratulate Beef Australia chairman Bryce Camm, his vice chairs Grant Cassidy and Russell Hughes, and CEO Ian Mill. I think the only thing stopping this from being an annual event would be the exhaustion of Bryce and his team. Well done!

Beef Industry

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning) (9.45 am): As we have just heard from the Premier, the entire cabinet visited Longreach for the community cabinet last week. Many of us went on to Rockhampton to support the beef industry in Central Queensland and beyond. The Palaszczuk government is committed to strengthening Queensland's \$6.7 billion beef export industry, which is predicted to increase by two per cent to 25.2 million head this year.

Construction will begin soon on a major redevelopment of the historic Longreach Saleyards. Given Queensland's size and the scale of the industry, regional saleyards are vital to beef exports throughout the state. AAM Investment Group managing director Garry Edwards says that the project to transform the yards will enable the throughput of 100,000 head of cattle each year by 2026. That could never have been imagined 12 or 18 months ago. The saleyards will be redeveloped to become the investment group's Western Queensland Livestock Exchange.


The Palaszczuk government is supporting the new \$3.2 million development with a multimillion dollar contribution that will provide for new cattle lane infrastructure and drafting facilities and create seven jobs during construction. This important project is backed by the Palaszczuk government, the Longreach Regional Council and AAM. Funding has also been delivered to upgrade and install new infrastructure at saleyards in Cloncurry, Emerald, Roma, Dalby, Blackall, Laidley, Richmond, Gympie, Dalrymple, Winton, Warwick and Kingaroy, providing flow-on economic benefits for the surrounding agricultural industry, agriculture supply chains, local businesses and transport networks.

We are also supporting western councils through our Works for Queensland and COVID Works for Queensland programs. Longreach and Barcaldine have received more than \$9.2 million across both programs, helping the councils deliver 59 projects. Importantly, these projects have already created or supported 571 local jobs, which is a terrific result for local businesses, local tradies and local families. On top of improving tourist attractions, both councils have used Works for Queensland funding to improve livability by improving water infrastructure, libraries, footpaths and parks. Longreach and Barcaldine were recently allocated a further \$2.24 million through the fourth round of Works for Queensland. I look forward to seeing the projects they will deliver through this latest funding from the Palaszczuk government.

Mr Stevens interjected.

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

Federal Budget

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (9.47 am): I begin my contribution this morning by associating myself with the words of the Premier to acknowledge Beef 2021. What a great event it was! I want to pass on my congratulations to chair Bryce Camm, deputy chair Grant Cassidy, and the entire Beef Australia team for an outstanding event.

On to more pressing matters. Tonight the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, has the chance to end his rotten rip-off of Queensland. Let me say this in words even those members opposite will understand: tonight will the Prime Minister's rotten rip-off of Queensland roll on or will Scott Morrison finally do the right thing by our state and give us our fair share? Queensland deserves our fair share as the fastest growing state in the nation. As the Premier pointed out, across the year a net 30,000 Australians packed up their bags and moved here. That is more than 80 new Queenslanders arriving every single day during 2020. Many of them came from New South Wales, which saw its population fall by nearly 19,000 through net migration, and Victoria, which went backwards by almost 13,000.

When it comes to where Australians want to live, it is Queensland under the Palaszczuk Labor government first and daylight a distant second. We welcome those new Queenslanders, but our growing population means more pressure on housing, hospitals, roads and schools. All Queensland ever asks for from Canberra is our fair share. Unfortunately, all Queensland gets from the federal LNP is rip-offs. They will not give us one cent for Queensland's Cross River Rail, when we had a route, we had a business case and we had every expert in the country screaming that it was needed. Yet Melbourne got \$5 billion—that is, \$5 billion—for an airport rail line when there was not even a map setting out that rail line's route. And do not get me started on Sydney. Sydney got \$5.3 billion for a brand new airport. Let us not forget Geelong, which got \$2 billion for fast rail and a brand new \$50 million public hospital funded by the federal LNP. How many hospitals in Queensland have been funded by Scott Morrison and the federal government? Zero, absolutely none.

Unfortunately, it seems the rip-off of Queensland is likely to continue in tonight's federal budget. Yesterday, media outlets trumpeted \$1.6 billion for Queensland roads and rail. While we welcome any funding for our state, that amount is dwarfed by the lavish handouts to southern states: \$3 billion for New South Wales; \$3 billion for Victoria; and for South Australia, \$2.6 billion for a single road tunnel. South Australia had net interstate migration last year of just 98 people. Why on earth do 98 people need a \$2.6 billion road tunnel? I will tell you why. It is called the federal Liberal seat of Boothby and its razor thin margin of 1.38 per cent. Meanwhile, lazy federal LNP members in Queensland on fat margins get nothing for our state.

There are so many other important initiatives in this state that are crying out for support from Scott Morrison. Where is the \$50 million for our hospital? Where is the funding for the Bundaberg flood levee? Where is the \$195 million for Townsville, which is 281 days overdue? Where is the \$40 million for the Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct in Toowoomba? Where is the \$1 billion Scott Morrison is obliged to contribute over the next 10 years to improve remote Indigenous housing? I am fearful that nothing will happen. After all, with senior cabinet ministers like Peter Dutton failing to pay even their council rates, how can we expect them to provide the funding that Queensland deserves? Tonight's federal budget needs to signal the end of Scott Morrison's great Queensland rip-off. Queensland deserves nothing less because we deserve our fair share.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba South, you are warned under the standing orders. Member for Maryborough, you are warned under the standing orders. The gentleman sitting next to the member there—I am sorry, I am not sure of your name; oh, it is the member for Logan, sorry, I did not recognise you: you are also warned under the standing orders.

NAPLAN; Early Childhood Education, Funding



Hon. G GRACE (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.53 am): I am sure all members will join me in the shout-out to all Queensland year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students as we head into NAPLAN testing for 2021, with 70 per cent of schools going online. My advice is to stay calm and do your best. I also wish the Powerhouse a very happy 21st birthday.


We know how important it is to give our kids access to high-quality kindergarten, with all research showing the benefits that flow in terms of improved school results and better health, wellbeing and employment prospects. In the current budget, the Palaszczuk government is investing around \$174 million in kindy through the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme. This includes subsidies to help reduce the out-of-pocket costs for families accessing a kindergarten program. Additional subsidies are available to support children from low-income families and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to access quality kindergarten programs.

At the height of the COVID-19 crisis last year, we provided an additional \$17 million to enable free kindergarten for families in term 2 to help our community kindergartens remain viable. This year we are expanding the Remote Kindergarten Program by providing \$12 million over four years which will greatly improve our state schools' regional and remote kindergarten program. In addition, we have provided an additional \$26 million for early childhood regulation and \$56 million over two years to support universal access to kindergarten and workforce initiatives, providing grants of up to \$30,000 for providers to support educators to finish their qualifications.

Sadly, the Commonwealth continues to deny Queensland's early childhood education sector funding certainty. The current national partnership agreement is the seventh short-term extension of the original 2009 agreement—an agreement that promised a move to enduring arrangements eight years ago but which has still not occurred. I wrote to Minister Tudge on this issue last month and raised it with him at the recent meeting of education ministers. An independent review has found that this funding uncertainty has hampered innovation, compromised services' ability to plan and invest in staff, and had implications for workforce retention and service quality.

With the federal budget tonight, I once again call on the Morrison government to end this succession of short-term agreements, to implement the recommendation of the independent review and its original commitment to provide ongoing, long-term funding for universal access to kindergarten, and to provide Queensland's kindergarten sector and Queensland families with funding certainty. Queensland's children deserve no less.

Health Services, Funding

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.56 am): Every day, Queensland's frontline health workers deliver world-class care to thousands of people in our busy public hospitals and health-care facilities. Our doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health workers do an outstanding job delivering patients the care they need. The unprecedented demand for health services that Queensland is experiencing, along with all the states and territories across the country, is putting pressure on the health system. That is why I am pleased to announce today an extra \$100 million to further enhance patient care and support our frontline health workers in their crucial roles.

This \$100 million package is aimed squarely at tackling the unprecedented demand we are seeing in our busy public hospitals. It will create an initial 65 new beds in some of Queensland's busiest hospital and health services in the Ipswich, West Moreton and greater Brisbane regions. This important funding package will fund a wide range of much needed new beds and facilities, including: \$7.2 million to open an additional 26 beds at Ipswich Hospital; \$5.3 million for an additional 13 beds for patients in West Moreton; \$7.1 million for an additional 26 beds at QEII Hospital; \$20 million for winter bed funding to open more beds in areas with the most demand, which is on top of the \$25 million we have recently put in for increased bed capacity; \$15 million to permanently expand Hospital in the Home services which were temporarily established as part of our COVID response; \$10 million to permanently expand the Residential Aged Care Support Services which were temporarily established as part of our COVID response; and \$5 million to pilot targeted expansions of post-acute services, including physiotherapists and occupational therapists, to support faster and safe discharge from hospital.

We are also investing: \$4 million to support appropriate discharge of long-stay patients from hospital and ensure they receive continued care in the right setting; \$4 million to expand our mental health co-responder model, which has had so much success, with an additional four teams each year over the next three years; \$6.5 million reinvestment in successful programs delivered through the Care in the Right Setting Funding Program, including the Rapid Paediatric Sepsis Pathway; \$5 million for a targeted expansion of the Transfer Initiative Nurse model to support getting our ambulances back on the road faster; and \$2.5 million recurrent to scale up the Patient Access Coordination Hub to a statewide level and operate 24/7.

This important funding package is the result of consultation between Queensland Health, our hospital and health services, unions and other important health stakeholders. I thank them for their collaboration and for working with us to find these initiatives to go forward. The demand on our busy public health and hospital system is increasing year on year, despite the record investment by the Palaszczuk government. This is creating pressures not just in Queensland but across the country. Tonight I hope the Morrison government delivers the funding that Queenslanders deserve to ensure we continue to deliver the highest quality of care.

Regional Queensland, Road Infrastructure; Federal Budget, Roads



Hon. MC BAILEY (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (9.59 am): Regional roads are absolutely crucial to Queensland. The Palaszczuk government is delivering record investments in road upgrades to make those connections safer and more convenient. Roads across Western Queensland have benefitted from the commitment of the Palaszczuk Labor government to infrastructure across this state. Since 2015 we have delivered more than \$1 billion worth of road upgrades for Western Queensland and we will see another \$1 billion locked in for Western Queensland over the next four years.

Last week I had the pleasure of chatting with local road crews working on the Cramsie Muttaborra Road about an hour north of Longreach. They were busy sealing a four-kilometre section of that road that links Muttaborra with Longreach. I clearly remember Jake, a concreter, being very proud to work on that project for his local community.

Our investments, including four COVID infrastructure stimulus packages, will deliver road upgrades right across Queensland including completely sealing this road by next year, and the locals absolutely love it. That project is one of many major road upgrades underway now in Central West Queensland and right across the state. These projects deliver better access to essential services in remote communities, greater economic productivity and safer regional roads. They also support the growing drive tourism economy that is helping Queensland bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic like the Lake Dunn Sculpture Trail near Aramac where we are partnering with the council to build stopping bays for the hundreds of visitors using that trail and to allow better access to the Muttaborrasaurus and the Muttaborra Interpretation Centre—fantastic assets in regional Queensland.

These projects also mean jobs. The mayor of Barcaldine was very positive as he showed me around. He told me that because of our investments, his council has expanded their local road crew and have bought more road-building kit. About 800 local jobs will be supported from next year when work starts on the Rockhampton Ring Road. During Beef Week last week we shared new images that show how the ring-road will transform the city's road network. I know the members for Rockhampton and Keppel are excited to see the ring-road take shape and I encourage Rocky locals to find out more about the consultation my department is running over the next few weeks.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has built a strong pipeline of projects to support Queensland's economic recovery. We need fair federal funding to continue that strong pipeline and to deal with population growth in our state. Queensland was already one of the fastest growing states in Australia before the pandemic, and the latest ABS data shows growth has accelerated as more people choose to move here with an 88 per cent net migration predicted in the next couple of years. However, in tonight's federal budget we will see states like New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia once again receive far more infrastructure funding than Queensland.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: That is a fact. Queensland will continue to do the heavy lifting on infrastructure investment because we will not do the sweetheart deals with Canberra that would force us to sell public assets as other states have. We will always stand up for a fair share of federal funding for Queensland. As the federal Treasurer prepares to hand down his budget tonight, we say the time for Queensland to receive its fair share is now, and what a shame those opposite do not support us.

Federal Budget, Housing



Hon. LM ENOCH (Algerie—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (10.02 am): Queensland is a great place to live, and over the past year many more Australians have realised that and are making the decision to move here. While we welcome other Aussies moving to Queensland, this has meant additional demand in the private rental market. This comes at a time when the Australian government is ceasing funding to the National Rental Affordability Scheme and turning its back on vulnerable Queenslanders experiencing housing stress, so in tonight's federal budget we want to see our fair share in housing support.

NRAS is an Australian government initiative which provides subsidies on properties which allow tenants to receive at least a 20 per cent discount on market rent. In Queensland alone there were 10,244 approved homes at the peak, many of these in regional communities. Losing any form of housing assistance across our regional areas and in our cities will affect housing affordability in already tight rental markets. The remaining NRAS properties in Queensland will exit the scheme by mid-2025


with the majority ending in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 periods. This means that over the next four years more than 9,000 properties will likely leave the affordable housing market. This uncertainty is creating anxiety for tenants who want longer term security.

We are expecting our housing service centres will see a significant increase in demand between 2022 and 2025 from customers exiting NRAS. As a frontline human service, the department works with all customers to connect them with services that address their specific needs. Over 54,650 households have been supported since early 2020 including 7,507 allocations to social housing. In addition to the private rental market assistance, we are also building more social and affordable housing ourselves with the largest investment in social housing since World War II.

Through the Housing Construction Jobs Program, we are investing \$1.6 billion to build more than 5,500 social and affordable homes across Queensland. Since the HCJP started, contracts have been awarded for the commencement of 2,238 new social housing homes across Queensland, with 1,415 already completed. An additional 659 new affordable homes are also being delivered. In addition, the Works for Tradies initiative will see the commencement of a further 215 homes by the end of 2021.

The Palaszczuk government is doing the heavy lifting while Scott Morrison and the LNP are walking away from their responsibilities to Queenslanders. In the federal budget tonight, Scott Morrison needs to step up and ensure Queensland gets its fair share of housing support. In the meantime, the Palaszczuk government will continue to work towards positive housing outcomes for all Queenslanders in need.

Federal Budget, Manufacturing


 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (10.05 am): The federal government's \$1.3 billion Modern Manufacturing Initiative is a welcome program for the industry, so I rise today to make the case for getting our fair share for Queensland. There is good reason for this. Queensland manufacturers are not only leading our economic recovery but have even been, as we always do, delivering better outcomes for this nation than any other state in Australia. Those down in Canberra had better be listening today because the numbers prove it. Queensland has had the highest average manufacturing export value per capita for five consecutive years.

For the past few months my Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water has been working very closely with manufacturers right across the state to identify those projects that may be eligible for the funding in this federal program. There is a breadth of potential manufacturing projects across different sectors and across Queensland's regional communities that deserve their fair share. We have been working across our many regions in Queensland because the industry is vital to their development. Around 46,500 people are employed by regional manufacturing firms, a number I am sure that this federal government is acutely aware of given their many recent trips to this part of the state.

The Queensland government is committed to helping manufacturers transform their businesses, lift productivity and improve international competitiveness by adopting advanced manufacturing technologies and those practices. We are working with them every day on their shop floors and in their supply chains to innovate, to create a skilled workforce and to adopt world's best practice, and our support is working. A recent world economic annual report revealed exports from Queensland's manufacturing industry totalled \$17.7 billion. It is clear to see that the Queensland government is supporting our manufacturing firms to grow and to take advantage of new opportunities.

If the federal government is willing and open to supporting our industries, I would welcome it. However, that support must be on the production lines, not through press releases. Queensland is the manufacturing powerhouse of Australia. We punch well above our weight and we deserve our fair share of this federal budget tonight.

Beef 2021

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.08 am): I know everyone is excited to be in parliament this week, but the real excitement last week was in Rockhampton for Beef Australia 2021. Beef Australia 2021 is the premier event when it comes to beef in this country. I can confidently say that Beef Australia holds the best event in the world when it comes to beef, a celebration of the best beef on offer. Chairman Bryce Camm and the entire Beef Australia board should be credited and

acknowledged for their sterling work in showcasing this event. This was Bryce's first Beef Australia event as chair and he had big boots to fill. He certainly filled them and he held a magnificent event. That is why he is a well-deserved recipient of the 20th #eatqld Champion award.

It was clear to the thousands who came through the gates that this was a special event. In fact, I believe it was a record event. There were not just quality cattle and pavilions of key suppliers and stakeholders to the sector but also an entertainment program like nothing the cattle industry had ever seen before. *Are You Lonesome Tonight*—an effort of Opera Queensland at opening night of Beef 2021 before touring our great state—was a performance that moved the crowd like no other.

We as a government have supported and always will support beef. I know that the members for Keppel, Rockhampton, Pumicestone and Bancroft enjoyed the experience, as did the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer and all the other ministerial colleagues who took time out to attend the event. It was a premier beef event, with the Premier warmly welcomed. With the Queensland government a principal partner, stalls and speeches at the event highlighted the work my department and others do for the sector.

It was not just this side of the House that enjoyed the hospitality that Beef 2021 offered; I note that some members opposite were in attendance as well. In fact, for those not there, *Queensland Country Life* had a wonderful wrap-up of the event—online and in hard copy—which I am happy to table for the House. It is a fantastic front page and a credit to *Queensland Country Life*.

Tabled paper: Queensland Country Life newspaper, dated Thursday, 6 May 2021 [614].

While on the subject of *Queensland Country Life*, I acknowledge editor Melody; journalists Sally, Helen, Victoria and James; and the whole crew for their excellent coverage of Beef Australia 2021—and of course my QCL tie, which I will not be tabling! In particular, I acknowledge our Queensland Japanese Consul-General, Tanaka-san, who took time out to visit during the week and inspect some of the exports. Japan is acknowledged as being our greatest beef export market in the world.

Beef 2021 is a key event for the agricultural sector, with AgForce, pastoral companies, banks, processors, locals and tourists wanting a great steak. Mayor Tony Williams will be counting down the days until Rockhampton holds Beef 2024 in three years—and on this side of the House we all look forward to it and will be there.

Homicide Victims' Support Group



Hon. MT RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.11 am): When someone steals the life of another person, it is an affront to our collective humanity. The ripple effects are spread far and wide, causing untold pain and often hardship. That is why the work and support of the Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group is so critical to our community. I acknowledge that there are members of the support group in the gallery today. I acknowledge and pay tribute to them on this their annual awareness day.

For many years now, those who make up this very special organisation have been standing shoulder to shoulder with those who are enduring unbearable heartache. The Palaszczuk government always has provided support to the Homicide Victims' Support Group to carry out its vital work. Last year our government appropriately increased funding to the group by \$1 million over five years, to boost the services that the group can provide to those in need. This funding boost to the Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group will support additional counselling services for victims. At the time, the chair of the Homicide Victims' Support Group, Dr Samara McPhedran, said—


This funding will help us dramatically expand the services and support we can provide.

Not only do these selfless and caring people provide emotional support to other people in their darkest days; they also help people in a practical fashion. They do this by providing people assistance with understanding the judicial process and with the preparation of victim impact statements. They recognise that, at a time of great emotional distress, advice and support in relation to these practical matters is of enormous benefit.


The Queensland Police Service is committed to ensuring that the perpetrators of the most serious of crimes are brought before the courts. That is because justice must be done. Justice must be done for the victims and, importantly, justice must be done for those loved ones left behind. Justice never relents. Justice never sleeps. Just as there must be justice, there must also be compassion, empathy, understanding and support. On this the annual awareness day for the Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group, we pay tribute to them and the support they provide to Queenslanders in some of the toughest of circumstances.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Visitors to Public Gallery


 **Mr SPEAKER:** I also welcome to the public gallery members of the Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group who are here today regarding the victims support group awareness day. This is an opportunity for members to visit displays in the Undumbi Room after question time until the end of the luncheon adjournment. The display also exhibits a range of support services for members, families and friends of homicide victims. Welcome to the Queensland parliament.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.14 am): I advise that the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs will be absent from the House today due to illness. The Premier and Minister for Trade will take any questions relating to the minister's portfolio in question time today.

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Office of the Information Commissioner, Report

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (10.15 am): As chair of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, I lay upon the table a report by the Office of the Information Commissioner titled *Follow-up of report No. 2 of 2019-20: Audit of Bundaberg Regional Council's implementation of recommendations: Compliance with Right to Information and Information Privacy*.


Tabled paper: Information Commissioner of Queensland—Follow-up of Report to Parliament No. 2 for 2019-20: Audit of Bundaberg Regional Council's implementation of recommendations: Compliance with right to information and information privacy [615].

The report outlines the council's progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2019 audit. I table the report in accordance with the requirements of subsection 184(5) of the Right to Information Act 2009 and subsection 193(5) of the Information Privacy Act 2009. I commend the report to the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr SPEAKER: Question time will conclude today at 11.16 am.

Hospitals, Code Yellow

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (10.16 am): My question is to the Premier. Code yellow internal emergencies were declared overnight at the Gold Coast University Hospital and Ipswich Hospital, with patients waiting more than five hours for emergency treatment. Is a five-hour wait for emergency care the new standard for Queensland Health?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am glad to have that question from the Leader of the Opposition. If the Leader of the Opposition and members of the opposition had listened to the health minister earlier, they would know that she announced a \$100 million injection, looking at the unprecedented demand we are experiencing at the moment in our hospitals. I will go into that in a bit more detail in a moment.

When I was at national cabinet last Friday, nearly every jurisdiction said that this is an issue that is affecting their state or territory as well. It is not a uniquely Queensland issue; it is a national issue. To that end, I called on the Prime Minister to put this firmly on the national cabinet agenda for next month as a significant item for discussion. Before national cabinet meets, the Prime Minister has asked the federal health minister to meet with the other health ministers to look at why this is occurring at a national level across the nation. I suggested that perhaps national cabinet could also look at why this is happening, what have been the impacts of COVID and what are the impacts of people perhaps not seeking medical treatment during this time. The other important issue is that a lot of people are presenting with mental health issues. This is a real issue. People from all walks of life have had their lives turned upside down. Mental health is also a significant issue.

The health minister announced a range of funding. She said that it will initially create 65 beds in some of Queensland's busiest hospitals—in Ipswich, West Moreton and the greater Brisbane region. There is \$20 million in winter bed funding to open more beds in areas with most demand; \$15 million to permanently expand Hospital in the Home services, which were temporarily established as part of our COVID response; and \$10 million to permanently expand Residential Aged Care Support Services.

What did I do in relation to this issue? I raised it nationally and it is now on the national agenda. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition might want to speak to some of his counterparts in New South Wales and South Australia to see that this is happening in their jurisdictions as well—that is, unprecedented demand. Once again, whilst I am on my feet I will thank all of our frontline health service providers for the mighty job they have done.

(Time expired)

Hospitals, Code Yellow

Mr CRISAFULLI: My question is to the Minister for Health. With Gold Coast University Hospital and Ipswich Hospital declaring code yellow internal emergencies and every single South-East Queensland hospital escalating to level 3 extreme delays overnight, is this level of service the new standard for Queensland Health?

Mrs D'ATH: We have to appreciate the lack of agility of those opposite in that they do not get it at all. They say, 'I'll ask a question and I'll get an answer from the Premier. I'm going to stand up again and I'm going to ask exactly the same question of the health minister and I'm going to see if I can get a different answer'. Strangely enough, the answer is the same. For those on the other side, I did hear quite a few interjections. They carry on and say, 'We shouldn't be blaming the federal government. We shouldn't be talking about other states. We shouldn't be blaming COVID.' This morning the LNP's own shadow spokesperson, the member for Mudgeeraba, said, 'We need to go back and have a look at why these issues are occurring in the first place.'

Mr Bleijie interjected.

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

Mrs D'ATH: In fact, the member actually said, 'We're seeing more acute patients and we are seeing an increase in the acuity of patients because so many elderly patients and people with comorbidities stayed at home during COVID and didn't visit our hospitals because they were too scared of getting COVID.' Those on the opposite side are finally waking up to the fact that COVID has had an impact on the health system, not just in Queensland but across the country. The Leader of the Opposition has also called on us to put extra resources in. We put in an extra \$100 million, and he is complaining about that. There is no end to the fact that all they do is complain.

I heard the interjection earlier about culture and morale. I will tell members what: you do not improve morale by sacking doctors and nurses, that is for sure. You work with the doctors and the nurses and the cleaners and the wards persons and the security guards and everyone who works in our health system to listen to what is happening on the ground to provide the sorts of services needed.

We also heard from those opposite that ramping does not happen in other states. That is not actually accurate. In Western Australia it is a long wait today, with Perth emergency departments still operating well beyond capacity. In Victoria the warm night eased restrictions as staff shortages were blamed for a surge in ambulance demand. In South Australia patients are forced to take taxis to hospital during medical emergencies. Paramedics are at breaking point in New South Wales. Those on the opposite side can keep saying that this is a Queensland problem and they can keep putting their head in the sand. It is a national problem and we hope the Morrison government is putting money—

(Time expired)

Beef 2021

Mr O'ROURKE: My question is of the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier update the House on the success of Beef 2021, including government support, and is the Premier aware of any alternative approaches?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Rockhampton for that very important question because it is about Beef Australia and it is about the commitment that members have to this event. Let me talk about the commitment that our government has to this event. We had a fantastic opening at Beef Australia. Of course, Rockhampton is the beef capital of Australia. I was proud to be back in Rocky. I attended the opening. I wanted to make sure that we showed the government's support for this industry, so I was there. The Deputy Premier was there. The Treasurer was there. The minister for agricultural development was there. The member for Rockhampton was there. The member for Bancroft was there. The member for Maryborough was there. The member for Pumicestone was there at the opening.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Keppel was sick, but she was there the next day. Who attended the opening from the opposition?

Mr Perrett: I did!

Honourable members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Who was there?

Honourable members interjected.

Mr Perrett: I did! I did!

Ms PALASZCZUK: Come in, spinner.

Mr Dick: Up the back!

Mr Perrett: I wasn't sitting in the front row, like you were. Premier, I didn't need to sit in the front row to be noticed.

Ms PALASZCZUK: There we have a member of the LNP for the beef industry in Queensland—one person turns up from the LNP.

Mrs Frecklington: And who jetted out straight afterwards?

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, you have had a good go this morning. You are warned under the standing orders. Member for Gympie, thank you: it is noted.

Honourable members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: What was everyone else on their side doing? What was more important than being at Beef Australia's official opening? Where was the Leader of the Opposition? Where was the shadow Treasurer? Where was the member for Nanango?

An opposition member: I was out talking to real people.

Government members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will take that interjection. Who said that? Shame! Shame! So you are saying that your constituency—

Mr SPEAKER: No, through the chair, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Speaker, I will tell you what is happening. The once mighty National Party has declined in Queensland. That is what has happened, and let me say this—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me say—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, you have 14 seconds remaining.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The once mighty National Party has declined, and let me say this: our government will step in where the National Party has stepped out.

Hospitals, Wait Times

Ms BATES: My question is to the Minister for Health. Patricia from Mudgeeraba has now waited in agonising pain for two months more than clinically recommended for surgery on her broken hips, and I table the documentation.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 15 February 2021, to the Mudgeeraba Electorate Office regarding an individual's wait listing for surgery [\[616\]](#).

Is this the new benchmark Queenslanders can expect from Queensland Health?

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to look at the documents that the member has just tabled, but it was a national cabinet decision to—

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: I hear those on the other side groaning. It is like COVID is an inconvenience for the LNP. Sorry, but over three million people have now died from COVID—three million people. We have seen the numbers that are happening in India. We are seeing bodies being burnt in the streets. We are seeing mass graves, yet those opposite think it is a joke and groan every time you mention COVID like, 'Oh, that boring thing again.' I am sorry, but it is a global health pandemic where people are dying and what we have done in this state has saved lives. It is about time those on the opposite side recognised that, because every other Queenslanders knows that. That is why they voted for us at the last election because they know we kept them safe and those on the opposite side would have put them at risk.

Mr SPEAKER: Sorry, Minister. Can we please have two minutes on the clock. Thank you, officers at the table.

Mrs D'ATH: It was a national cabinet decision to suspend elective surgeries last year during COVID to ensure that we had the capacity if there were surges in COVID cases in our hospitals so we did not end up like India running out of oxygen, we did not end up like the US and we did not end up like the UK.

Mr O'Connor: You've got 17 cases in hospital!

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

Mrs D'ATH: I am going to take that interjection from the member for Bonney. He says we have 17 cases in hospital. The member for Bonney, and I suspect probably the whole LNP, thinks the only impact on the health system is the number of positive cases we have today. That is extraordinary. Let us ignore the thousands of tests that our pathology teams are doing every day and every person who comes in in an ambulance with an upper respiratory condition and gets wheeled through what the member for Mudgeeraba called the COVID alley. Every day our hospitals are on alert in case there is a potential COVID patient that comes in.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Minister, having listened to the question, under standing order 118 I ask that you come back to the question as asked. There were some very particular elements to that question, including a tabled document.

Mrs D'ATH: I was responding to the interjection about the pressures on the health system because it is not just elective surgery, there is pressure on the entire system. It is the Palaszczuk government that put in a record \$250 million to deal with the backlog of elective surgery. That is what we are doing to deal with the backlog of elective surgery.

Ms Bates: Not at the Gold Coast where Patricia has been waiting with two broken hips!

Mrs D'ATH: I will take that interjection from the member for Mudgeeraba. They were not yelling and screaming when people were waiting to just get on the waiting list for surgery. When we are talking about those on the waiting list for surgery, you did not even get on that list under the LNP because it was all about just trying to get an appointment.

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Buderim is warned under the standing orders. The member for Mudgeeraba is also warned under the standing orders. In the famous words of Captain America, I could do this all day.

Beef 2021

Mr WHITING: My question is to the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier update the House on how important supporting events like Beef 2021 is to our regions and is the Premier aware of any alternative views on investment in the regions?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Bancroft for the question. He is chair of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. The member for Bancroft took the time to come to Beef 2021. I thank the member for Bancroft for doing that. It is good to see him getting out and about. For the life of me I still cannot understand why those opposite did not make the effort to go to Rockhampton. It is very disappointing. I know the member for Nanango was there last time.

Mrs Frecklington: I was there for four days, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thought the member for Nanango might be spending some time in Gladstone. A little birdie tells me she wanted the preselection for Flynn. I would support that. As we know very clearly—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, you are under a warning. I appreciate that there is some commentary coming in your direction. The rules are clear. You are going to leave the chamber under standing order 253A for the remainder of question time.

Whereupon the honourable member for Nanango withdrew from the chamber at 10.33 am.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The federal budget comes down tonight. We want to see our fair share from Canberra. We are not seeing enough money coming into regional Queensland from the federal government. For the life of me, why is New South Wales getting \$3 billion in infrastructure? Why is Victoria getting \$3 billion? My understanding is that South Australia is getting \$2.6 billion for an underground road? In total they are getting \$3.2 billion in infrastructure, which is twice as much as Queensland. This is a test of the Morrison government. Is it going to fund regional infrastructure projects for Queensland?

We know very clearly that we are looking for matching funding for the Bundaberg flood levee. We are looking for more money for Emu Swamp Dam. We are looking for matching investment for the Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct. We are looking for \$195 million, matching what we put in, for the pipeline. I know how important that is to the member for Thuringowa. We want to see our fair share.

On the Sunshine Coast, it might help if some of those Sunshine Coast members advocated for the \$20 million in matching funding for the stadium expansion. Where are they? They are silent. It is about time those opposite were not so lazy and actually did some work. On this side we work. On that side all we hear is whinge, whinge, whinge. That is all we hear: whingeing opposition.

(Time expired)

Princess Alexandra Hospital, Elective Surgery

Mr MOLHOEK: My question is to the Minister for Health. The opposition has been told elective surgeries scheduled at the Princess Alexandra Hospital today have just been cancelled due to a shortage of beds. How many surgeries have been cancelled and is a chronic lack of beds the new benchmark for Queensland Health? I apologise in advance to the minister for asking another boring question. There is nothing boring about Queenslanders on waiting lists.

Speakers Ruling, Question Out of Order

Mr SPEAKER: On the basis of the last part to that question, the editorial, I rule the question out of order. There is no opportunity for that commentary to be provided. It is essentially a statement.

Beef 2021; Beef Industry

Ms LAUGA: My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the government's support for Rockhampton's Beef 2021, and is the Deputy Premier aware of any alternative approaches?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Keppel for her question. It was fantastic to join her, the Premier, the Treasurer and so many government MPs at Beef 2021 amongst the record 115,000 people who went along to support and enjoy that fantastic event, the biggest celebration of beef in the world—one of the biggest events able to be held in the world, of course, because of Queensland's strong response to the COVID pandemic.

The Palaszczuk government is doing a lot to support the beef industry. Members heard earlier about our investments in the saleyards, but what I was most impressed with was the Queensland innovations that are transforming the way the beef industry operates here and worldwide, making it more profitable and more sustainable.

Thanks to Queensland agritech, farmers are able to use satellite technology to monitor pasture loads across their properties, to track water levels across their various water sources, and, thanks to Queensland technology Ceres Tag, they are able to monitor each and every animal. Ceres Tag is one of the world's most comprehensive animal monitoring platforms. It is the world's first direct-to-satellite animal information platform. Each ear tag monitors biosecurity, health, welfare, performance and traceability provenance of the supply chain network, including for theft detection. Ceres Tag is on track to be the world's first accredited smart ear tag to international standards thanks to a \$1.5 million

investment from the Palaszczuk government's Advance Queensland Innovation Partnerships program in 2017, already creating jobs here in Queensland. I would like to thank David for talking me through that technology. They are already thinking about new applications, including how they might be able to track and protect vulnerable endangered species like the rhinoceros.

Queensland is home to half of the country's cattle herd, more than 11 million head. Our beef processing industry supports 18,500 jobs. We are pleased to support each and every one of them. I put on the record my thanks to chef Shane Bailey for bravely letting me cook in his kitchen, to Bryce, Cam, to the board, executive and team members of Beef Australia. They did a fantastic job. Also thanks to Mayor Tony Williams, I think probably the first mayor to have gone from being a volunteer at the event to helping open it as the mayor, and our members for Keppel and Rockhampton for their support.

(Time expired)

Princess Alexandra Hospital, Elective Surgery

Mr LAST: My question is to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. The opposition has been told that elective surgery scheduled at the Princess Alexandra Hospital today has just been cancelled due to a shortage of beds. How many surgeries are being cancelled and is a chronic lack of beds the new benchmark for Queensland Health?

Mrs D'ATH: It is good to see that the opposition could get the question right the second time around. We know that recently there was community transmission involving two clusters and that meant the PA had to cease elective surgery at that time, which has led to a backlog. Whenever outbreaks happen, such as in New South Wales right now—there is an unlinked case there—there is disruption to the health system. I explained this last time to those opposite and I will try to explain it to them again. In its latest survey of 132 countries, including Australia, the World Health Organization has shown that over 90 per cent are still seeing disruption to their health services, including to surgeries.

I am very proud of the investment that the Palaszczuk government has made in the Metro South Hospital and Health Service. Since those opposite were last in government we have increased the budget in Metro South by 43.1 per cent, that is, over \$780 million. We have employed 322 extra doctors, 1,009 extra nurses and 257 allied health workers, and outpatient long waits are down by 64.5 per cent. We can compare that to the 925 health workers sacked from Metro South by those opposite when in government.

As I have already outlined this morning—and I will spell it out again to those opposite—this government is investing \$100 million additional funds to increase bed capacity and deal with some of the pressures we are seeing in our health system. There is \$7.2 million to open an additional 26 beds at Ipswich Hospital, \$5.3 million for an additional 13 beds at West Moreton, \$7.1 million for an additional 26 beds—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118(b) on relevance. The question was: how many surgeries have been cancelled at the Princess Alexandra Hospital today?

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not need the assistance of any member. I am hearing the point of order and I will rule accordingly.

Mr BLEIJIE: The second part of the question was: was it as a result of the bed shortages? It is a pretty simple question.

Mrs D'Ath: No, keep going. It was more than that.

A government member: Read the last part.

Mr BLEIJIE: That was it: bed shortages under the Labor government and the surgeries cancelled. That was the question. Do you want me to re-read it?

Mr SPEAKER: For the benefit of the House you may wish to read the last part of the question because my ruling will relate to it. There is no point of order in regards to the relevance that you have mentioned. The minister is responding about the Princess Alexandra Hospital both in terms of its location and where it sits within the health system. As I understand it, the question had a broader connotation regarding the health system. Minister for Health, you have one minute and three seconds remaining.

Mrs D'ATH: As I said, we are investing \$20 million in winter bed funding to open more beds in areas of most demand. The money will go where that demand is. There is \$15 million to permanently expand the Hospital in the Home service, which is about getting people out of hospital and cared for in their home.

If those opposite want bed capacity freed up at the PA Hospital, they may want to pick up the phone and call their mates in Canberra and say, 'What about those people who should have an NDIS package? What about those who should have aged care packages and be in either a nursing or an aged-care facility or be cared for at home?' That means almost 600 beds. That is bigger than many of our metropolitan hospitals. Six hundred beds could be freed up immediately if the Commonwealth provided the capacity and the resources to look after those people, which is their responsibility. I repeat: it is their responsibility. Those opposite have no credibility on this issue. I am very proud of the \$100 million we are putting in to deal with these pressures.

Bundaberg Electorate, Infrastructure

Mr SMITH: My question is of the Treasurer and Minister for Investment. Will the Treasurer update the House on the Palaszczuk government's commitment to supporting vital infrastructure in my electorate of Bundaberg and is the Treasurer aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question and his strong representation for the people of his community. Our Premier and our government fully understand the importance of protecting regional communities. That is why in our budget last year we committed \$42½ million towards the construction of a Bundaberg flood levee. We remember the harrowing images from 2013 and the impact the flood had on the people of Bundaberg. What we need now is for the federal government to match that commitment.

Unfortunately, when it comes to Bundaberg and Queensland the federal LNP tell us that the cupboard is bare. They will only allocate \$1.6 billion to Queensland even though they have delivered \$3 billion to New South Wales, \$3 billion to Victoria and a total package of \$3.2 billion to South Australia. All that money is pouring into the rust bucket states when their populations are pouring into Queensland. As the rust buckets are being lined with gold by the federal coalition, the Leader of the Opposition is cheering on the federal government. The Leader of the Opposition has not said one word. He does not want to listen to this answer; he wants to talk to the backbench. He has not said one word to stand up for Queensland and complain about the blatant rip-off of our state. It is simply a betrayal of Queensland. He is standing around saying nothing and doing nothing while our share of infrastructure funding is ripped away.

The Leader of the Opposition is just like Campbell Newman, who backed in Tony Abbott when he ripped out every single dollar for Cross River Rail. Why would anything change when rust bucket retreads like Campbell Newman and Lawrence Springborg are back at the top of the LNP? Fair dinkum: I know that the second-hand car market is booming but that is too much. Get someone new! It is no wonder that the member for Nanango wants to shoot through. She is desperate to become the member for Flynn. Unfortunately, it looks like she is being beaten by the dynamic member for Callide. She has been outsmarted by him so that he can deliver his renaissance in the federal parliament. There is one thing that those two members have in common: they do not want to stick around for the LNP when the LNP will not stick up for Queensland.

There has never been a starker choice: a state Labor government led by our Premier standing up for Queensland and demanding our fair share or a rust bucket LNP that will cheer on the federal government every step of the way, supporting rust bucket states and not supporting Queensland.

Hospitals, Wait Times

Dr ROBINSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Catherine from the Redlands has told me her father, terminally ill with leukaemia, was forced to wait more than 12 hours at the Redland Hospital to have his cannula replaced. Distressed and in severe pain, Catherine's father died later that week. Where is the government's plan to fix Queensland Health?

Mrs D'ATH: Firstly I say to the member that my condolences go to the family. It is sad when anyone's life is lost. I certainly want to convey that to the family.

In relation to the question about what the Palaszczuk government is doing to address these demands, I have answered that multiple times today. I refer the member back to my answers in relation to the \$100 million in additional investment we are making.

Women, Workforce

Ms RICHARDS: My question is for the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing. Will the minister update the House on how the Palaszczuk government is supporting working women in Queensland and can the minister advise of any alternative approaches?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for Redlands for the question. She knows that when it comes to supporting women, whether that is in the workforce or in the general community, we on this side of the House get it right. We put in place policies to make sure that women can get the services and the support that they need, and since 1995 in Queensland the working women's centres have done exactly that.

Unfortunately, since 1995 the working women's centres have largely had funding only from Labor governments. They have provided excellent vital advice and support services to women. Unfortunately, in spite of the Respect@Work report recommendation 49, the federal government has decided not to fund the working women's centres. That recommendation clearly spells out the need for support for those centres.

There is no alternative approach from that side of the House. We now have the old boys back. The boys are back in town. We have the Leader of the Opposition back in, Lawrence Springborg as possible president, Campbell Newman again—the same people who back in 2012, true to form, cut funding to the working women's centre. We have been funding them ever since. Again true to form, the federal government, which cut the funding in 2016, has not provided any funding whatsoever to vital services that, I might say, largely support women not even in the Queensland system but rather in the federal industrial relations system. It is an approach that we on this side of the House simply cannot tolerate.

We are calling on the federal government to implement recommendation 49, implement funding for working women's centres, do the right thing and not have the same old crowd again. They are not going to get any joy in Queensland. We have them all coming back again. The razor gang is coming back, as the Treasurer said: Campbell Newman, Lawrence Springborg. We hear other names being mentioned: Seeney, Ian Walker, Gary Hardgrave and Tim Mander. I am sorry: the member for Everton is there already, so that will be a great support! The boys are back in town! Working women's centres, watch out! The other approach in relation to funding is just not there whatsoever.

I am proud to say that over the years that the working women's centre has operated, delivering a great service for Queensland, we have spent \$6 million supporting it. We have now signed an agreement of \$800,000 over three years to continue our support. All we ask is that the federal government does the right thing when it comes to women's issues, and implements recommendation 49 and matches Queensland's funding. Can those on the other side get anything right when it comes to supporting women throughout Australia?

Infrastructure, Funding

Mr JANETZKI: My question is to the Treasurer. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia ranks Queensland sixth for its focus on infrastructure. Spending by New South Wales is at \$84 billion, Victoria is at \$69 billion and Queensland is in sixth place at \$35 billion. That is nearly half the amount per head of population. Will the Treasurer commit to fast-tracking infrastructure spending to leverage spending from Canberra's infrastructure budget?

Mr DICK: Mr Speaker, where do you start? Let me start with the last part of the question. We are happy to match the \$1.6 billion over 10 years for Queensland with the \$100 billion our government will spend for Queensland over the same period. I do not know whether the member for Toowoomba South was listening during the budget last year—it would appear not—but we locked in \$56 billion over four years. This is the single biggest infrastructure spend in this state for a decade. You could not have a clearer contrast between two governments and their infrastructure spend.

I do not know whether the member for Toowoomba South was set up again with that question, on the day when their federal coalition colleagues believe that South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales are twice as good as Queensland because they are getting twice as much as us. It is simply not good enough. Member for Toowoomba South, your complaint is not with the state Labor government—

Mr SPEAKER: Through the chair.

Mr DICK: Your complaint is not with the Palaszczuk Labor government.

Mr SPEAKER: Through the chair.

Mr DICK: It is with your colleagues in Canberra who have once again short-changed, duded and ripped off Queensland. What has the Leader of the Opposition said? Absolutely nothing. He sent out the B team—or the D team or the G team; I could not remember. The member for Kawana and the member for Toowoomba South spoke yesterday. He would not put his head up. He does not have to put his head up; he just needs to ring his coalition colleagues in Queensland—I know Andrew Laming is a bit busy at the moment doing empathy training—and get the fair share for Queensland that we deserve.

The simple reason the federal coalition—Scott Morrison and his colleagues—will not put money into Queensland is that they take us for granted. They have all those seats in the House of Representatives. They have all those lazy LNP MPs on fat margins who do not deliver anything for our state. They do not care. The people who care are the people of Queensland. All of my colleagues in the government and I will keep the pressure on the federal government every single day until the date of the federal election, because that is the only way our state can send a message to Canberra. We deserve our fair share. We deserve funding for hospitals. We deserve \$50 million for a public hospital in Queensland, just as Geelong got theirs. We will continue to chase this rancid government in Canberra to win our fair share.

(Time expired)

Federal Budget, Infrastructure

Mr HEALY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Will the minister update the House on how tonight's federal budget will impact the Palaszczuk government's record infrastructure investment in Queensland?

Mr BAILEY: I am very glad to answer the question from the member for Cairns, who has been very effective as a fierce advocate for better roads in Far North Queensland. We see one treatment for Queensland and a different treatment for New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. South Australia has fewer people than South-East Queensland; it has fewer people than regional Queensland. It is getting six times the funding per head of population than this state. I did a quick calculation and, per head of population, South Australia gets \$1,800 in this federal budget per person and Queensland gets just over \$300 per person. That is the kind of differential there is. This is in a context where not a single dollar went to Cross River Rail from the federal government. We are carrying that entire load ourselves in Queensland. Thank God we have, because it is setting us up for the Olympics and setting us up for growth.

Some 88 per cent of people are coming to this state in net migration. Are we prepared? We have been investing in infrastructure; we have been getting on with it. That is why our jobless rate is coming down. That is why this state is going ahead. We handled the health crisis, we protected our economy and we see the jobless rate plunge. That is what is going on.

We see that we are going back to the bad old days in Canberra where Queensland gets a raw deal and southern states who sell assets get the preferential deal. That is what is going on. It is discrimination against the Sunshine State once again. We landed a few good packages during the COVID crisis with the federal government, but here they are back to the bad old days.

What do the federal LNP MPs do? Has anyone worked it out? They have delivered nothing in this budget. This government has done the running on it. The second Bruce Highway and the inland freight route have been us. They have delivered nothing for their communities.

One person who has delivered for his community is the member for Cairns. The member for Barron River, the member for Cook and indeed you, Mr Speaker, have been advocating for their area. We put down \$60 million on the Cairns Western Arterial because we know that it needs the investment. We have lobbied relentlessly. I know that those members have as well. We finally received the result from Canberra that we wanted, with a commitment to the Cairns Western Arterial. We will be looking at the profiles tonight to make sure it is not on the never-never—that it is not outside of the forward estimates. We want to see that money get out on the Cairns Western Arterial. We will look at the detail. I cannot commend enough the members for Cairns, Barron River and Cook and you, Mr Speaker, for their advocacy for roads. Let us see what is in the detail tonight.

Age of Criminal Responsibility

Mr BERKMAN: My question is to the Attorney-General. The government has repeatedly said that raising the age of criminal responsibility is a matter for the Meeting of Attorneys-General, which recently confirmed that this is no longer on their agenda and is instead an issue for the states and territories.

Given this, will the government finally commit to raising the age from 10 to at least 14 years old in line with the ACT, international jurisdictions and the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. In fact, the issue is still on the agenda of the Meeting of Attorneys-General and was discussed at our last meeting. There was a working group formed. They are still going through a final report. It is still on the agenda. As the Premier has said, at this stage Queensland has no plans to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility. We will, of course, work with our colleagues in other jurisdictions. Once that working group has finalised a report, we will take a look at it.

Housing, Federal Funding

Ms BOYD: My question is to the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts. Will the minister update the House on whether Queensland is getting our fair share of housing support from the federal government?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question and for her ongoing advocacy for support for housing in Queensland. I know that she stands up every day in her community to support good housing outcomes for people.

As we have heard many times today, with more and more people rushing to our state to call themselves Queenslanders we know that the housing market has reacted to that and we are seeing pressures. The Palaszczuk government has been doing the heavy lifting in terms of supporting housing options in Queensland. As members have heard many times before, not only do we have the \$1.6 million Housing Construction Jobs Program that will deliver more than 5,500 social and affordable homes in Queensland—construction has commenced on more than 2,200 of those—but last year we started the Works For Tradies program which will deliver a further 215 homes across the state, and construction will commence on those before the end of this year. We have delivered a range of measures to support market growth, including first home buyers grants, regional home building boost grants and the Build-to-Rent Pilot Project. We have a growth areas team, led by the Deputy Premier, taking on land supply challenges facing South-East Queensland. We have our Partnering for Growth program which has seen some 1,121 properties supported in the social and affordable housing sector. All of these programs are evidence of the work we as a government have been doing to ensure we are responding to the housing need in Queensland.

When we look to the federal government, which clearly and rightfully has a role to play in this area, we see a constant vacating of this space. The Morrison government has turned its back on the National Rental Affordability Scheme. I mentioned that earlier this morning. That is an incredibly important scheme. In fact, when the member for Everton was the housing minister he talked about how the closing of that scheme was a blow for Queensland. If only he had done something about it at that time. Unfortunately, we are not hearing anything from them to support a return to that scheme or an alternative to that scheme. By mid-2025 there will be no affordable housing under NRAS. That is a huge problem for Queensland that will leave tenants of over 10,000 Queensland properties to find alternative homes or pay more rent. We have seen the federal government turn its back on remote Indigenous housing. All of these areas where the federal government is vacating the space are putting pressure on the housing market.

Tonight we need the federal government to step up, get back into the space and support people in housing, particularly in Queensland as we continue to grow and see pressures on the market. The Palaszczuk government will continue to play its part. We are doing the heavy lifting in this area, but we need the federal government to step up.

(Time expired)

Spinal Muscular Atrophy, Newborn Screening

Mrs GERBER: My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister listen to the 14,000 people who have signed the petition and include screening for spinal muscular atrophy as part of the newborn bloodspot screening program in Queensland so Queensland babies can have a healthy start to life?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. As the member may be aware, this is not the normal type of testing that is done within the health system. My department is looking at this issue and seeing what we can do. There are a lot of different tests that could possibly be done on newborns. We have to look at what we can do and base our decision on the best advice as to what we should be doing for newborns. As I have said publicly, we are looking into whether this is something we can bring in.

Renewable Energy, Jobs

Mr POWER: My question is to Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement. Will the minister update the House on how governments are supporting job-creating renewable projects in Queensland?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for Logan for his interest in job-creating energy projects. Normally Queenslanders would have to wait until 7.30 tonight—federal budget night—to receive the disappointment of not getting our fair share of job-creating projects, but not this year. The Morrison government minister for Northern Australia, charged with the task of generating investment in North Queensland, brought the disappointment to Queensland early. He is usually seen flying around Queensland, banging on about nuclear power plants—the ‘Pittodactyl’ as we have come to know him. He delivered the let-down for Queenslanders early.

In the rarest of moves, he overruled the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility board. He used his veto powers in an attempt to kill off another renewable energy project for North Queensland, vetoing 250 construction jobs for Queensland. The proponents and investors were at the table with the Commonwealth for three years. On the eve of construction starting, he swooped in with a new policy—a policy for which no public statement had been made for three years, no policy document was available to make their requirements clear and not even a passing mention in the Commonwealth parliament. It is sneaky at worst and clumsy at best.

It is another spectacular failure of the Morrison government with regard to the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility. No wonder it has become known as the ‘no actual infrastructure fund’. It has invested less than five cents in the dollar for Queenslanders. That is disgraceful. That is what the LNP think of regional Queensland.

The Morrison government minister responsible was caught out on Sky News not even knowing how battery storage works. That is just embarrassing. What chance has Australia got when the LNP does not understand how energy works? We have the ‘Callideosaurus’ still calling renewables a fantasy. He is Morrison’s frontrunner for—

Mr SPEAKER: The member will use members’ correct titles in this House.

Mr de BRENNI: We have the member for Burleigh panicking about an ice age bought on by renewables. The only ice age they should worry about is the age of internal combustion engines.

In contrast, we have seen federal Labor outline a clear plan to help more Australians own electric vehicles. Will the Morrison budget deliver a plan for EVs or renewables? No-one is holding their breath. The contrast on energy is clear. This morning I joined the member for Logan—a proud electric vehicle owner—at the three new EV chargers installed here at Queensland parliament. Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank you and your office for your support. In contrast to Canberra, no backbench revolt was required to call on the parliament to do that because in Queensland we have political leadership on energy and a modern energy system and a pipeline of investment in renewables. With the federal budget to be handed down tonight, it is time for the Morrison government to stop driving with the handbrake on, do their homework on renewables, stop killing off jobs and give Queenslanders their fair share.

North Queensland, Insurance Premiums

Ms LEAHY: My question is to the Deputy Premier. In light of the Commonwealth government’s commitment for a \$10 billion reinsurance pool, what mitigation action is the state government taking to reduce the eye-watering insurance premiums in the state’s north?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Warrego for her question. We are certainly eager to see more detail of the Morrison government’s announcement in that regard. It is welcome acknowledgement of the challenges that insurance costs are bringing to residents, business owners and industry throughout Queensland, but particularly in the north of the state. We will look at their plan and what we can do to assist. We certainly acknowledge it is a challenging issue. It is brought about by the increasing number of disasters that we are seeing.

As well as addressing the insurance cost elements, we also need to better address recovery and resilience. That is why it is disappointing that we are yet to see funding from the Commonwealth government towards the Bundaberg flood levee that the Treasurer talked about earlier. It is those kinds of projects that can stop disasters in the first place, thereby avoiding the ongoing impacts on insurance

costs. We will continue to focus on and to advocate for important projects like those. Where the Commonwealth sees an opportunity to intervene in the market and support households and business owners we will support and assist it.

Townsville, Water Security

Mr HARPER: My question is of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water. Will the minister update the House on how the Queensland government is delivering water security for Townsville? Is the minister aware of any other support being provided?

Mr BUTCHER: I thank the honourable member for the question. I know that he is focused on delivering water infrastructure for the Townsville region including the Haughton pipeline. I know that he is particularly focused on delivering that project as a key component of water security and for the long-term water supply for the Townsville region.

I am always happy to update the House on how the Palaszczuk government is building the water infrastructure that our state needs to grow, particularly in the Townsville region, and how we are fighting for our fair share from the federal government. Today I am pleased to say that the first stage of the Townsville Haughton pipeline has reached practical completion, with only minor works remaining. This project, fully funded to the tune of \$215 million by the Palaszczuk government, is an important step towards securing that critical water supply for Townsville. As everyone knows, we had to flush out the federal government for the second stage after they broke their promise to Queensland. We are going it alone—something we are happy to do because our government is stepping up to deliver for the people of Townsville, like we always do.

The federal LNP member for Herbert promised Townsville that \$195 million would stay in Townsville. That is funding for water infrastructure, not for pork-barrelling. I know that the member for Thuringowa has been asking this question over and over again. He has another project that is ready to roll. It is one of his favourite projects—Riverway Drive—and a water pipeline will go under it. Of course he has had no response at all from the federal government or from the local federal member because we all know that the federal government is all talk and no action.

While the federal LNP government wander around Queensland breaking promises and the Queensland LNP simply have no idea what is going on, it is the Palaszczuk government that is providing crucial support when it is needed, particularly in Townsville. It is the state government that is doing all of the work—we are taking on all of the risk—and it commits to the long-term future of our regional communities. That commitment to deliver water security is why Queenslanders can rely on this Palaszczuk Labor government. All that we ask for in return is our fair share from this federal government. I say to the LNP and to the federal member for Herbert, just as the member for Townsville has said recently in a social media post: show us the money!

Infrastructure, Investment

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia has ranked Queensland sixth overall for infrastructure focus. Given the housing affordability crisis gripping Queensland, has the minister sought a briefing about the effect of Labor's lack of infrastructure investment and the resulting pressure on new house prices?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Maroochydore for repeating the question that was provided to the Treasurer earlier. It gives me another opportunity to emphasise how the Palaszczuk government is delivering a record infrastructure spend for Queensland—the highest spend in more than a decade: \$56 billion over the next four years—delivering much needed infrastructure right across this state, as well as creating jobs both in delivery and ongoing economic growth supporting future jobs. Our state continues to be let down by the Morrison government, determined to spend their infrastructure dollars, their stimulus dollars, everywhere but Queensland—South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria. Queensland gets just \$1.6 billion of that pie.

We know how important infrastructure is to a state as big and diverse as Queensland. That is why we are investing those record levels of capital in our budget—all part of our economic recovery program. We could do more if the Morrison government were not so determined to spend all of their money delivering infrastructure projects in other states. We need those projects here, particularly as we battle with the massive number of people fleeing Sydney and Melbourne and other states to come here to Queensland, putting pressure on land supply, putting pressure on dwelling supply and putting pressure on housing affordability and housing prices.

In order to open up new land, in order to make new land available, we need to deliver trunk infrastructure. We need to deliver roads, public transport, water, sewerage, electricity—all of those services. We need additional support to do that. There is a flow of people from other states to Queensland. The Morrison government should respond to that by delivering to Queenslanders their fair share of funding.

The Morrison government is fond of referring to these funds as Commonwealth taxpayer funds. They are not Commonwealth taxpayer funds; they are Queensland taxpayer funds. They are funds Queenslanders contribute to. Queenslanders expect the Morrison government to return their fair share to Queensland so that we can build the infrastructure that Queenslanders need and so that we can create jobs now as well as deliver the infrastructure that will provide housing and jobs well into the future. I again thank the member for Maroochydore for the question.

Mr SPEAKER: The period for question time has expired.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Warrick, Mr F



Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.16 am): I rise to make a ministerial statement. We are just learning of the sad passing of Frank Warrick. Frank was a welcome guest in thousands of Queensland homes for many decades as a newsreader and as a journalist. His love for this state was on show in a documentary series called *The World Around Us*, particularly the part he loved best—Queensland. The sympathies of the House go to Frank's wife, Lyn, and their family.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 26 November 2020 (see p. 90).

Second Reading



Hon. G GRACE (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (11.17 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill before the House today is about looking after and providing support to Queensland's first responders who put their lives at risk to protect and help us every day. This bill provides Queensland's first responders with an important safeguard under the workers compensation scheme if they are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, as a result of the work they do for all of us here in Queensland.

First responders play an incredibly important role in protecting and serving our Queensland community. We have all seen our first responders facing some of Australia's biggest challenges in recent times—from catastrophic bushfires to floods, horrific and tragic domestic violence incidents and our ongoing battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each and every day our first responders are exposed to traumatic incidents that most of us could never imagine. Attending these types of incidents, whether it be one catastrophic event or a gradual build up over many years, takes a toll on our first responders' mental health. This bill follows extensive work that started in 2018 to improve the workers compensation experience for our first responders.

In 2018 the Queensland government engaged Phoenix Australia, Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, to independently review and benchmark workers compensation claims practices for first responders making workers compensation claims for psychological injuries. The review found many commendable practices. However, the review suggested improvements in the areas of communication, education, health literacy, claims management, and rehabilitation and return to work. I understand that many of these improvements have now been implemented.

At a similar time Beyond Blue undertook a national survey of approximately 20,000 police and emergency services workers to identify issues affecting their mental health and wellbeing. Their report *Answering the call* was publicly released in November 2018. The survey identified higher rates of psychological distress, mental health conditions and suicidal thinking among police officers and emergency services workers, with one in three employees experiencing high or very high levels of

psychological distress. Of those surveyed, 10 per cent had probable PTSD, including significant levels of distress or impairment to normal functioning, and a further five per cent had experienced suicidal thoughts in the last 12 months. These rates are between two and three times the rate seen in the average Australian population.

Separately, the Senate Education and Employment References Committee report *The people behind 000: Mental health of our first responders* was finalised in February 2019. There was some very chilling evidence provided to the inquiry. I would like to read a quote from one of the submitters, an Australian police officer, who said—

What other job requires you to be in a constant state of hyper vigilance and alertness yet at the same time be a counsellor, a social worker, a lawyer, or a prison warden. What other profession authorizes you to take a person's liberty, or potentially use deadly force, but then mandates that you attempt to save the person's life that has just tried to kill you? What job causes you to wonder whether you will come home to your loved ones after you bid them farewell each and every day as you head off to work?

This truly highlights the important work that first responders do in our community to keep us all safe while at the same time putting their own lives on the line. Both national reports found that the workers compensation process may be stressful and negatively impact the recovery of first responders.

In 2019, as the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations, I established a tripartite stakeholder reference group to provide advice to government and prepare an action plan on ways to improve the workers compensation experience for first responders following the outcomes of the Phoenix review as well as the Beyond Blue and Senate committee findings. The stakeholder reference group included key unions, including: the Queensland Police Union, Police Commissioned Officers' Union, Together Queensland, United Workers Union and United Firefighters Union. This is in addition to relevant government agencies, including: Queensland Ambulance Services, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Queensland Police Service and WorkCover Queensland, Queensland's main workers compensation insurer. The stakeholder reference group was later expanded to include psychiatrist Dr Andrew Khoo from the scheme's Medical Assessment Tribunal.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organisations and their representatives on the working group for their contribution to this important body of work. We want to get this right. The group found that, despite a range of employer and insurer initiatives, there are still a number of barriers and gaps that impact a first responder's experience. Areas of concern included: stigma, workplace culture, claims determination process and return-to-work opportunities. The action plan developed by the working group sets out practical initiatives that can be implemented by employers, insurers and government to address some of the identified concerns.

There are five key areas that initiatives fall into, including: increasing access to, and awareness of, workers compensation and entitlements; reducing barriers to workers compensation scheme entry such as these presumptive laws; providing immediate access to support—that was a really important part—increasing collaboration between stakeholders; clearly defining expectations, such as partnering with treating practitioners to make case conferencing a minimum standard for trauma related claims; embedding best practice claims management for psychological injuries in the scheme and increasing the capability of rehabilitation and return-to-work coordinators; and improving rehabilitation and return-to-work opportunities such as expanding the number of agencies committed to the government Recover at Work program to improve return-to-work opportunities. I think it is important that we provide a big variety of opportunities in returning to work.

Importantly, the group's work also told us two very important things about first responders and our workers compensation scheme: firstly, our first responders—the brave Queenslanders who put their own lives at risk to provide assistance in time critical, often life-threatening situations—are at a high risk of developing PTSD due to the nature of their work duties; secondly, our first responders found the workers compensation process often daunting and adversarial. PTSD is already compensable in Queensland under the workers compensation scheme, but when our first responders sustain a trauma related psychological injury they can find the legislative test for injury a significant barrier to making a workers compensation claim.

If a first responder has been diagnosed with PTSD, it is more than likely it will be from a traumatic task they undertake for Queenslanders; for example, treating those badly injured or killed in high-speed car accidents, recovering bodies in the wake of natural disasters, or investigating or responding to horrific crimes such as domestic and family violence, child abuse and other forms of serious violence. Because many first responders are unable to identify one particular event—some of them do—which led to their injury due to a cumulative exposure to trauma, many claims can be delayed due to the investigation process regarding the cause of the injury. This does not meet community expectations.

We must do more to support Queensland's first responders. I am proud to say that this bill aims to overcome this barrier, further reduce the stigma surrounding psychological injuries, and send a clear message to first responders that they are supported by Queensland's workers compensation scheme.

The bill does this by introducing presumptive workers compensation laws for our first responders and eligible employees of first responder departments diagnosed with PTSD. Importantly, presumptive laws do not create new or change existing workers compensation entitlements but instead provide a different, easier pathway for certain claims to be decided. Under presumptive laws, first responders and eligible employees who are seriously struggling to cope with PTSD will not have to go through a lengthy claims determination and investigation process. It will be presumed that their PTSD is caused by their work. This is a great leap forward.

The bill covers first responders on the front line who respond to time critical, often life-threatening incidents, including: police officers; ambulance officers and paramedics; firefighters, including members of volunteer and rural fire brigades; members of the State Emergency Service; corrective services officers; authorised officers within Child Safety, Youth Justice staff members—I note that the member for Caloundra, who was previously a corrective services officer, is in the House at the moment—and doctors and nurses who work in emergency and trauma care, acute care, critical care and high-dependency care. It also includes workers who perform identical roles in the private sector such as paramedics working in the not-for-profit sector.

The bill also covers others who work in first responder departments if they perform a role which exposes them to repeated or extreme details of traumatic incidents through attending the scene of a traumatic incident, such as a person whose employment involves collecting human remains in the wake of a natural disaster or who experience traumatic incidents as they happen to other people; for example, fire communications officers or emergency medical dispatchers responding to and providing information in response to emergencies, or corrective services officers observing disturbing footage of violent crimes by offenders via CCTV. It does include a broad range of first responders in those particular areas. The bill also covers officers who are required to investigate, review or assess traumatic incidents that have happened to other persons; for example, workers who are exposed to graphic details as part of investigating complaints of child sexual abuse or serious sexual assault. Often these can be highly traumatic. It includes all of those instances.

Due to the unique way that PTSD presents in first responders, particularly where there has been cumulative trauma, the bill requires diagnosis of PTSD by a psychiatrist. This ensures first responders get the right diagnosis early to maximise treatment and rehabilitation outcomes. I cannot emphasise enough how important this part of the bill is. To ensure first responders are not delayed in making a claim and are able to access support as soon as possible, the insurer will be responsible for arranging and funding a specialists' diagnosis if a first responder does not have this when they lodge their claim. The insurance company will ensure they get the service quickly.

The bill also makes it clear that nothing prevents an insurer from accepting a PTSD claim based on a diagnosis by another doctor, safeguarding quick access to compensation as well. Under the bill, this presumption can be rebutted if, for example, there is evidence the first responder's injury did not arise out of, or in the course of, their employment or if the first responder's employment is not a significant contributing factor. That is where you are not in that direct first responder's category.

Importantly, reasonable management action undertaken in a reasonable way cannot be used to rebut the presumption. This is because a diagnosis of PTSD requires exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence to self or others, or repeated and extreme exposure to the aversive details of traumatic incidents, all of which are not possible to arise from reasonable management action undertaken in a reasonable way. This means the existence of work performance issues cannot be used as a rebuttal. Unfortunately, these issues can be the result of a worker struggling to work with a debilitating and insidious condition, like PTSD.

Finally, the bill does not amend or affect any existing review rights in the act. This means if an injured worker or employer is unhappy with a decision made by an insurer, they are able to lodge an application for review with the Workers' Compensation Regulator, with subsequent appeal rights with the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and further appeal rights to the Industrial Court.

This is a very important bill, as we know. We introduced it in the last parliament and we have brought it back as part of our election commitment. I would like to thank the Education, Employment and Training Committee and its chair, the member for Redlands. The committee did an excellent job in its report which was published on 12 February 2021 regarding the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020.

I would also like to thank those who made submissions to the committee about the bill and those who appeared as witnesses as part of the committee's inquiry and shared their lived experiences. The committee made seven recommendations, and I thank them for that because I think they looked at this holistically. I will go through some of the recommendations that we are accepting and those that we believe may be actually more detrimental. It is a difficult area. I think the committee did a great job and we have landed in an excellent place when it comes to the amendments we are proposing in response to some of the recommendations.

The first recommendation expressly recommends that the bill be passed, and I thank the committee for that. The government supports this recommendation of course. The second recommendation of the committee is to amend the scope of the bill to include other workers. This includes: occupations such as coalmine workers performing certain statutory roles or mines rescue team members; employees who as part of their regular duties are required to attend and secure a site to provide safe access for other first responders; or employees of a local government whose duties correspond to other roles such as that of an ambulance officer or a fire service officer.

The government supports clarifying the inclusion of mines rescue team members and local government workers performing like-for-like duties as first responders. These workers were always intended to be captured by the bill, and I will seek to introduce amendments during consideration in detail of the bill to provide this certainty. I think the committee thought that it was not clear-cut. It was always our intention and we accept those recommendations. If this provides clarity, then we are happy to move those amendments.

Further expansion of the scope of the bill under recommendation 2 is, however, not supported. The bill has been carefully considered using an evidence based approach, and I went through all of the committees and all of the groups that have looked at this. This approach was based on workers compensation claim data, published literature, the threshold requirements for deeming diseases, as well as the guidance and outcomes from recent reviews into first responder mental health. We have put all of those together.

The scope of the bill, we submit, is balanced, providing presumptive coverage to those workers most at risk of cumulative exposure to trauma and developing PTSD while ensuring the ongoing financial sustainability of the scheme. In relation to the financial sustainability of our workers compensation scheme here in Queensland, I am proud to say that it is one of the most financially stable schemes anywhere in Australia, and it is doing remarkably well even during hard times like COVID-19. However, it is recognised there may be some occupations, such as those put forward by submitters to the committee, that should be considered further given the nature of their duties.

The government also supports the committee's third recommendation for a review to be conducted 12 months after commencement. We have always embedded this in the original bill. We think 12 months is a good opportunity to see how it is working. The Office of Industrial Relations has committed to leading a 12-month review of this new claims pathway through a stakeholder consultation process 12 months after the bill's commencement. This will allow scheme experience to develop and assist an evaluation of whether the occupations or eligible employees are adequate, could be expanded or need to be contracted. I think they can look at all the areas when it comes to this experience after 12 months.

What we do not want to do is take away from first responders as workers. They face incredible hardships and challenges. We do not want to take away from the fact that this presumptive legislation is primarily for those workers—those who do this kind of work as part of their regular work, day in, day out. It is anticipated that this review will be informed by workers compensation claims data, jurisdictional updates from other schemes with presumptive laws in place, reviewing submissions, academic literature and empirical based evidence to identify any other at-risk cohorts of workers or relevant volunteers for potential inclusion. Of course, there will also be extensive consultation with insurers, employers and unions about the lived experiences of workers at risk of exposure to work related trauma.

The committee's fourth recommendation is to consider investigating the inclusion of psychological injuries other than PTSD as part of the 12-month review. We have seen that many of our first responders suffer with a range of mental health issues caused by their work. I thank the committee for acknowledging this. However, at this time, expanding the new pathway to include all psychological injuries would not align with the criteria for presumptive laws set out by Safe Work Australia and would put significant pressure on the sustainability of our workers compensation scheme. While the government does not support this recommendation, I want to assure our first responders that all work related psychological injuries can be claimed in Queensland and support is available if you need it. It just will not be part of the presumptive laws.

In addition to the bill, to support first responders and eligible workers who have a trauma related psychological injury that is not PTSD, WorkCover Queensland has recently adopted an administrative policy with certain scheme employers to expedite the claims process, maximise return to work opportunities, limit re-telling of workers' experiences and ensure best practice is followed by all parties to the claim. We have already put in safeguards regarding this.

The committee's fifth recommendation is to consider the appropriateness of regulating the diagnostic and statistical manual for diagnosing PTSD. The government does not support considering this recommendation as part of the 12-month review. The DSM-5 is internationally accepted as a diagnostic tool for mental health injuries. Linking to this diagnostic tool ensures consistency and rigour for making sure our first responders get the right diagnosis and treatment for their injury.

The committee's sixth recommendation is to consider legislating further examples of extreme or repeated traumatic incidents faced by our first responders. The bill currently sets out a number of examples to describe the difficult and harrowing roles of our first responders. The government does not support legislating further examples. I know that it is a good intention, but unfortunately this may actually erode the beneficial approach of this new pathway by unintentionally narrowing the scope of workers and volunteers who should be covered. I think what we have done in setting the examples is a balanced approach. Often if too many are added, it is as if you have to fit one of those categories. This is beneficial legislation. We will not be proceeding with that recommendation at this point in time, even though it was recommended for all the right reasons, because we do not want any unintended consequences of denying presumptive PTSD for some of these workers. It does get complicated when balancing all of this.

The committee's final recommendation is to include the lists of occupations and employers in the act rather than the regulation. I acknowledge the committee's concerns about providing certainty and surety for our first responders. However, the government does not support this recommendation. The choice to regulate in the manner set out in the bill was made to ensure our first responders continue to be able to access the new claims pathway.

We cannot have vulnerable workers at risk of PTSD waiting months or years to be able to access this pathway if there are role changes, government or departmental changes or where there is new and emerging research that identifies workers at risk of this debilitating injury. Prescribing the lists of occupations and employers in the regulation will ensure we can take action. Any changes to these lists would be significant, which means all stakeholders would be protected through the safeguards of our consultation, government and parliamentary processes if there are any future changes. We think we have the balance right in being able to act quickly if need be. It is important to note that no worker is disadvantaged under this proposal. I think it is really important to note that: no worker is disadvantaged under this proposal. Queensland's scheme supports all workers with work related psychological injuries, including the range of potential mental health injuries which may occur in the aftermath of a traumatic incident.

The government considers many of the issues raised in the committee's recommendations are better considered through a more holistic review process like the next five-year review of the scheme, planned for 2023. This will allow experience of the proposed amendments to grow and ensure the appropriateness and success of the amendments can be evaluated in the broader legislative framework. I am pleased to table the government's response to the committee's report.

Tabled paper: Education, Employment and Training Committee: Report No. 3, 57th Parliament—Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, government response [\[617\]](#).


Queensland's workers compensation scheme is the best performing scheme in Australia. Despite the many beneficial amendments implemented under the Palaszczuk government to improve the scheme and the benefits to workers, the average premium rate of \$1.20 per \$100 of wages has not changed and has remained the lowest of any state or territory. At the same time we have increased the discount employers receive if they pay on time. We have shared the benefits of a very healthy workers compensation scheme in this state. We have improved benefits for workers and we have obviously kept insurance premiums and benefits for employers. I am proud that our workers compensation scheme provides support and care for injured workers while delivering the lowest premiums in the country. We restored those rights taken away by those opposite. We reinstated open common-law rights to workers injured under the scheme. The scheme already provides no-fault statutory compensation benefits for workers who sustain a work related injury, whether it be a physical or a psychological injury, and this bill builds upon these protections for our first responders suffering from PTSD.

We have implemented all of the cuts that were made by those opposite to the workers compensation scheme in relation to injured workers and at the same time we are also delivering one of the best schemes in Australia. The bill before the House today is part of the broader policy position to ensure a worker suffering from psychological injury is supported. Members may also remember amendments made in 2019 to better support workers suffering from a work related psychological injury. They included: amending the definition of a psychological injury to bring it in line with the work relatedness test for physical injuries; and requiring insurers to provide access to appropriate services during the claim determination period, ensuring early intervention and minimising the impact, severity and duration of psychological injuries, and I understand this is working very well.

In addition, the government administers the Workers' Psychological Support Service, which is an independent, confidential and free service for Queensland workers suffering a work related psychological injury. This service connects the worker with an experienced social worker who provides support and guidance and connects them with the community services they need. This might include housing assistance, counselling, financial advice or other services.

I am very proud of this bill. It builds upon the Palaszczuk government's record of supporting injured workers and recognises the enormous contribution first responders play in our community and assists them to access support when they need it most. Let's provide a safety net for those workers who put their lives at risk every day to protect us and the Queensland community. With this bill the Palaszczuk government is doing exactly that. I very proudly commend the bill to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Before I give the member for Kawana the call, I remind the House that the following members are under a warning. I am advised they are the members for Chatsworth, Mermaid Beach, Toowoomba South, Maryborough, Logan, Kawana, Bonney, Buderim and Mudgeeraba; they are under a warning until 1 pm.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (11.47 am): I rise to speak to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. The minister just said that Queensland has the best workers compensation scheme in Australia. The only reason the minister can make that claim is because she inherited the best workers compensation scheme in Australia. It is no secret that between 2012 and 2015 the LNP government made substantial reforms to the workers compensation scheme in Australia. What we inherited under the workers compensation scheme in 2012 was a premium of \$1.47 per \$100 of wages. The businesses—small businesses and large businesses—were paying \$1.47 per \$100 of wages for the workers compensation scheme.

When the minister inherited the workers compensation scheme from me and the LNP government workers compensation premiums were the lowest in the country at \$1.20. In the three years that the LNP were in government workers compensation premiums went from \$1.47 to \$1.20. If we look at the last six years under this minister, have they had the same downgrade? The minister inherited premiums at \$1.20 and she claims today she has the best in the country at \$1.20. The best in the country is when premiums are reduced for small businesses; she cannot claim the same as what she inherited, admittedly at a reduced rate. She cannot thank herself for that because she inherited the lowest premium rates in the country.

When the LNP government was elected in 2012, we had the fourth highest premium in the country. There was a disincentive for businesses to invest in Queensland, because we had one of the highest workers compensation premiums per \$100 of wages. By the end of 2015, we had the lowest in the country. It did not happen by accident; it happened because of our reforms. Every time this industrial relations minister jumps up and tries to claim credit for having the lowest premiums in the country, I have to remind her that she inherited the lowest premiums in the country. The minister cannot claim credit for doing something that already existed. Premiums were the lowest in the country. Businesses thanked us for it. The CCIQ knows it. Everyone but this minister knows the truth. We know that this minister cannot handle the truth that she inherited the lowest premium rates in the country.

Ms Grace: I can handle the truth.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, the minister cannot handle the truth.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Member for Kawana and minister, please put your comments through the chair. I will ask you to stop quarrelling across the chamber.

Mr BLEIJIE: They are the facts. Whether or not the minister likes it, she inherited the best workers compensation scheme in Australia, the envy of every other state, because of the work of the LNP government from 2012 to 2015. I laugh and chuckle every time the minister claims credit for having the best workers compensation scheme in Australia. In three years we managed to turn one of the worst workers compensation schemes in Australia into the very best and into the envy of every other

state and territory. In the six years of this minister there has been no decrease in the premium rate for small business. She still claims credit and still says that we have the best, because she inherited the best scheme in Australia.

If the minister wanted to show success in the workers compensation scheme, the premium should be less than \$1.20. It should continue on its downward trajectory. The benefit of a workers compensation premium that falls is small businesses investing back into their businesses. They invest into the Queensland economy. This government thinks a still-high tax of \$1.20 per \$100 of wages is a good thing. It is not; it should go down. This minister will not see it go down because it has not in the six years she has been in the role. I am very happy that she keeps acknowledging the great work that she inherited from the former LNP government and that she now claims credit for.

It was the LNP government that first introduced presumptive legislation for firefighters in the state. It was not the Labor Party. The Labor government followed us. We have dealt with presumptive legislation in the past. I was the shadow minister for emergency services. In opposition the LNP introduced presumptive legislation for firefighters and rural fires in the state. Of course, the Labor Party did everything it could to oppose it until we introduced it. Then it tried to make out it was its idea—just like it is making out that all the good things happening in the workers compensation scheme, the envy of every other state, are because of its brilliant ideas. We know that that is just not the case.

I give a shout-out to our first responder firefighters who fight on the front line—bushfires, house fires, urban fires. I give a shout-out to our rural fire services, doing a tremendous job. I give a shout-out to our first responder police men and women who are fighting on the front line because of this government's lack of investment in police resources. We have a youth crime crisis across the country. I give a shout-out to our police first responders, because they are doing it tough under a government that does not support them or enact the laws necessary for them to do what they need to do on the front line. We have seen a spike in crime, particularly youth crime, around the country. I give a shout-out to our first responder ambulance officers, doing their best with another Labor health crisis in terms of ambulance ramping across the state at the moment. It is not the ambulance officers' fault; it is this government's fault. The policies of the Labor government have led to ambulance ramping. I back our ambulance officers every day of the week, because the state Labor government does not.

Mr KELLY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance.

Mr BLEIJIE: On the point of order, an ambulance officer is a defined first responder in the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I have heard that. Member for Greenslopes, I do believe the member is staying within the context of the bill. I am happy to allow the member some latitude.

Mr BLEIJIE: Police officers, firefighters and ambulance officers are defined in the bill as first responders. This legislation deals exactly with their role. We support this legislation today because the frontline workers have it particularly tough—when there is a youth crime crisis, when ambulance officers wait six hours at hospitals and when patients blame the ambulance officer. It is not the ambulance officers; it is the government.

Mr KELLY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Simply stating terms from the bill does not make it relevant to the long title of the bill. To simply state those terms and then make other political points by referencing those does not make this relevant to the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, I will remind you of the long title of the bill and ask that you come back to that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The definition talks about other first responders in the bill including corrective services officers, Youth Justice staff, fire services officers, doctors or nurses employed.

Before I get to the provisions of the bill, I will first deal with the committee's recommendations. In terms of a lot of the committee's recommendations I had concerns that, although the definition of 'first responder' in the bill is already very broad, the committee recommendations would have made it substantially broader. I acknowledge the minister's comments that she agrees with some elements of committee recommendation No. 2 but not broadening the definition. One of the big risks we run with these types of bills, if we have a sufficiently broad definition, is that they belittle real first responders working on the front line. It is a reality that not everyone is a first responder. Not everyone in their job or occupation experiences the same trauma. Not everyone experiences trauma the same.

The point of this bill is to provide presumptive legislation. I might add that, even if people are excluded from the broad definition in this bill, it does not prevent them from seeking workers compensation in any event. They just have to go a different route. In this legislation, if someone on the

front line has a PTSD injury, as defined in the legislation and defined elsewhere by medics, it is presumed to be caused by their work. It is then on the state to disprove that argument. The bill provides safeguards with respect to psychologists and so forth. It is not a blanket, one-size-fits-all approach. I was concerned at some of the committee's recommendations that it would be too broad. If we look at submissions to the inquiry—the ETU wanted electricians included—we see that it could have become very broad.

I have concerns with the regulation-making power. The minister says that it is better to do it by regulation because they can do it more quickly. Based on the fact that we have no legislation before the House, I would have thought we could get legislation moving pretty swiftly through the House. There is nothing on the agenda. I do not accept the minister's argument that it has to be done by regulation. If the minister has the power to delegate a broader definition pursuant to the regulation, what we are debating today could become too broad in the future.

I acknowledge Minister Grace's comments with respect to the committee report in that she has not accepted a lot of the recommendations. The minister has accepted mine rescue workers and defined it further. It is not only the mine rescue workers and the local government employees; their employment status and what they do in their work has to be like-for-like, for instance, with an ambulance officer or a firefighter. That is good because it alleviates a lot of my concern with respect to having such a broad definition. In the future we do not want to get into the argument and argy-bargy over who is in and who is out, because if it so broad then everyone will just say, 'Well, I am in.'

Again, it does not prevent them from seeking out the workers compensation scheme. The scheme is open to PTSD, but this way they go through a defined pathway—an easier pathway. I do not for a minute pretend to know what it is like to be working on the front line in one of these employment occupations. All the time police officers go to a job not knowing whether they are going to come home. If they approach someone, they do not know if they have a knife or a gun or what the situation is. Ambulance officers are confronted with tragedies on the highways with the high road toll we have at the moment. I do not pretend for a minute to understand the trauma that they go through. Firefighters leave their families at all hours of the day and night not knowing what is in a house that is burning down and whether or not they are going to make it home.

The LNP and I have always supported good legislation that protects and acknowledges the people in our Queensland community who go the extra mile. Some people say that it is the job and that is what they get paid for and they know what they are signing up to. It is, but no-one can understand or appreciate the job until they have done it. As I said, I do not pretend for a minute to understand it. As a legislator in this House, all I can do is give support and support legislative provisions that will back our frontline workers. That is why it is important that this House does not accept a broad definition that means everybody is in, because it belittles the actual frontline workers. Let us look at some of the occupations outlined in submissions to the committee. If you were a police officer or a firefighter or an ambulance officer you would think, 'Goodness gracious! You want to be included in this presumptive legislation? Do you know what I do on a daily basis?' I thank the minister for her comments with respect to that, and on that basis the LNP will support those amendments. We of course support the bill. As I said, we have supported presumptive legislation in the past.

PTSD affects many people right around Queensland. It has been noted in the parliament today that mental health issues are on the rise and suicides are on the rise not only in Queensland but around Australia. This House should look at legislation that supports people in these jobs, and that is why we will back our frontline workers to the hilt in this parliament with this presumptive legislation. There are, as I said, safeguards with respect to the legislation. With people putting claims in there are some safeguards, despite the fact that the bill has a reverse onus of proof. Usually the LNP does not support the reverse onus of proof, but on this occasion when there is certain presumptive legislation that backs our frontline workers we have no issue with it.

Our workers compensation scheme, as I said at the start, is the envy of every other state and territory, and that is because the LNP backs our workers in this state. We introduced legislation that led to the workers compensation premium for small businesses reducing.

I am finishing where I started because I have seen walk into the chamber a couple more union officials who missed the earlier part of my speech. I want to finish my contribution where I started to remind the ministers that, when they were sworn in to office, workers compensation premiums were at \$1.20—the lowest in the country and the envy of every other state and territory. Six years later they are still \$1.20. They went down from \$1.47 to \$1.20 under the LNP government. They have not moved a cent under the Labor Party because it is satisfied that a high tax is a good tax. Never get in the way of the Labor Party and a high tax for the people. It is satisfied with that.

We were never satisfied with \$1.47 per \$100 of wages. That is why we did what we did to bring it down—and we did—and it would have continued to go down. The problem with the Labor Party is that it is only a matter of time. For years now the minister has talked about the healthy accounts of the workers compensation scheme. It is only a matter of time before the Labor Party has to get its hands on the healthy surplus in the workers compensation scheme, and it will see that just as it did with public servants' superannuation. It will see that as a pot of money and then the premiums will increase, and who does that affect? Not the government, because it does not pay the premiums.

Ms Grace: Yes, we do. That's how much you know.

Mr BLEIJIE: Small business operators pay—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Minister, you will cease your interjections please.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the minister who says that the government pays the premiums. I would like to know which small business in my electorate the government waltzes into and says, 'We'll pay your workers compensation premiums.' I would like to know every private employer that the minister walks up to and says, 'We'll pay the premiums.' It does not happen.

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker Hart, I rise to a point of order on relevance. This is really getting ridiculous now—relevance.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am talking about premiums in workers compensation which the minister talked about.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Member for Kawana, you have the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The reality is that those opposite do not want to hear it because they refuse to acknowledge that premiums went down and they refuse to acknowledge that business operators pay premiums in Queensland. When we add increases or put pressure on a workers compensation scheme, the ones who ultimately pay are small business operators.

In the case of the amendment that the minister has agreed to, which includes elements of recommendation 2 for mine safety workers, there will be a cost increase to the workers compensation premium in the private sector for mine operators. The explanatory notes that were handed out just before the debate started talked about minimal costings. I would like the minister in her response to the debate—when we finish the debate—to explain how the department can get minimal costings based on the numbers. We want the facts and figures during consideration in detail or the minister's response in terms of what research the department has done or the minister's office has done with respect to—

Ms Grace: Most claims are accepted.

Mr BLEIJIE:—PTSD claims through the system based on the new definition given the inclusion of mineworkers in the definition. We want some statistics on that and how it can be negligible when there will be an impact. I take the interjection when the minister said that most claims are accepted anyway. Let us see the statistics and figures, because the minister did not set that out in her explanatory speech on the bill.

As I said at the start, we will back the legislation. I was going to express concern with the committee report and have done so, but the minister has not accepted all of the committee's recommendations. She has accepted some of them. I accept what the minister has said with respect to adding to the definition some local government employees and mine safety workers—that is, the ones who actually see the trauma and the mine rescue workers who are actually involved in the rescues and are like for like with firefighters or ambulance officers. I think that alleviates a lot of the concerns the LNP had with respect to such a broad definition, so we will be supporting this. However, we always want to know where the claims are at with workers compensation and WorkCover Queensland. I would be keen to know the statistics with respect to what the minister relies on in that the explanatory notes to the amendments say that there will be negligible impact on the workers compensation scheme or premiums, because if it does impact premiums—the minister may have been briefed that it may not impact premiums today or tomorrow, but the minister may have been briefed that it may impact premiums in 12 months or two years—then businesses across Queensland ought to know that.

Ms Grace: We're going to review it in 12 months.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the minister that it will be reviewed in 12 months, but I do not accept that it is just okay to keep reviewing things in 12 months. Surely the minister or the department would have an analysis of the impact of amendments that are moved by the House. It is not just, 'Let's move the amendments and we'll see what happens in 12 months.' Surely the department or Treasury—


Mr McDonald interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. It was not said, but it was a hand gesture indicating that the government is flying blind with respect to this. That is concerning for businesses across Queensland. They need certainty and clarity around certain things and government decisions. If it is going to impact, there will have been figures calculated by the department, so we ask the minister to be up-front with the people of Queensland and up-front with members of parliament before we vote on this and come clean with those figures and table the analysis the department has set out.

On that note, we will support the legislation and support the minister's amendment because it is not as broad a definition as I was concerned about given the committee's recommendation. I thank the committee for the work that it did and again pay tribute to our first responders, particularly those on the absolute front line every day—police, fire, emergency service workers, firefighters and ambulance officers—for the tremendous work they do in extraordinarily difficult circumstances particularly when a Labor government is causing a huge youth crime crisis, with crime spiking out of control, and ambulances ramping, as we heard this morning, and people waiting six hours in an ambulance out the front of a hospital. We back any legislation that will support our ambulance officers, firefighters and police officers because we know the government does not back them through other legislation or by means which reduce ambulance ramping.

Day in, day out we hear excuses from the government. They say it is everyone else's fault. They blame, blame, blame. If they want to know who to blame for ambulance ramping and for the crime crisis they need only look in the mirror.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Member for Maryborough, you are under a warning. Make a note of that, please.

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (12.10 pm): I support the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. Listening to the contribution from the member for Kawana was like listening to a broken record. When one looks at the track record of those opposite in IR when they were in government there is not a lot to cheer about. In contrast, our Palaszczuk government will always back our frontline workers.

As the minister said, we have a very healthy and robust scheme in place. This legislation builds on the additional work that we did around establishing the Workers' Psychological Support Service to provide additional support to workers who have experienced a work related psychological injury. It also builds on the amendment that we made to the definition of injury for psychiatric and psychological disorders and providing early access to those services for psychologically injured workers while they are waiting for their claim to be determined. I think that is a really important change that was made to allow quick access to much needed services.

As the chair of the committee, I thank the former committee for the work that they undertook prior to the bill lapsing. I thank our secretariat and my committee for their work, particularly the deputy chair, the member for Southern Downs, who I hope is doing well while he is on leave. I thank the minister for her consideration of our committee's report and the amendments that are proposed in consideration in detail and any other considerations that come forward in the future review process. I think the minister's response to our recommendations was extraordinarily detailed and provided great clarity. There is no worker who is disadvantaged by the scheme and the process.

As was mentioned by the member for Kawana, I cannot imagine the trauma that our frontline responders go through. One only needs to read the newspapers to see some of the most horrific domestic and family violence incidents being responded to. As I was reflecting on this bill and the sorts of issues that police officers face, I remembered the police officer who knocked on my door one Sunday afternoon to tell me that my dad had passed away. He had attended the scene of the accident. There could be nothing more traumatic than having to do that. I cannot imagine what it is like for somebody to have to undertake that job on a regular basis.

Our first responders in all industries do an incredible job keeping Queenslanders safe. They often are exposed to traumatic situations where their lives are on the line and where they are responsible for the lives of other people. This undoubtedly has a mental health impact and although laws exist for our first responders to seek compensation for the permanent stress caused, we know that this process can often be challenging and frequently puts workers through further unnecessary stress.

Our committee incorporated the submissions made on the initial bill. We had submitters from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union, the United Workers Union, the United Firefighters Union, the CFMMEU, the Queensland Council

of Unions, the Australian Medical Association, Together Queensland, the Queensland Law Society, the Electrical Trades Union, the Australian Workers' Union, Associate Professor Linda Crowley-Cyr from the School of Law and Justice at the University of Southern Queensland, the Services Union and Mr Brian Ranse. All submitters were offered the opportunity to make supplementary submissions. We received further submissions from the United Firefighters Union and the AMAQ. I thank the witnesses who attended our public hearing for the stories that they shared, particularly Professor Chris Perry from the AMAQ who told us of the experiences of doctors and nurses on the front line in the emergency department. They deal with extraordinarily traumatic incidents. I also acknowledge Nate Tosh from the United Firefighters Union for the stories that he shared on the day. I thank the department for the briefing that they gave to our committee.

This legislation responds to the Beyond Blue 2018 report, *Answering the call: national survey—Beyond Blue's national mental health and wellbeing study of police and emergency services*. It revealed what we all know and that is that there are substantially higher rates of psychological distress and mental health conditions, suicidal thinking and planning among our first responders compared to the general population and that claim rates related to mental health conditions or psychological injuries for first responders is 10 times higher than that of the average Australian workforce.

This legislation also responds to the 2019 report of the Commonwealth Senate inquiry into first responders' health, *The people behind 000: mental health of our first responders*, which recognised the need for early intervention and mental health support, and made recommendations across the areas of prevalence reporting and management of first responder psychological injuries, workers compensation, return to work and post-retirement support.

I know having spoken with local police and paramedics in my community that they are fully supportive of these legislative amendments. As I said, we cannot even begin to imagine the situations they respond to. By changing the legislative test for the mental injury to be presumptive will alleviate some of the stress caused to our first responders who struggle with PTSD. It will make the process of receiving compensation for damages experienced less stressful for our police officers, paramedics, child protection officers, corrective services officers, firefighters—including, importantly, our volunteer and rural fire brigades that also do an incredible job—State Emergency Service members, doctors and nurses—particularly in emergency and trauma care and acute care—authorised officers within Child Safety and Youth Justice staff—the minister touched on some of the experiences of staff in that department and some of the circumstances they attend—and eligible employees who work for departments that perform those roles and expose them to repeated or extreme details of traumatic incidents. The amendment will also support coalmine first responders who do an incredible job in extremely complex situations.

During the committee's public hearing it was interesting to note the contribution from Mr Luke Murphy from the Queensland Law Society. He was discussing the current legislative process. He said—


I have had to say to applicants that I believe they are entitled to it—

compensation—

but it is just not commercially viable for them to run it. Fees of over \$100,000 will be incurred in having to run a review application, because they will run for a number of weeks. You are never going to get that back. You cannot recover that even if you are successful in the industrial commission, because the costs you recover are restricted to Magistrates Court scale E.

We are seeing a growing number of jurisdictions adopt similar reforms, such as Tasmania and the Northern Territory, and it is good to see that Queensland is following in their footsteps. The reforms will go a long way towards continuing to fight and tackle PTSD mental health problems in Queensland. It is through legislation such as this that we will help remove the stigma around mental health issues and create an environment where sufferers of mental health problems like PTSD are more comfortable about seeking the support they need. It is about backing our frontline workers and helping them to get the help they need.

This past year throughout COVID has been incredibly tough for so many first responders. The challenges have always been there. Through strong reforms such as this the Palaszczuk Labor government is putting the lives and needs of our first responders first and foremost, making sure that these workers and their families are given access to the financial support and compensation they may need. The Palaszczuk government will always put workers and their health first. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (12.19 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. Firstly I thank my fellow committee members and the committee staff, as well as all those who participated in the committee

process and those who made submissions. As highlighted by previous speakers, this bill is identical to a bill tabled in the 56th Parliament. The Education, Employment and Training Committee accepted the 14 submissions received by the former committee and subsequently received two more submissions that were also accepted by the Education, Employment and Training Committee.

Our first responders certainly face a harrowing task in responding to emergency situations. Time after time those individuals face potentially traumatic circumstances. They may have to comfort an individual as their life fades away following a vehicle accident. They may witness what will be one of the most evil events in our state's history, when someone commits an act of pure horror against another. If we look at just a brief history of South-East Queensland, from recent years many of my constituents will never forget the death of Constable Damian Leeding, a great officer from the Coomera Police Station, and his execution-style murder in the line of duty; the 11 individuals who died in the Logan house fire; the death of Hannah Clarke and her children; and more recently the death of Kelly Wilkinson, to name but a few. While it is harrowing for us to see those events on TV and that can be traumatic, we are not the first responders who deal with such events firsthand. No words can ever describe the emotional trauma and stress those first responders feel on seeing lives broken into pieces.

Therefore, we should be forever grateful to the people who work for our Police Service, the Queensland Ambulance Service, the volunteer rural fire brigades and the local fire and emergency services. They all do an absolutely fantastic job in the electorate of Theodore, on the northern Gold Coast and throughout Queensland. Sometimes we make comment and judge them for what happens. For instance, sometimes we may say that the police were not able to respond quickly enough. However, our police do one hell of a job. They do a tough job in serving the community.

As I said, they witness horrors that certainly take an emotional toll on them. In the Beyond Blue report of 2018, *Answering the call*, a national survey found that mental health conditions or psychological distress among first responders was 10 times higher than that of the average Australian worker. The Commonwealth Senate inquiry into first responders' health, *The people behind 000: mental health of our first responders*, recognised the need for early intervention in mental health support and made recommendations across certain areas to deal with the strain on those individuals.

The bill provides for an alternative claims pathway for first responders and eligible employees who have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. The presumption would be that the injury was work related and the onus of proof would be on the employer to prove that it was not work related. While the majority of submitters certainly supported the bill, some concerns were raised by the Queensland Law Society which expressed significant reservations about the broad scope of the presumptive legislation, highlighting the reverse onus of proof. The society also raised a concern about the viability of the WorkCover scheme and the potential for opening the floodgates to claims. The society suggested that going forward it would be better to have a pilot program to test the impact of the legislation.

The committee made seven recommendations and I will highlight recommendation 2. The committee recommended the bill be amended to include the coalmining sector, open-cut mines and explosive risk zones. Certainly it would be harrowing to be a first responder at a mine disaster. The committee recommended that first responders who work outside the Ambulance Service but who recover human bodies also be included.

In recommendation 3 the committee recommended that a planned review of the presumptive legislation be conducted 12 months after commencement, when we have a good understanding of how the legislation is proceeding. The Queensland Law Society referred to the increase in compensation claims when this legislation was introduced in British Columbia, Canada. The society highlighted their concerns that those costs will be passed on through providers. Unfortunately, a lot of small businesses would end up bearing the brunt of that. Certainly that is not good for employment going forward as it will put more pressure on small businesses and providers.

As the member for Kawana highlighted, under the LNP government Queensland had the lowest rates when it comes to WorkCover costs to business at \$1.20, which is something that we can be very proud of. To this day it amazes me that the Labor Party has not started to dip their hands into that pocket to steal a bit of money and recycle it into consolidated revenue, which they are very good at doing when it comes to super schemes. Given time that will be another revenue stream for the Queensland Labor Party and they will certainly find other streams.

I am very supportive of this legislation. I understand that there are situations where traumatic stress builds up over time. Going forward, this needs to be done to best protect our emergency services workers.



Mr O'ROURKE (Rockhampton—ALP) (12.26 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. There are several objectives to the bill. Importantly, the bill proposes to introduce presumptive workers compensation legislation for first responders and other eligible employees who have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Some of the professions that are eligible include police officers; paramedics; child protection officers; corrective services officers; firefighters including volunteers and rural fire brigade workers; State Emergency Service members; doctors and nurses in certain areas such as emergency and trauma care; local government and private sector workers performing the same roles, such as paramedics working in the not-for-profit sector or in mine rescue teams; and eligible employees who work for departments and perform roles that expose them to repeated or extreme details of traumatic events, such as fire communications officers and emergency medical dispatchers who respond to and provide information in emergencies.

Our first responders do an absolutely amazing job and I want to thank them for the services that they provide for Queenslanders. Their jobs are extremely difficult and they should be proud of what they achieve each and every day. This legislation is about supporting our first responders.

The bill will provide an alternative claims pathway for first responders with PTSD that presumes they have a work-related injury unless it is proved that the injury was not caused by work. The aim is to promote early claims acceptance. PTSD can develop in people who have been through a traumatic event that threatened their life or safety or that of others around them. It could be a car accident or another serious incident such as an assault. Those who have served in war or been involved in disasters such as bushfires and floods can experience feelings of intense fear, helplessness or horror.

Our first responders have a high risk of PTSD injury compared to other workers. Studies have shown that some of our first responders have found it very difficult to claim workers compensation for PTSD injuries, resulting in poor mental health outcomes.

There were 14 submissions received, from organisations like the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Queensland Branch, Australian Medical Association Queensland and a number of unions representing their membership. We also had a public hearing and departmental briefing on 16 December.

I think each and every one of us in this chamber would know a first responder who has or had PTSD and the difficulties they have experienced in getting medical support through WorkCover. I know a gentleman by the name of John who was a first responder for many years and who attended some horrific motor vehicle crashes over the years. It has left him so very unwell, with almost nightly nightmares—other than the days he self-medicates with alcohol.

This bill is about supporting our first responders and acknowledging that they have some of the most challenging of jobs. I thank them for the job that they do on behalf of our community. I would also like to thank the other members of the committee, committee secretary Rob Hansen and staff. I commend the bill to the House.



Mr DAMELTO (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (12.31 pm): I rise to give my contribution on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. Our first responders across Queensland do an amazing job—a job that people in this House, other than a handful, would likely never get an opportunity to do. It is hard to fathom what it would be like to be a frontline worker, with constantly daunting thoughts of not knowing what they will be confronted with as they respond to everything from bushfires, house fires and car accidents to situations involving crime. The introduction of this bill into the House will give not only those working in those extreme conditions but also their family members peace of mind that they will be looked after when they suffer a mental health injury. Every one of those people who gets up early in the morning or late at night to respond to an emergency as a frontline worker carries not only the burden of having to do that work and what they will see when they get there but also the burden of not knowing how their family would be supported if they were no longer able to do that role. As PTSD has been brought to the fore in many conversations these days, whether it is in the Australian Defence Force or now as we are speaking about our frontline workers in Queensland, the fact of the matter is that it is real and it is something that affects many workers.

As someone who sits on the Education, Employment and Training Committee, I was proud to be part of the committee process as this bill came before us. I would like to give a shout-out to our committee members. The member for Southern Downs has taken some leave to sort out some of his own mental health issues and the member for Theodore has stepped into his position. I acknowledge those people, the member for Redlands as our chair, and the deputy chair of our committee for the

work they have done to support us as we have gone through this process. Some recommendations were made by the committee. I note that the government has accepted some of those and there have been some great amendments foreshadowed.


An issue that the KAP and I had with the bill was to do with the broadness of the definition of 'frontline worker'. It is good to see that the amendments the minister foreshadowed this morning are more prescriptive in terms of who those people are. It is good to see that first responder mine site workers have been included. My background is in mining construction. The horrific accidents that can happen on a mine site need to be acknowledged, as does the work of the frontline workers in emergency response teams that help those affected people. The work they do is imperative.

Some 14 submissions came through during the committee process. Every one of the entities—from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Queensland Branch through to the United Workers Union and even The Services Union—made submissions that were supportive of the bill, apart from the Law Society. The Law Society has spoken out against the presumptive part of the legislation. I can understand where it is coming from, from a legal point of view, with this submission, but I think the presumptive part of this legislation acknowledges the hard work and the type of work that our frontline workers do in Queensland. I cannot imagine what it would be like to be called out at one o'clock in the morning to a roadside incident or the effects that must have.

Another aspect of the bill that I like is that a person does not have to pinpoint an exact incident that caused their PTSD. That is important, because reliving some of those memories can be quite detrimental as well. It also points to the realisation that PTSD sometimes does not come from a single incident but can be cumulative. Going to roadside incident after roadside incident, attending multiple fires or busting through 100 doors to arrest the bad guys—it is hard to pick the defining moment or the straw that eventually broke the camel's back. The acknowledgement that that incident has happened, that mental health injury has occurred and that there will be support for those people will make it a lot easier to put on the uniform, put on the badge or jump in the truck each morning to go out and respond to some of these more horrific incidences.

The KAP will support this bill as it goes through the House. There are a couple of things that we want to be assured of. We want to ensure there are the right supports in the regions for people who are dealing with mental illnesses and PTSD. I know that frontline workers usually have access to these services, but in certain places where the services are lacking there would have to be some travel involved in order for those people to get the right treatment for their mental illness or injury.

If we are going to be pushing this legislation through the House—with the support of both sides of the House, I understand that this will go through—we have to make sure we have the supports out there. It is great to say that these people will be accepted by the workers compensation scheme if they put their hand up and say, 'Yes, I have received one of these injuries,' but we need to ensure they have the support out there not only to get the help they need but also to be treated locally. Once again, I acknowledge that the KAP will support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (12.38 pm): I rise to support the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. In doing so, I recognise that at the core of this legislative reform is respect for first responders and health workers and respect for the contribution they make to our community.

I have spoken many times in this House already about the great pride I have in the health and frontline workers that serve this state—indeed, the pride that our community has in them. For me locally, that includes the great Prince Charles Hospital, an icon in our community, as well as the many workers from the RBWH who, while they may work in the minister's electorate, call Stafford home. It is also the brilliant men and women who work out of the Chermside QFES station and Chermside Ambulance Station, which are co-located as part of the larger Prince Charles Hospital footprint, and of course our local police—those at not only the Stafford station across the road from my electorate office but also the many north side regions that cover our community. I speak to them regularly to thank them in person for their work, and I thank them again in the House today. I am very proud that as they concentrate on serving our community, including taking the daily risk of being exposed to pretty horrific scenes, we are doing our bit to have their backs.

In this bill the government is making it easier for workers to access fair workers compensation support when they suffer PTSD. I was pleased to meet with my YMCA youth member for this year who is a young paramedic student. I was pleased to be able to tell him as he starts his career—while we hope he never has to experience the trauma we are talking about in this debate—that in 10, 20 or 30 years time we will still have in place a system that looks after him and his colleagues.

I think Queenslanders can recognise two key tenets of this reform. They are: firstly, the work our emergency workers do exposes them, often on numerous occasions, to extreme and confronting scenes; and, secondly, when a worker or retired worker is seeking workers compensation for PTSD and psychological damage it is likely to be at the very time that they are most vulnerable. This bill tries to remove or at least limit the risk of retraumatising workers, especially at that very sensitive time.

I thank the minister for noting in her contribution that this is not the start nor finish of this issue. Mental health is a complex and challenging area and the Queensland workers compensation scheme tries to take a holistic approach, including administrative options, to try to assist workers going through that process and limit further trauma for those right across the spectrum of mental health diagnoses.

Specifically, in 2019 the government passed amendments to Queensland's workers compensation laws that require insurers to take all reasonable steps to provide claimants with psychological injuries reasonable treatment and support services while their claim is being determined—a really important step. This includes paying for counselling, support and medical treatment. I am pleased Queensland is ahead of the curve in this regard. Further, since 2018, the Queensland government has funded the Workers' Psychological Support Service which connects workers who have a work related psychological injury with existing community and social support services, including emergency accommodation and housing support, family and domestic violence services, grief and loss support, financial counselling and social inclusion programs. Workers and their families can access this free, confidential service at any time.

As the minister pointed out, this is not a standalone legislative reform. It builds on the strong record of this government in providing Australia's best workers compensation scheme. It is a system that is absolutely committed to looking after Queenslanders injured through their work. It does so by providing a financially viable scheme that is set up to protect workers well into the future.


Under the Newman government we saw an axe taken to our workers compensation scheme. I was surprised to hear—I should not be surprised—that the member for Kawana had the opportunity to speak about the work of frontline workers and the significant psychological damage their public service brought but instead he wanted to look them in the eye and talk about premiums. He wants to tell those paramedics, fireies, police, nurses and doctors that they got it wrong—that the Newman years were actually the best they have seen. Whether it is sacking nurses or removing paramedics' rights to fair workers compensation, I can tell members of the House that they have not forgotten.

In fact, the Newman years were so damaging in the workers compensation space that, from memory, the LNP's head of their policy committee resigned in disgust. Their committee process, dominated by LNP members, provided a more fair and reasonable report that was absolutely ignored by the LNP. That is the arrogance of those times. In contrast, whether back then or now, Labor works with stakeholders, the legal sector and people engaged in workers compensation to deliver a fair and balanced system—a system, as I said, that protects workers, particularly when they need it most, and provides financial certainty well into the future.

I thank the minister and the government for the amendments that the minister has flagged. We heard pretty telling evidence during the committee hearing about roles across industries that may not be called paramedics or first responders but that perform that service. For example, I point specifically to the amendments in terms of open-cut examiners, explosive risk zone controllers and employees who perform regular duties in local government. It is a like-for-like amendment that recognises the real work those Queenslanders do and their exposure to the risk that that work brings with it.

I thank the many stakeholders who made submissions on this legislative reform to both the current committee and the committee in the previous parliament. It was genuine engagement and provided real life examples of what this bill seeks to achieve. I thank those who participated in our hearing. It was a very good discussion and it gave us a good insight. I am glad that we can address some of the issues in the amendments. I thank the chair of the committee who led a good process, including making sure the voices of stakeholders were heard. I also thank the deputy chair and other members who engaged in a pretty genuine process. I thank the secretariat for all their work for both our committee and the former committee.

I am very proud that the government is continuing to build on its strong protection of workers, whether it is through industrial relations or the workers compensation scheme. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.45 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I do not propose to stand here today and recount the horrific incidents I have been exposed to in my former life as a police officer.

There are several former police officers, paramedics and nurses in this place who, during the course of their careers, were no doubt exposed to significant trauma. I have seen firsthand the effects of trauma on our emergency service workers. From domestic and family violence to road accidents, suspicious deaths and other incidents, almost every emergency services worker has been exposed to horrific incidents and trauma as a part of their duties.

The LNP will not be opposing this bill. However, I can attest from personal experience that managing trauma, life-threatening incidents and the myriad duties that our first responders attend to is not easy. Certainly communication, education, health literacy, claims management, rehabilitation and return to work are integral to both supporting first responders who are exposed to trauma and life-threatening incidents and managing their return to work.

In recent years we have come a long way in terms of the way we deal with post-traumatic stress and exposure to trauma and major incidents. I recall when I first started in the Police Service that if you attended something like that after your shift finished you went down to the local hotel and you had a few beers with the troops. That is how you dealt with it. There were no counselling services. There were no support mechanisms in place. There certainly was not anything like the workers compensation and rehabilitation we are talking about here. You just got on with it. Unfortunately, as a consequence we saw a lot of our first responders suffer terribly from the effects of post-traumatic stress.

It is a fact that until people have been exposed to the incidents that the brave men and women who attend and deal with them every day are exposed to they will not understand the effect they have on those workers. For a lot of these workers it may not be today or tomorrow that those effects are seen or felt, it may be several years down the track. People can talk to any first responder and they will always point to the one incident that got through the chinks in the armour—the one incident that struck home and had a lasting impact on them.

Whilst we must show support for our emergency services workers, especially when they need it most, it is important to note the age-old adage of 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'. As the Australian Medical Association Queensland said in its submission to the committee, I want to draw specific attention to the plight of emergency services workers in regional Queensland. As the AMAQ said, 'Doctors working in rural and remote areas may be prone to developing PTSD due to being overworked and under-resourced,' but, unfortunately, that is not limited to doctors.

In addition to ensuring access to workers compensation, good government should be about ensuring we prevent the suffering wherever possible. In my electorate we have a hospital with a termite infestation and we have ambulance staff risking their own lives to respond to accidents due to substandard road conditions. In cities like Townsville and Cairns, on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast and here in Greater Brisbane, we have police officers responding to stolen vehicles being driven dangerously by juvenile offenders. As we have already seen, this can and does result in fatal incidents that, without doubt, have an impact on police officers, paramedics, Fire and Emergency Services workers and others.

I note that this bill introduces presumptive workers compensation laws for first responders diagnosed with PTSD. I certainly want to lend my support to calls for first responders to lodge their claims as early as possible and to access existing early intervention treatment. For that reason, I call on the minister to ensure all of our emergency services personnel have access to the resources and support services they need regardless of where they work in this state.

In many parts of regional and rural Queensland, our emergency services workers, when they first identify and put their hand up to seek assistance, are desperate for the support they need to deal with this trauma. Being a first responder can be both the most rewarding and challenging career imaginable. We owe a debt of gratitude to our first responders. We certainly owe it to all of those personnel to give them the protection and support they need.

I note the comments from my colleague the member for Kawana that this bill continues the work implemented by the former LNP government. As the shadow minister for police, corrective services and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, I too want to personally thank all of our first responders for the job they do each and every day in keeping Queenslanders safe and protecting our communities.

I also note the amendments moved by the minister to include coalmine workers. Who could forget the horrific incident that occurred at the Grosvenor mine just over 12 months ago when five miners were severely injured in a mine explosion and what those rescuers faced when they went underground to rescue their mates. Of course it is only appropriate that this legislation be extended to coalmine workers in Queensland and to those workers within the meaning of the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999. I commend the bill to the House.



Mr McCALLUM (Bundamba—ALP) (12.52 pm): I rise in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The Palaszczuk government continues to back Queensland workers as part of our ongoing economic and employment recovery from the COVID pandemic. Central to these efforts are our first responders—frontline Queensland workers who each and every day are exposed to incidents the likes of which most of us could never imagine. Attending these incidents can often take a toll on the mental health and wellbeing of our first responders. It can cost them their jobs, their families and sometimes tragically their own lives.

Today—on the eve of International Nurses Day—we are making it easier for Queensland first responders who develop post-traumatic stress disorder to access support and care under the state's workers compensation scheme. We are acknowledging the essential work performed by these men and women and the impact the ongoing exposure to trauma can have on them and their families. We are backing our police like those at Goodna; our ambulance officers and paramedics like those at Redbank; our firefighters like those at Bundamba and Ripley; and our child safety workers, correctional officers, emergency nurses and medical practitioners at Ipswich and right throughout Queensland. Emergency dispatchers and other people in first responder agencies whose work involves experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to traumatic events are also covered by this legislation.

These important amendments to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 include presumptive workers compensation laws for first responders who are diagnosed with PTSD. That means first responders and other prescribed workers and volunteers will not have to prove that their injury is work related. By reversing the onus of proof, a specific injury like PTSD is deemed to be work related unless there is evidence to the contrary. If the presumption does not apply, workers are still entitled to lodge a claim for a work related injury under the scheme's existing measures. Similar laws have been previously passed in Tasmania and the Northern Territory, and today Queensland joins them, providing important support for the long-term mental health, rehabilitation and safe return to work of first responders with PTSD.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Education, Employment and Training Committee in examining the bill. I also acknowledge the minister's comments that the government supports including local government and mines rescue team members and undertaking a 12-month review into the scope and operation of this bill. Mines rescue team members and local government workers in like-for-like emergency responder roles such as firefighters and paramedics were intended to be included by the bill. The amendments that will be moved during consideration in detail will clarify their inclusion. The 12-month review into the bill will also allow the scheme to develop so we can examine the effectiveness of these laws and the appropriateness of including other occupations that meet the definitions of first responder or eligible employee. I am happy about that and I support that 12-month review.

These changes follow an independent review of our workers compensation process and national reviews into first responder mental health by Beyond Blue, which does amazing work. The streamlined approach improves first responders' experiences across the entire claims process—from entry into the scheme to rehabilitation and return-to-work opportunities. It acts on recommendations made in Beyond Blue's 2018 report *Answering the call* that found substantially higher rates of psychological distress, mental health conditions and suicidal thinking and planning among first responders compared to the general population.

This bill builds on the strong record of the Palaszczuk government in delivering for Queensland workers. When it comes to workers compensation, we back our workers. We have restored the rights of injured workers to seek common-law damages without having to meet an impairment threshold. We have reversed breaches of privacy whereby employers could previously obtain a prospective worker's claims history. We have introduced new provisions that deem certain cancers for firefighters work related. We have introduced a new workers compensation capacity certificate that focuses on what injured workers can do rather than what they cannot do.

We have maintained the lowest average premium rate of any Australian state or territory for our scheme. We have covered apprentices at no cost to employers that has resulted in savings of \$105 million to Queensland employers. WorkCover Queensland is fully solvent with a funding ratio of 152 per cent according to their last annual report. We have also established the Workers' Psychological Support Service to provide additional support to workers who have experienced a work related psychological injury, and we have provided free health screening for stone benchtop workers who are at risk of silicosis.

While we are focused on protecting Queensland workers, unfortunately the federal LNP government is attacking them. In March this year we saw the Morrison government's IR omnibus bill that wanted to strip workers' rights through greenfields agreements, bargaining and the basic rights of

part-time workers. Faced with a lack of support for the bill, the Morrison government focused on entrenching insecure work and removed the only aspect of the bill which was agreed to by unions and employers—laws aimed at reducing wage theft—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Member for Bundamba, I ask you to come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr McCALLUM: Indeed. If ever there were proof that the LNP has no respect ordinary workers, this is it. We are a government that continues to support all Queensland workers. Earlier this month we announced an investigation into sexual harassment protection for workers as part of a review of our industrial relations laws. Importantly, it will also investigate protections for workers in short-term employment. The bill before the House today follows our Australian-first legislation to make industrial manslaughter an offence, which now carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in jail and fines of up to \$10 million. We made wage theft a crime, and we made it easier for workers to recover lost wages.

Our nation-leading labour hire licensing laws protect workers from exploitation at the hands of unscrupulous providers. We have delivered substantial reforms to mine safety and built fair wages into major infrastructure projects. We have delivered portable long service leave for Queensland's 40,000 community sector workers—most of them women—and the nation's first paid domestic and family violence leave. We have also improved our workers compensation laws and restored rights stripped away by those opposite when they were last in government.

We are about keeping, helping and supporting Queenslanders both in and out of the workplace. That is exactly what this bill helps achieve. I am very proud to commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr McCallum, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Health System



Mr CRISAFULLI (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker, in just two months Queensland Health has lurched from crisis to crisis. The minister is losing control of the system and the government is losing control of people's welfare. We owe it to Queenslanders to get health care right. More often than not people interact with our health system on their worst day: a shock diagnosis, an emergency event, a loved one in need at their most desperate hour. Right now our public health system is under siege, and I am going to highlight the changing positions that we have seen from the minister who is under attack in this place.

It seems that the minister constantly changes her position based on the attack point or the talking point of the day. There was no problem on 5 March and the minister said, 'Queensland public hospitals have performed exceptionally well.' On 25 March, after sustained pressure in this place from the LNP, an emergency meeting was held. After unprecedented demand there were crisis talks but no change. On 27 April we heard the most astonishing admission from a minister so early in her term that Queensland Health needed a cultural overhaul. In less than two months we have transitioned from 'absolutely nothing to see here' to a full-blown crisis.

What does the crisis look like? Every time we come into this House we tell the story of what the crisis looks like. Madam Deputy Speaker, let me tell you what that story looks like today in terms of numbers. Overnight this is what the picture showed us: 15 ambulances ramped at Logan Hospital; another 15 patients kept waiting at the RBWH; 13 crews ramped at the Prince Charles Hospital in Chermside; and code yellows at the Gold Coast and Ipswich hospitals. We have heard lots of different things about code yellows.

Ms Bates: Nothing to worry about.

Mr CRISAFULLI: There was nothing to worry about at one stage, then it was an unmitigated disaster, then they were 6.3s, then they were back to code yellows and every single South-East Queensland hospital was escalated to level 3, extreme delays overnight. Today as we sat in this House whistleblowers called the LNP to advise that elective surgery was cancelled at the PA Hospital and at 8 am today there were 34 patients in the RBWH waiting for a bed. There was an announcement of \$100 million to fix the problem but no mention of support, no mention of training, no mention of culture, no mention of what the minister intends to do to fix a broken system—just a cry to Canberra to do something and a patchwork from the minister to say that this money will fix the crisis we have seen lurching forward as the government loses control.

What does it look like through the eyes of honest Queenslanders? I have given you the number so now I may as well tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, what it means to everyday Queenslanders who have reached out to the opposition. As one of her defences the minister stands up and asks why we are attacking hardworking staff, but we are in their corner. We are trying to give them a voice, to effect some change, for somebody to take responsibility so we do not see this moveable feast of it always being someone else's fault—other than the people who are paid to administer it, and that is the government. Rod from the Gold Coast said—

My 89 year old father-in-law was admitted to the Toowoomba Hospital on Thursday 29 April, with a compound, open wound which resulted in a badly dislocated thumb after a fall at home.

He was brought by ambulance to emergency.

He was told to wait for available operating time and made nil-by-mouth. After many phone calls and much disappointment, he was constantly pushed back on that waiting line, longer than 48 hours.

No patient, let alone a frail 89 year-old, should be treated with such disregard for his condition. At his age and his condition, it will take weeks to recover, being nil-by-mouth for days. The nursing staff were great, but the system was totally broken.

These are the words of Queenslanders. They are not my words. During question time today the member for Oodgeroo raised the case of Catherine from Redlands, who said—

Last September my dad was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia and was advised that the disease was terminal. Dad was given a life span of three-six months.

The paramedic tried to tell the nursing staff that all dad needed was to have his canula placed in again—the paramedic could not do it because it was 'hospital equipment'

I said to the nurse 'you do realise that dad is terminal' and her reply was you can try again in the morning there may not be as many people here'.

This is when I feel that my dad gave up the will to live. Dad passed away on the Saturday of that week.

An officer in charge of the metro ambulance station contacted us this week. The officer said—

It is internally reported that on a daily bases there is no resources to respond to emergency cases and consequently they sit in pending queues until an ambulance becomes available. In Queensland there have been more deaths in the last six months from ambulance delays than people who have died from COVID throughout the pandemic. This is a fact. Why does the right person have to die for the system to change?

I say to the officer, 'They do not.' We are going to force change. We are going to continue to hold this government to account until they realise that these are the stories of real Queenslanders. They are not condemning paramedics. They are not condemning doctors or nurses. They are not reaching out to us and telling us about frontline staff who do not care about them. Quite the opposite. They are seeing their frustration and they are feeling their frustration. They are living through it. A minister who is absolutely clueless, a minister who is unable to administer the medicine that a sick system needs leaves Queenslanders with the honest belief that the government is losing control of the system.

I say to the minister, I say to the Premier and I say to the cabinet: 'Stop blaming Canberra. Stop blaming COVID. Stop blaming culture. This is on you.' It is time the government fixed this broken system. They are losing control of health in this state, and we are seeing it through the eyes of real Queenslanders. We are seeing it in the numbers. While we were getting ready to come into this place there were 34 patients at the RBWH waiting for a bed.

Imagine the family of those who are lined up for elective surgery today at the PA. Just imagine what goes through their mind. They have made the sacrifice. Absolutely they will accept it if it is because of a pandemic. If a hospital is closed because there is an outbreak of COVID of course they will accept it. But they are not going to accept it because the government cannot administer a basic service in this state, nor should they. Nor should the ambulance officer who gets in his or her vehicle tonight to provide a service for Queenslanders, only to sit in frustration at the end of a ramp knowing that they cannot provide the service to that Queenslanders who has called on them in their hour of need and they cannot provide the service to the other Queenslanders who is waiting on the other end of the phone repeatedly calling back. Then there is the operator on the end of the phone who has to deal with the grief of the person who just wants their loved one to be looked at.

We have people dying in the arms of their loved ones because the system is broken. That is not a slight on paramedics, Minister; it is a slight on a broken system and the government is losing control of it. I say, as I have said every Tuesday, I give notice to the government: tomorrow we will be asking more questions on this. Please do not be surprised because we are determined to give a voice to voiceless Queenslanders whether they are at the front line or on the receiving end of a government that is losing control of health in this state.

Leader of the Opposition, Performance



Hon. CR DICK (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (2.10 pm): Today we learn that the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Broadwater, has no backbone. Imagine standing here in the people's house on federal budget day knowing that Queensland has been ripped off on infrastructure spending—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DICK: They do not want to hear it. Imagine knowing you have been ripped off on infrastructure spending and the Leader of the Opposition does not utter one word of support for Queensland jobs and the Queensland economy. The opposition leader's silence is as shocking as it is damming of the state LNP. There is not one word of criticism, not even a single request for federal funding.

We know the Leader of the Opposition cannot contain his ambition, but his performance in standing up for Queensland is simply pathetic. Let us put Scott Morrison's rancid infrastructure rip-off to one side. What about doing a basic job as a political leader? Just ask for something. The Leader of the Opposition cannot think of one thing, not one single thing, that he can ask for from his political colleagues in the federal LNP on behalf of the people of Queensland, not even for the electorate of Broadwater. I do not think much of the LNP, but they sure deserve better than this sort of leader. The Leader of the Opposition's failure to stand up for Queensland is a betrayal of our state and a betrayal of the office that the member for Broadwater holds. If you are not prepared to demand federal funding for Queensland, you are not fit to be the Leader of the Opposition let alone the Premier of Queensland.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition talking about hospitals. Why not stand up for Queensland and demand some more funding? Why not ask the federal government for more health funding? Why not ask Scott Morrison to directly fund a \$50 million public hospital just like Geelong got? Why doesn't the Leader of the Opposition ask Scott Morrison to remove the 6½ per cent federal bulk funding cap—the artificial cap that was imposed on health funding by the federal LNP when they absolutely wrecked national health reform? Why doesn't the Leader of the Opposition ask Scott Morrison to fix Medicare so some Queenslanders might just be able to access bulk-billing? After all, the Morrison government, the federal LNP government, raises 81 per cent of taxes in this country.

The federal Morrison government has the funding, the power and the budgetary capacity to fix so many of these issues, but the Leader of the Opposition will not say a single word. He will not ask a single question, he will not write a letter, he cannot even make a phone call. The Leader of the Opposition only criticises the state government because every single thing he does is driven by one thing and one thing alone, and that is politics.

The Leader of the Opposition does not care about patients. The Leader of the Opposition does not care about health care. He does not care about public hospitals. He does not even care about Queensland. He only cares about himself and getting a seat back around the cabinet table like when he served Campbell Newman. The Leader of the Opposition loved those days. He loved being in the cabinet with his great friend and mentor, Campbell Newman. The Leader of the Opposition loved it so much he is bringing it back. Campbell Newman is back to the top of the LNP tree, and every member opposite knows it. He is coming back.

I will say this much: it did not happen under the member for Clayfield. The member for Clayfield knew that Campbell Newman was absolutely toxic to Queenslanders. It did not happen under the member for Nanango. Maybe that was because Campbell Newman called the member for Nanango 'populist' and 'retrograde'. Either way, the member for Nanango knew that Queenslanders did not want to see any more of Campbell Newman. It is a lesson the member for Broadwater ought to learn but he is simply far too arrogant.

The Leader of the Opposition aided and abetted the return of Campbell Newman back to the top of the LNP. You cannot make this up, and it is not only Campbell Newman but Lawrence Springborg. How is that for new politics that he goes on about all the time? How is that for generational change: Campbell Newman and Lawrence Springborg? The people of this state rejected those leaders over and over and over again, and the Leader of the Opposition keeps inflicting them on Queenslanders. The Leader of the Opposition is out of touch, he will not stand up for Queensland and he offers nothing for Queensland except Campbell Newman.

Treasurer and Minister for Investment, Performance



Mr JANETZKI (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.15 pm): Judging by the number of times the Treasurer has just said 'Leader of the Opposition', I think it is safe to say that the Leader of the Opposition is getting under this government's skin. We have had 10 minutes of

hearing from true Queenslanders about how they have been let down by this government's failing health system. I reckon after listening for 10 minutes about those personal stories of patients waiting for treatment in a failing health system, and those health workers who continue to speak to us about the considerable problems in Queensland Health—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Order!

Ms Bates interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr JANETZKI: It is clear that the opposition and the Leader of the Opposition are getting to them. We are hearing the stories from true Queenslanders, real Queenslanders, and we are coming into this House to stand for them. If that is all the Treasurer of Queensland has to offer on the day of the federal budget, we should be worried. Originally, I was expecting a poor budget from the Treasurer in June. I am upgrading that now: I think it is going to be a horror budget. I think it is going to be a horror budget, because when the Treasurer delivers those kinds of personal attacks for five minutes during a federal budget week we ought to be worried about what is ahead for us.

The performance from the Treasurer on Sunday was most interesting as well. He started saying, 'We're reworking our forecasts on border closures.' I would hope that in 'Budgeting 101' the Treasurer is doing a whole range of testing across the budget process and not just leaving it until Sunday, when it appears he woke up and put together a shopping list of their infrastructure—

Mr Bleijie interjected.


Mr JANETZKI: I will take the interjection from the member for Kawana. After he had probably been out there busy walking his pooch, he realised he had to put together an infrastructure list but forgot all about having to engage with the federal government, talk to them about the infrastructure project, put together business cases, intervene with the federal government, speak to them about what Queensland desperately needs. He woke up, put out a list and played politics. That is what this comes down to. This Treasurer has one fiscal policy left—just the one fiscal policy—and that is to blame Canberra. There is nothing else that this government has to offer Queensland except to blame Canberra.

Queenslanders already know all about infrastructure and they know about it from an independent source, from Infrastructure Partnerships Australia. They already know that this government spends 12 per cent of its budget on infrastructure when states like New South Wales and Victoria spend 20 per cent. These are numbers that go to how much is being spent on infrastructure and they are from an independent source.

We know how the Treasurer does not like independent sources, independent voices. He is wrapping up the Productivity Commission right now. He does not like that. He does not like CommSec and what CommSec has to say time and time again. When the Treasurer was away in January, he sent out the member for Sandgate to try to take apart the methodology of CommSec. That went nowhere. The methodology of CommSec is sound, and what it has told us time and time again is that this government's record is very low. Most recently, it was sixth for economic performance and last for economic growth.

They do not like independent voices, so here are the independent numbers on infrastructure for the next four budget years. What will New South Wales spend? It will spend \$84 billion on infrastructure; Victoria, \$69 billion; and Queensland, \$35 billion. Before this Treasurer starts to throw stones it is time for him to look at the performance of this government. It is time for them to invest in the infrastructure needs of this state. If people are on the M1 they do not care about who is paying for it and they do not care about the politics that the Treasurer is into; they just want it built. If people are at the Redlands and they want a hospital built, they do not care about the politics that the Treasurer plays; they just want it built. If they are in Townsville and want water infrastructure, if they want real things in this state, they do not care about the politics played in here by the Treasurer; they just want it built. The people of Queensland deserve better, and now they should be extremely concerned about the budget to come in June this year.

Mother's Day; Stillbirth

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (2.20 pm): It was Mother's Day on Sunday and I hope that the mums of Queensland had a fantastic day. I want to recognise that being a mother or a mother figure comes in many forms. There are many different ways to mother and it is not always a role we are born

to. There are stepmothers, mothers-in-law and women who are still waiting to be mums. There are carers and guardians, fur baby mums and the people in our lives who form part of the village that it takes to help raise our family, because it does take a village to raise a child and to nurture the family.

Mother's Day is a day when our social media feeds are flooded with happy images and sentiments, but there is no getting around the fact it is a really tough day for some, especially mums who have lost a pregnancy or had a baby born sleeping, a stillbirth. This is a tragedy that affects six families in Australia every single day and, unfortunately, this rate has been relatively unchanged for 20 years. Recently a beautiful local couple in my community, Georgia and Tyson, had a beautiful baby girl, Sophia. Sadly, she was still at birth and they said their farewells to baby Sophia in the hospital using a cuddle cot. I thank Georgia and Tyson for their permission, their blessing and their encouragement to share their story with the parliament today.

I was made aware of the sad circumstances of the birth of their daughter because of a Facebook fundraiser that the couple organised to provide more cuddle cots for other local families who have had a stillbirth. To say that I am blown away by their care and consideration for others at this time is an understatement. It is a very rare person who, at a time when their hearts are broken, turns to how they can help others in their grief when going through similar circumstances. I am sure all members of this House would agree that it takes a really special person to think of someone else at a time like that. I am so grateful to this beautiful family for their care for others. Georgia is now determined to turn her family's sadness into action, and she is now considering how she can advocate to prevent this from happening to other families. I have no doubt she will go on to do great things in this space.

In 2009 Queensland Health launched the Safer Baby Bundle. This was aimed at reducing the number of stillbirths in Queensland, in part by educating expectant parents about the risk factors for stillbirth. Some of those are as follows. Firstly, count your baby's movements. If you notice a change or a decline in your baby's movements, do not be afraid to call your healthcare provider and ask for advice. There is absolutely no harm in doing so. Secondly, be sure to sleep on your side from 28 weeks gestation to ensure continual blood flow to your baby while you are asleep. However, if you are like me and you wake up on your back, do not panic; roll over and go back to sleep again. Thirdly, make sure that if you smoke you give up and avoid passive smoking. While smoking rates have decreased significantly in recent years, some expectant parents do still smoke. This does mean dad has to stop, too. Of course, make sure you are in regular contact with your primary healthcare provider, whether it is your ob-gyn, your midwife or your general practitioner. It is never too early to engage your provider so they can monitor your health and look after mum as well as baby. The great challenge here is that no two pregnancies are alike. What is normal in one pregnancy may be cause for concern in another.

Finally, I would say to all members of this House that I know that stillbirth is still a very hard topic to address. It can be tempting for someone who knows a friend who has been through this bereavement to not bring it up out of a concern to not hurt the family. However, the wonderful charity Sands has a really fabulous two-page document called 'Words Matter'. That is to help family, friends and the community provide meaningful support in an appropriate way to loved ones who have suffered this tragic loss. I found it a really useful document and a great reminder that although sometimes it feels more comfortable to say nothing, the right thing to do is to reach out and check in with that person not just at the time they suffer that bereavement but down the track too, just to periodically check in. I am going to table this for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Words Matter' [618].

I think it is a fantastic document. What it really narrows in on is that saying nothing is almost never the right thing to do. You need to show that you care; you need to show that you are thinking of the baby as well. As Sands so eloquently says, a little life is not a little loss. For those mums this Mother's Day and every Mother's Day, I say we are there for you.

Palaszcuk Labor Government, Performance



Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (2.26 pm): Treasurer Dick went out on Sunday and held a press conference and it is clear from that press conference, that Treasurer Dick is softening everybody up for a horror state budget. He is blaming everybody but himself. He is blaming everybody but the Labor government. He is blaming everybody but Premier Palaszcuk, who has been in government for six years. I listened to the Treasurer, who just spoke. For a man who practises his speeches so much, I still cannot understand why he cannot come in here and deliver a five-minute speech without his notes. He even has to type out his jokes. He still delivers these jokes in a typed format after all these years. I thought he was better than that.

He came out on Sunday with this big shopping list of issues for the federal budget. One of the items was the Mooloolah River interchange on the Sunshine Coast for which my state LNP colleagues and I have been campaigning for years. In fact, at the last two elections we have promised to deliver the Mooloolah River interchange which would bust congestion on Nicklin Way and other areas and provide safety improvements, because it is crazily dangerous. The Labor Party has done nothing. In fact, Minister Mark Bailey sent it off to a business case which was due to be released last year. He has still not released it. Whether it is even finished, who knows?

Treasurer Dick had the hide to go out on Sunday and call for the federal government to fund 80 per cent of it. It is a state government road; it is a state government responsibility. The state government should have funded it 100 per cent. It is good that ScoMo has now come out and put in 50 per cent because they think the only way this road will be done is if the federal government comes to be the saviour of the Labor Party. Time and time again the federal LNP government is having to rescue the Labor government from its financial mismanagement. The infrastructure is not being built in Queensland.

Treasurer Dick also blamed them for the vaccination rollout but forgot that his health minister is responsible for the Queensland vaccination rollout. Then he blamed the Prime Minister for closing international borders, yet Premier Palaszczuk was the first minister or chief minister in the country to say that the Australian border should be shut to India. Then the Treasurer came out and said that the forecasting had put the state government out because of the dilemma with the international borders, yet it was his government that called for the international borders to be closed. In fact, the Premier said she supported the closure and wrote to the Prime Minister asking him to close the border to people coming from India because of the huge issues over there.

We have had the health crisis, and Treasurer Dick stood up earlier blaming the feds saying, 'We want more money.' When are Annastacia Palaszczuk, the Premier, Treasurer Dick and Deputy Premier Miles—incidentally, it is his 12-month anniversary today—going take responsibility? When are they going to put a plan to the people of Queensland and say, 'We're the state government. It's our responsibility for state roads and we will deliver'? They will not because they never do. That is the problem with Labor.


Labor never deliver better services. They do what they always do, like they did today: 'Here's another \$100 million for health.' Do members think it will provide any improvement in services for patients in Queensland? It will not. Ambulance ramping will continue. Surgeries in Queensland will continue not to be done. Patients will not get the benefit of the \$100 million.

The Treasurer says, 'Debt is a tool.' Who could forget the interview where he said, 'Debt is a tool. Debt is a tool. Debt is a tool'? The only tool that we require on the Sunshine Coast is a shovel to start the Mooloolah River interchange. The only tool the Treasurer needs to talk about is a shovel to start building the Mooloolah River interchange. I call on the government to match the federal government's 50 per cent funding allocation and get the Mooloolah River interchange flowing. Then we will see real congestion busting on the Sunshine Coast.

The Treasurer also blamed the other states for doing sweetheart deals. How is it that the state Labor government of Victoria and the state Liberal government of New South Wales can get good deals from the federal Liberal government but this mob cannot? This mob have no infrastructure plans. They cannot go to the federal government and say, 'We have a pipeline of infrastructure. We have all of these infrastructure projects on the go. We need your support.' They do not have anything. The federal government looks at Queensland and says, 'What has the Queensland government given us to work with? Nothing.' That is why the federal government has to rely on LNP federal MPs and state MPs to say which projects are a priority for the state. That is why the Prime Minister has announced an infrastructure budget tonight. It is about time the state Labor government stopped the blame game and accepted responsibility. If they cannot handle the heat, they should get out of the kitchen. If they cannot justify their big salaries, they should resign.

(Time expired)

Townsville, Water Security

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.31 pm): What a contrast this contribution will be compared to the delusional ramblings we just heard from the member for Kawana!

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Member for Kawana, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr HARPER: On this day, the day of the federal budget, I rise on a matter of critical importance to the city and people of Townsville. I am glad that in his contribution the Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned water infrastructure in Townsville, because that is what this is about.

In mid-October 2020, before the state election, I sought a meeting with the federal member for Herbert, Phillip Thompson, to raise with him a matter of concern: the main water pipeline that delivers 70 per cent of Townsville's water from the Ross River Dam six kilometres, under Riverway Drive, to the Douglas Water Treatment Plant. In 2020 I got a funding commitment to deliver stage 2 of Riverway Drive—after we had done the heavy lifting on Riverway Drive stage 1, \$43 million, which was opened in 2019.

In 2020 we started scoping works on Riverway Drive stage 2, because stage 1 was a catalyst. The scoping works found that the Townsville water pipeline is at the end of its operational life and that there are critical sections of it that will fail. That was found out in mid to late 2020. I got the commitment in October 2020. Ironically, I was joined by the federal government, which co-funded it. In December 2020 a piece of that pipeline broke—it failed—plunging Townsville into chaos for two days. We could not even shower. Think about the impacts on our hospital. The major city in North Queensland did not have water security.

We can look at the federal member's contribution over the years in terms of promising to deliver on water security and the lies he told the people of Townsville in 2019 in relation to what would be funded.

Mr LANGBROEK: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The member has used unparliamentary language and I ask that you ask him to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): I agree that you have used unparliamentary language. I ask that the member withdraw.

Mr HARPER: I withdraw. I now table some copies of the *Townsville Bulletin*.

Tabled paper: Articles from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 21 June 2019, titled 'ScoMo needs to cough up the cash now for Stage 2' and 5 December 2018, titled 'Houghton Pipeline Stage 2 business case tender to open next week' [\[619\]](#).

An editorial states—

... some seven months since the funding offer was made and the cash is nowhere to be seen.

That was in June 2019. In 2020, there were further reports of 'promising to deliver' but they did not actually deliver the funding for the Houghton pipeline stage 2. The \$195 million that was set aside was a lie to the people of Townsville. It was never delivered. It is in the paper.

Mr LANGBROEK: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It is the same point of order in that the member has used unparliamentary language—a word that we in this place are not to use. I ask that you ask him to withdraw.

Mr HARPER: I withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker. An untruth was told to the people of Townsville—if that makes the member feel better. We were promised money and it was never delivered. I have a funding commitment to deliver stage 2.

Mr BLEIJIE: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have made a ruling. It is not about whether the member wants to satisfy the member for Surfers Paradise with the withdrawal. The rules of the parliament are that we are not to use that word. I think it is a reflection on you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the member did not give an unqualified withdrawal.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Kawana. As I heard it, the member did withdraw his comment.

Mr HARPER: We can start to see just how critical water security is for the people of Townsville. We cannot deliver stage 2 of Riverway Drive unless the water pipeline that delivers 70 per cent of Townsville's water is fixed. The city council and the state government are working together. I table a letter I wrote to the member for Herbert in April this year.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 23 April 2021, from the member for Thuringowa, Mr Aaron Harper MP, to the Federal member for Herbert, Mr Phillip Thompson MP, regarding the main water pipeline in Townsville [\[620\]](#).

I met with the federal member in October last year, but 180 days later I had heard nothing from him about helping secure and repair that water pipeline.


Mr Walker: Shame.

Mr HARPER: The member for Mundingburra knows just how important water security is for Townsville. I finally got a reply on 30 April. It is worth nothing. The member for Herbert wants to play political games. He did not even mention the fact that that water pipeline is critical. He knows that it is

co-funded and that we need to fix it. I ask the member for Herbert to stop absolving himself of responsibility for water security and to get on board with the state government and the Townsville City Council to fix this pipeline. We cannot again have the issue of water failing in a major capital city.

I reflect on two other important areas that I would like to see addressed in the federal budget tonight: aged care and housing. We need the federal government to step up and to stop walking away from remote and Indigenous community housing. On the day of the federal budget, the Leader of the Opposition did not say one word about fixing the health system or more money for aged care. People are blocking hospital beds when they could be in residential care facilities, but we have GPs who do not want to go there because of the Medicare rebate. We need our aged-care system fixed. People have worked hard all their lives and deserve care in the home.

Rural and Regional Queensland, Road Infrastructure

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (2.37 pm): Since January this year, more than 83 people have died on Queensland roads—thankfully, in the Mackay district there have been eight fewer deaths this year than in the same period last year; there were 25 more in the same period last year—with 29 of the victims aged between 16 and 24. In my electorate there has been a spate of horror crashes. Thirty of the state's 83 fatalities have occurred on Central Queensland roads alone.

I have become tired of hearing public officials and the media lay the blame for Queensland's appalling road crash statistics on driver behaviour. Driver behaviour is a factor but it is not the only one. The reality is that safer roads save lives. Recently at a federal Senate inquiry, Engineers Australia revealed that national and state road funding is being allocated to road congestion relief, not road safety improvements—even though road crashes cost the Australian economy almost twice as much as road congestion. That is without even factoring in all of the trauma and mental health costs associated with road crashes and fatalities. According to one expert, most of the road funding is being spent on urban road capacity improvements and does not address the quality or condition of rural roads, where most of fatal crashes occur. We talk about equality and so on for our First Nations people, but most of the roads to rural Aboriginal communities are dirt roads that are very poorly maintained. The group also highlighted the fact that Australian roads represent the only infrastructure for which there is no independent economic oversight or independent safety regulator overseeing projects.

In my electorate I have made numerous requests for independent road safety audits on my roads through the region, all of which have been ignored or seem to have been dismissed. There are countless safety issues causing community anger and frustration, some of which have been caused by design flaws in road upgrades carried out with little regard for safety issues.

Just recently there was a semitrailer rollover in Sarina where two pieces of road bitumen of different ages join and there is a divot. The B-double truck rolled into the drain and the alignment of the bumper bar to the existing scrape from the crash before could not have been lined up better with a micrometer in that it was exactly the same. Just recently there was also a rollover in the middle of Walkerston involving an extended traffic island. The first rollover in that area was with a B-double truck. It rolled on to the footpath of the Walkerston State School. Thankfully it was at four in the afternoon and there were no students or parents on that corner at the time. The second time it was at midday when all of the schoolkids were contained within the schoolyard. We were very lucky again, but it is still happening.

We all must take into consideration—and I have shared some photographs with Minister Bailey about this—that when these things continue to happen in the same area it is only a matter of time before there is a fatality. Given what is currently happening on our roads, it is going to happen. There was another accident on the same stretch of road where these two trucks near the Sarina wreckers had rolled over. A lady tried to exit that road not even 300 metres away and she was shunted into an oncoming car. The oncoming car smashed her engine block out of her vehicle with so much force that it flew up the road and destroyed the axle on the bogie of the B-double that hit her in the back end. That is scary stuff, so we have to look at doing something about the roads. I have tried to talk about Anzac Avenue. Trucks are going through there making a heck of a racket and destroying the bitumen.

Throughout the electorate we have also seen double-lane highways where the design has failed to account for old bridges and two vehicles cannot fit on the bridge. It is only wide enough for one vehicle and maybe three-quarters of another. I have inspected the new Mackay bypass ring-road and it is not possible to fit a tractor and a car or a tractor and a truck and it is a 100-kilometre zone, but motorists are expected to do it. There are unintended consequences that are happening right now

where someone is going to get hurt or, even worse, killed. These are the things going on. Trucks on the Mount Morgan range with a load on have to veer into oncoming traffic on the way down and other motorists have to back up to let the truck through. That is destroying all of the barricades on the range itself, so local traffic does not even have the safety of the barricades after trucks are entering. We need to look at rural roads in our electorates. I have spoken to the minister. It is a huge concern that needs to be addressed.

Bundaberg East Flood Levee



Mr SMITH (Bundaberg—ALP) (2.42 pm): Tonight will see the federal budget handed down and I have to say that I am quite fearful that the federal government will let the people of Bundaberg down. I have not seen anywhere even the slightest bit of evidence that the federal member for Hinkler has done his job and secured the \$42.5 million to pay the federal government's fair share for the Bundaberg East flood levee.

Mr Tantari: Shame!

Mr SMITH: I take that interjection. This is an infrastructure project that will mitigate flooding across Bundaberg East, Bundaberg South and the CBD as well. The Bundaberg East flood levee has overwhelming community support. I have spoken with businesses about the damage sustained in the 2013 floods. I have spoken with staff and parents from the Bundaberg East State School and Bundaberg South State School. Those schools do not just want the levee; they need the levee. There are still parents who to this day, when the rainfall comes down heavy and consistent, go and pull their kids out of school early. That is how much damage was sustained to the psyche of people in Bundaberg during the 2013 floods. There is overwhelming community support. Schools, businesses, residents, the Bundaberg Regional Council, Suncorp and even the LNP state opposition support the call by the Palaszczuk Labor government to build the Bundaberg East flood levee, and I will get to the LNP's support in just a moment, and I thank it for it.

In relation to the levee and the effects of the 2013 flood, Suncorp's executive manager for public policy, Joshua Cooney, said on 15 October 2020—

Millions of dollars of repair bills were ultimately paid and there was a lot of heartbreak as well.

If we can avoid that through good effective mitigation such as this Bundaberg East Flood Levee then it's a worthwhile investment.

In 2013 the Burnett River Floodplain Action Plan Community Reference Group listed the levee as the No. 1 project. It went on to state—

Water displaced as a result of the levees situated at East Bundaberg would not impact on other affected areas including North Bundaberg.

I say that because, instead of rolling up his sleeves and getting on with doing the job, the member for Hinkler has instead decided to stir up a bunch of mistruths throughout our community and in the north trying to suggest that it will actually increase flooding over the north. But, as we know from that statement in 2013, he knew years ago that that was not the case. What else does the federal member know? He knows that the state opposition supports our government's delivery of the flood levee, but let us have some sources.

I am a history teacher, so whenever I make a claim I always have to have some sources. So let us find some sources, and here we go. On 18 May 2013 an image of the member for Burnett standing with residents calling upon the building of flood mitigation was displayed in the Bundaberg *NewsMail*. On 15 April 2018 an article in the Bundaberg *NewsMail* reports that the member for Burnett had 'had enough of waiting for the construction to begin'. On 18 October 2018 on the member for Burnett's website he has listed a release that supports the government's plan for the Bundaberg East flood levee. On 2 December 2020 a Facebook video posted on the member for Burnett's Facebook page has him saying—

I do acknowledge that the flood levee money has been put up by the state.


On 3 December 2020 from *Hansard* the member for Burnett stated in his appropriation bill response—

I acknowledge and welcome the promises that were kept for local projects, like the \$42 million towards an East Bundaberg flood levee ...

Quite frankly, if the people of Bundaberg tune in to the federal budget speech tonight and do not hear Josh Frydenberg committing \$42½ million to match our government's already ironclad \$42½ million commitment to build the Bundaberg East flood levee, it will be because of one of two

reasons: either the federal member for Hinkler is too afraid of the ramifications of standing up to his National mates in Canberra—the same mates who gave him the job as long as he voted their particular way—or he is so jaded towards the people of Bundaberg, that they would support a Palaszczuk Labor government, that he will completely turn his back on the people of Bundaberg and will risk further and future destruction. I know that tomorrow I will be able to stand up and say that I have delivered for the people of Bundaberg. Will the federal government be able to say the same thing? I highly doubt it.

Hospitals, Access

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.47 pm): We are back to the bad old days of Queensland Health. It is a sad reality for the hundreds and thousands of Queenslanders needing care from our public hospital system each day, and let me be clear: the situation is no reflection on our doctors, nurses and other hardworking frontline health staff. These people are doing their level best to care for and treat our sick and injured Queenslanders, and what an amazing job they do. This is about mismanagement of the system, about high-level accountability and about the minister standing up and doing her job, because we owe it to Queenslanders to get health care right.

On the news again last night we saw harrowing pictures of ambulance on ambulance lined up waiting to off-load their patients into emergency departments. Fifteen ambulances were ramped at Logan Hospital, another 15 were lined up at RBWH and yet another 13 crews were parked waiting their turn at the Prince Charles Hospital. Some of those patients were waiting more than five hours.

Put yourself in the back of that ambulance. Put yourself in the shoes of that person who has called triple 0. Maybe they have had a fall. Maybe they are experiencing chest pain. Maybe it is an asthma attack. They are not calling an ambulance just because; they are calling an ambulance because there is an emergency. Alternatively, put yourself in the shoes of the paramedic, forced to sit idle on the ramp checking your patient but unable to answer the calls going out over the radio and unable to support your colleagues as they battle to meet community demand but, because of a mismanaged and hamstrung system, they cannot get to the emergency. This is a system under siege. The figures back up the story. In February this year 40 per cent of ambulances statewide were ramped. At our busiest and best funded hospitals—the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Logan and Redlands—it was more than 50 per cent.

Those opposite are very quick to denigrate the reputation of the LNP when we were in government, but let the record show that, after three years of our administration, by 2015 ambulance ramping was down to 15 per cent. That is right: in six years those opposite have increased ramping by 25 per cent. Sadly for Queenslanders, once they are inside the hospitals things do not get much better. Queensland's emergency department performance is a national disgrace. In the December quarter 2020, 23 per cent of patients who attended a Queensland Health emergency department did not get seen in the clinically recommended time frame. Then there is the waiting list debacle. In January 2015, 30,000 Queenslanders waited for elective surgery. By December 2020 that had ballooned to 55,000 Queenslanders—nearly 25,000 more.

A doctor within Queensland Health told me this morning—

It is a state of learned hopelessness. The ED doctors have given up. There are never any beds. The ED is always full. The ambulances are always ramped. Doctors and nurses on the wards spend their whole day talking to bed managers and looking for ways to kick patients out rather than looking after them. Surgeons are paid big dollars to twiddle their thumbs. The theatres are there, the fancy equipment is there, the theatre nurses are there, the waiting lists are there, but there are no beds to put the patients in, and this is not unique to one hospital, it is across every major tertiary hospital in Queensland.

In my own electorate we hear from people fed up with waiting. Take Patricia's case. Last year she was told she was a category 1 and would have surgery within 90 days. Six months later she lives in agony waiting for bilateral hip replacements so that she can walk again. Bumped up and down a waiting list, from one hospital to another, into the private system, back to the state, crying, pleading for help. These are people, not just numbers. This is your grandmother, your brother, your daughter, your grandson.

We know people are treated in bathrooms underneath a shower and we know life-saving pelvic exenteration surgery has been cancelled at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital with people from Queensland forced to travel to Sydney and Melbourne. We know that there are sterile storage rooms in our hospitals which are not actually sterile. We also know that there is a problem with the Kimguard wrap which will impact elective surgery and the minister has not even begun to address that. We must get health care right. Queenslanders deserve it.

Federal Budget



Mrs MULLEN (Jordan—ALP) (2.52 pm): Tonight the Morrison government has the opportunity to fix a very serious problem and that is the federal LNP's continued underinvestment in and complete lack of understanding of what is happening in Queensland. Tonight's federal budget will be a real test on what the Morrison government really thinks of voters in Queensland and whether their frankly useless Queensland federal members deserve to be further rewarded despite their lack of advocacy for the people they represent—and there are a whole lot more people to represent in Queensland.

Last week's data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that Queensland is definitely the place to be. In 2020 more than 30,000 people from across Australia moved to Queensland and, as the Treasurer has said, that is more than 80 people choosing to become Queenslanders every day. In comparison, close to 19,000 people left New South Wales and more than 12,000 people left Victoria in 2020. But to be fair, South Australia did have some positive movement and I am sure those 98 people are really happy with their decision to move there.

We know that the population gains that we are seeing in Queensland are positive and will support our economic growth, but it also brings the challenges that I recognise in a growth electorate, namely, keeping up with housing, health, education, roads and infrastructure. I had hoped the federal government had also seen the data and recognised that, as Queensland is the fastest growing state in all of Australia, it needed to support Queensland with commensurate funding.

On Sunday the Treasurer outlined what I believe are reasonable requests for Queensland: a list of vital funding measures that we need to see in this evening's federal budget. In housing we need to see a continuation of the National Rental Affordability Scheme to ensure vulnerable Queenslanders have access to affordable housing. I am sure the voters of Forde and Petrie would like to see that. Or perhaps the \$1 billion over the next 10 years to address overcrowding in remote Indigenous housing. The federal government has completely abrogated its responsibility in this space, which is just shameful.

How about resourcing primary healthcare support where appropriate for NDIS participants and aged-care residents in public hospitals to ease demand pressures on the Queensland health system. I am sure the voters in Longman would like to see that. Or perhaps ongoing, targeted support after the expiry of JobKeeper for Queensland's regions and businesses, particularly the international tourism sector. I am sure the voters of Leichhardt would like to see that.

What about crucial funding, or really any real funding, under the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility to support major projects and to create jobs. I am sure the voters of Dawson would like to see that, although happily they are seeing the back of George Christensen so that is something. Perhaps even match the Queensland government's investment of \$40 million for the Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct. Groom voters might be keen on that.

Where is the Queensland LNP in all of this? Their only contribution today has been to quote from a report issued by Infrastructure Partnerships Australia saying we need more money for infrastructure. This is the same body that keeps calling on Queensland to sell its assets. Clearly this is where the Queensland LNP is heading—selling assets—and they are bringing back their chief architect of asset sales, Campbell Newman.

We have had some early announcements, or, as the Australian *Financial Review* put it, 'Another year, another round of eye-watering pre-budget news releases aimed at producing splashy headlines'. This is something the Prime Minister is certainly known for: making splashy headlines but then drowning in the delivery. This year is no different, with the Morrison government announcing plans for an extra \$10 billion over the next decade—I will repeat that: over the next decade—for infrastructure across Australia.


Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack spruiked that they were 'backing Queensland jobs', 'backing Queensland businesses', 'backing Queensland to keep being its best self as the state helps drive our economic recovery'. I thought, 'Yes, Queensland, you be you! You be your best self!' But it turns out our best self is only worth around \$1.6 billion while low-growth states like New South Wales and Victoria are worth \$3 billion each. So really we are only half ourselves. Even South Australia with its 98 new residents is getting \$2.6 billion, and that is all for one project.

Do not get me wrong, that \$1.6 billion announced by the Morrison government will be very helpful to help fund key infrastructure projects in Queensland, but it is clearly not enough. Queensland deserves more. We have led the country's economic recovery, we have led the country's health response to COVID-19 and we deserve our fair share in tonight's federal budget.

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL****Second Reading**

Resumed from p. 1230, on motion of Ms Grace—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (2.57 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly and referred to the committee on 26 November 2020. When introducing the bill on 26 November 2020, the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing, the Hon. Grace Grace, advised the Legislative Assembly that the bill was to be reintroduced with no changes. The objective of the bill is to provide an alternative claims pathway for first responders with PTSD which presumes they have a work related injury unless it is proven their injury was not caused by work.

In January 2018 the Hon. Mark Ryan, Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services, requested a review of workers compensation data in relation to care and support for police officers who develop PTSD. The Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing subsequently established a steering group with members from WorkCover, the Queensland Police Service and a psychiatrist from the Medical Assessment Tribunal. The steering group recommended an independent review be undertaken.

The department engaged Phoenix Australia, Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, to review the workers compensation claims process for first responders claiming for psychological injuries. The bill allows for first responders and eligible employees working in first responder departments who are diagnosed with PTSD by a psychiatrist to be presumed to have a work related injury for entitlement to workers compensation unless it is proven that the PTSD did not arise out of or in the course of their employment or their employment was not a significant contributing factor to the PTSD.

The presumption of injury will apply to first responders and other eligible employees as prescribed in the regulation to include an ambulance officer under the Ambulance Service Act 1991; an authorised officer under the Child Protection Act 1999; a corrective services officer under the Corrective Services Act 2006; a fire service officer, member of the State Emergency Service, member of the rural fire brigade, volunteer firefighter or volunteer fire warden under the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990; a police recruit under the Police Service Administration Act 1990; a Youth Justice staff member under the Youth Justice Act 1992; a doctor or nurse employed in any of the following areas—emergency and trauma care, acute care, critical care or high dependency care; an occupation or profession performed in the private sector that corresponds with that of an ambulance officer under the Ambulance Service Act 1991, a corrective services officer under the Corrective Services Act 2006 or a fire service officer under the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990.

The LNP have concerns about the broad definition of 'first responders' and believes the 2019 Commonwealth Senate inquiry definition is more appropriate and correct—that is, paramedics, police officers, firefighters, ambulance officers and other emergency personnel trained to provide assistance in time critical and often life-threatening situations. Expanding the definition beyond traditional first responders has the potential to allow non-first responders to be part of this scheme. Not surprisingly, the unions are calling for these laws to apply to many other workers including electricians and not-for-profit community service employees. That will have the result of placing enormous pressure on Queensland WorkCover.

While there was widespread support for the bill, there was concern that some first responders were not included. As the shadow minister for natural resources and mines, this is an area that I would like to address today. The Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union's Mining and Energy Division recommended amending the bill to include in the list of first responders in proposed schedule 6A coalmine workers who have statutory responsibilities to respond to serious accidents that occur at coalmines. The committee made a recommendation to support this concern.


The committee recommended that the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill be amended to provide the presumption of injury for PTSD to the following workers who are required to perform first responder duties as part of their employment: a coalmine worker performing the statutory roles of an open-cut examiner, explosive risk zone controller or mines rescue team member under the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999; an employee who, as part of

their regular duties, is required to attend and secure a site to provide safe access for other first responders or whose employment requires them to recover human remains; and an employee of a local government whose duties correspond to that of an ambulance officer, a corrective services officer or a fire services officer who is required to attend and secure a site to provide safe access for other responders.

The CFMMEU submitted that the presumption of injury should also apply to workers in the statutory positions of open-cut examiner and explosive risk zone controller under the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act and employees trained and competent to perform aided rescues of coalmine workers as those workers are required to respond to traumatic incidents like other first responders and are exposed to the same risk of developing PTSD. The CFMMEU explained that workers in the statutory role of OCE and ERZ controller and mines rescue team member also have statutory responsibilities to attend or investigate a serious accident, often in advance of traditional first responders. As first responders to mining accidents they are putting themselves at considerable risk in what could potentially be a compromised work site, attending a range of accidents including those that involve death and serious injury.

Over recent years we have seen a series of tragic incidents in the mining sector including a number of fatalities. The scene of those accidents would be indelibly imprinted on the minds of the first responders. Currently an inquiry is being conducted into the Grosvenor mine incident and we await the findings of that inquiry with great interest. The coalmining workplace can be a hazardous environment and the importance of health and workplace safety can never be understated.

As I said, the LNP does have concerns that this legislation might get too broad. However, I think first responders to coalmine disasters have a fair and legitimate argument. Not only are they attending what could be very dangerous and tragic circumstances; those people go in knowing that they will be attending their colleagues and work mates. They are not like other officers attending an incident where the victim is unknown to them. In this case, they are attending their colleagues. I would like the minister to give the House an assurance that the definition will not be broadened to include those for whom this legislation is not intended, but I believe that first responders to coalmine disasters are definitely worthy of the protection of this act.

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (3.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I am confident that all members of the House will be unified in our view that first responders play a critical role in protecting and serving the Queensland community. I have had the privilege of working in frontline services as a support worker dealing with victims of violence and their families. On that point I acknowledge the work of the Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group, their members and volunteers who were with us today as part of their 2021 awareness day activities. I extend my gratitude to members of the House who made the time to go along. I saw lots of members from both sides who went along to hear their stories. I know that would have meant a lot to the volunteers and members, so I thank everybody here for that.

I have benefited from working closely with our first responders, members of the Queensland police and workers from across the departments of justice, child safety, corrective services, and fire and emergency services. I know how impossible it is for us in this room today to truly understand the scenarios that they face every day going to work, the things that they see and hear, smell and experience, and the toll that that can take on a person throughout their career.

This bill specifically addresses the issue of eligibility and access for first responders diagnosed with a work related post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, injury within Queensland's workers compensation scheme. It follows the work of a stakeholder reference group of first responders and first responder departments established in 2019 to consider this issue. It also builds on the seminal report authored by Beyond Blue in 2018, *Answering the call national survey*, which looks specifically at police and emergency services employees and volunteers. It revealed that, despite having generally positive mental wellbeing and resilience levels, frontline workers and first responders also had substantially higher rates of psychological distress, mental health conditions and suicidal thinking and planning compared to the general population. The report found that, for first responders, workers compensation claims rates related to mental health conditions or psychological injuries were 10 times higher than that of the broader Australian workforce. It also found that police and emergency services personnel who were exposed to the workers compensation system overall find it unhelpful or sometimes even detrimental, unfortunately, to their recovery.

Subsequent to that report, in 2019 the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations established the stakeholder reference group to consider the evidence around this issue and develop an action plan for improving the workers compensation experience and mental health outcomes for

Queensland's first responders. The symptoms of PTSD can include persistent re-experiencing of the trauma events, avoidance of situations and activities that are triggering, numbing, feeling detached from other people, difficulty sleeping, difficulty concentrating, irritability, anxiety and hypervigilance. Often PTSD has a devastating and long-term impact on an individual and their families, particularly if left untreated. Not only do we lose the benefit of productivity for the individual; if a person can no longer work in that workplace or sector, employers are left with the attrition costs such as recruitment and training costs. In addition, there are the direct costs to individuals and their families throughout the diagnosis, treatment and recovery process. Quite simply, it makes economic sense and, quite frankly, it is the right thing to do to support our Queensland frontline staff and to pass this bill.

The bill provides presumptive workers compensation laws for our first responders and eligible employees of first responder departments diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Presumptive laws remove one of the primary barriers for access to the workers compensation scheme for those experiencing PTSD by providing that workers no longer need to prove that their PTSD is a work related injury to have their claim accepted.

Presumptive workers compensation laws were also recommended by the stakeholder reference group as a key measure to improve a first responder's claim experience. This bill reverses the evidentiary onus, which means that first responders with a psychological injury or PTSD would not have to prove that their work was a significant cause of the injury. This approach encourages timely access to compensation and treatment while minimising the emotional and financial impact associated with applicants having to prove their case.

We saw through various submissions the barriers that first responders face in lodging a claim currently, including the claims determination process and return-to-work opportunities. The United Workers Union also succinctly summed up some of the additional complexities surrounding workplace culture and stigma in their submission when they said—

These issues are compounded by a culture of strength and resilience in first responders which underplays the seriousness of mental health issues and, inadvertently, discouraging treatment.

The net effect of these challenges is first responders tend to not to make workers compensation claims until they are either at breaking point, or cannot continue to work.

Presumptive laws do not create new or change any existing workers compensation entitlements but instead provide a different pathway for certain claims to access the scheme.

First responders are defined in the bill as workers or volunteers who respond to time critical and often life-threatening incidents. This includes police officers, ambulance officers and paramedics, firefighters including volunteers and rural fire brigade members, members of the State Emergency Service, corrective services officers, authorised officers within Child Safety and Youth Justice, as well as doctors and nurses working in certain areas such as emergency and trauma care. It also includes workers performing corresponding roles in the private sector such as paramedics working in the not-for-profit sector.

The bill also provides coverage for other eligible employees in recognised first responder departments if they work in a role that exposes them to persistent or acute traumatic incidents; for example, communications officers providing advice in emergency situations or workers whose role and functions require them to look closely at child sexual assault cases. This bill covers both those workers who are physically on the scene and directly involved in responding to a traumatic situation and those whose work exposes them in other ways to graphic details of traumatic incidents. These represent the cohort of workers where there is evidence of a strong causal connection between their employment and PTSD.

If the bill is passed, we have committed to undertake a review of the scope of coverage after 12 months to evaluate the appropriateness of who is included under the presumptive pathway. The planned 12-month review will allow for some maturity in this new process and assist in examining the effectiveness of these laws in addition to evaluating whether additional occupations should be included.

Further, it is recognised there are many roles across the public and private sectors which may be exposed to traumatic incidents or who regularly work in times of crisis. It is important to clarify that if the presumption does not apply workers are still able and encouraged to lodge a claim for a work related injury under the scheme's existing decision-making pathway.

The bill requires a PTSD diagnosis to be certified by a psychiatrist. This requirement recognises the unique manner in which PTSD may present in first responders. To ensure first responders are not impeded in making a claim and are able to access support as soon as possible, if a first responder does

not have a diagnosis from a specialist the insurer will be responsible for arranging and funding one. Importantly, this does not prevent an insurer from accepting a PTSD claim based on a diagnosis by a doctor alone if they are satisfied that the injury is work related.

Under the bill, the presumption can be rebutted but only if there is evidence employment was not the cause of the PTSD; for example, if a psychiatrist certifies that a first responder's PTSD was caused by an incident perhaps that has occurred outside of their employment.

I think it is important also to acknowledge the investment that many departments and agencies have made in preventing the onset of PTSD. As we all know, prevention is preferred. Many, if not most, frontline services now invest in employee assistance programs that help provide free psychological support to employees and often their families.

This bill continues the proud record of the Palaszczuk government in protecting and advancing the rights of Queensland workers—I am proud to join a government that has championed this cause—for example, with paid pandemic leave, nation-first labour hire licensing laws, nation-first paid domestic and family violence leave, industrial manslaughter laws and portable long service leave for the community services sector which is a fantastic initiative. This bill offers another important and necessary reform to protect our workers and I commend it to the House.



Mr MILLAR (Gregory—LNP) (3.14 pm): I rise to speak in support of this bill, which will essentially create a special category of workers compensation for first responders suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder due to trauma exposure suffered in the course of their work duties.

First responders are a very special category of workers. Most Queenslanders recognise this and are very grateful for the work they do. In the context of this bill, first responder employment categories will include police, ambulance, child safety, youth justice and corrective service officers. In addition, fire service officers, members of the SES, and members of the rural fire brigade, including fire wardens and volunteer firefighters, will also be included in this bill. Last but not least, the changes will cover doctors and nurses working in emergency and trauma care, acute care, critical care and high-dependency care.

I think most Queenslanders would agree that these employees face heightened risks of PTSD as part of their daily duties. By its nature, PTSD can occur from exposure to a single traumatic event. For instance, many first responders to the Granville train disaster in New South Wales in 1977 struggled with PTSD following the rescue and recovery operation to assist victims. PTSD can also develop over time from repeated exposure to smaller events. As the medical community and wider society have developed a fuller understanding of how PTSD occurs and how it can demolish the lives of sufferers, there has been wider acceptance that victims should be afforded every assistance. This must include cases where PTSD develops as part of a worker or volunteer doing their job.

It is not uncommon for the media to celebrate a supposed increased awareness or understanding in Australia about mental illness, but can I say that I find that commentary greatly overblown. Restricting my comments to occupational PTSD, victims of this illness will struggle alone. They will also struggle to arrive at a diagnosis because the illness can deprive them of insight into the triggers and patterns of their behaviour. Often the first time they seek help is when they reach an actual crisis point: a mental breakdown, nervous collapse or even suicide attempt.

For my constituents in the seat of Gregory, there is no easy access to care for a loved one suffering from such a crisis. This is reflected in the devastating small numbers of residential beds available to Queenslanders requiring residential treatment for that type of psychiatric episode. Take as an example the Central Highlands, an area the size of the state of Tasmania with a population of approximately 28,600 people. In the last parliament, in 2019 I asked the then Labor health minister how many hospital beds were available for Central Highlands patients requiring in-hospital suicide watch or treatment. The answer was that they could be admitted to the Emerald Hospital general ward. Even then the health minister could see that this could be only a very short stay—so what then?

There are 23 dedicated adult mental health beds at the Rockhampton Hospital. These beds have to treat all mental health patients requiring inpatient care and attention for all of Central Queensland—the cities of Rockhampton, Gladstone, all hinterland towns and the entire population west of the Great Divide, all the way to the borders with the Northern Territory and South Australia. There are 23 beds in total. To get an inpatient place in Central Queensland, patients suffering a crisis due to occupational PTSD will be 'competing' in a triage system against patients suffering from a crisis due to every other kind of mental health issue. In short, for all our so-called increased awareness, we are still not funding mental health care adequately. It is not care if you cannot access it.


Because of the time it can take to get a diagnosis, it is not uncommon for PTSD sufferers to self-medicate through the use of alcohol and drugs or prescription drugs, so how easy will it be for occupational PTSD sufferers to access residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation in Queensland? The answer to a question on notice asked by the member for Southport reveals that there are only 674 dedicated beds for residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation in all of Queensland. That is about one in 7,700—very bad odds indeed. So how would a sufferer of occupational PTSD who develops a related addiction problem go getting a place in residential rehabilitation?

With the exception of Mount Isa, there are zero beds west of the coast. That is not west of the Great Divide; that is west of the coastal cities like Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Mackay. That number again is zero. For people in the Central Highlands, the Central West and South West, that is zero. The 19 beds in Rockhampton and the 10 in Mackay are supposed to fulfil the needs of the entire population of Central Queensland from the coast to the borders, including beds for our Closing the Gap goals.

I welcome this bill. It is just the first step in helping sufferers of occupational PTSD. It will help them because it directly addresses the problems they face in securing workers compensation. The *Courier-Mail* last month reported that psychiatric injuries were 10 times more likely to be rejected by WorkCover than physical injuries. To quote the report, data released under the Right to Information Act shows more than half of the WorkCover psychological injury claims in Queensland in the 2019-20 financial were rejected. In contrast, the rejection rate for physical injury claims was around 4.9 per cent. Under the current WorkCover system, workers must prove the psychological injury and that it has been caused by the duties they have undertaken in the course of their work. This is a very high hurdle, particularly given the long time frames that can be involved for PTSD. Also, the nature of the psychological trauma means it can consume most of the victim's energy and functional capacity.

I welcome the fact that this bill reverses the onus of proof. It means that it will be assumed that a first responder's PTSD injury was caused by their job, unless the employer can prove otherwise. In taking this approach, the Queensland government is to be commended, but they must watch this step with a real effort to ensure that sufferers of occupational PTSD are able to access the treatments they need to recover.

Like I said, we have zero beds in Western Queensland and the Central Highlands when it comes to treatment. Those beds are on the coast in cities like Rockhampton and Mackay. To get a person from a place like Emerald or Alpha admitted into one of those beds is incredibly hard. The next step is to make sure we have the beds available for those people to assess what they need to recover. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (3.21 pm): I rise to support the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I would like to commend the committee for its work on these reforms and, of course, the staff who supported the committee so well through this process.

There are few in our community who are more admired than those on the front line dealing with the most horrendous incidents that our emergency workers can face. Our first responders are there when we need them—when serious criminal activity puts our citizens at risk, when buildings catch fire, when vehicles collide, and when children are in danger from those who should protect them. Time after time they put themselves into the breach when we need them the most, and they deal with the crisis in ways the untrained are unable to. The reasons they are up high whenever lists of our most respected professions are published are obvious to us all.

Our first responders pay a price for the trauma they experience and the trauma they witness on a daily basis. Our systems and processes for looking after them are likely better than ever, but, sadly, many still face the long-term impact of post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of what they experience while protecting the rest of us. These workers are proud professionals. They are great at what they do. As much as they might seem bulletproof to us, they can be damaged by what they put themselves through to protect us and to protect the most vulnerable among us.

Our workers compensation system already rightly recognises post-traumatic stress disorder as an injury. However, the very nature of this injury means it can be years before symptoms manifest, and even longer before they are recognised, acknowledged, treated and compensated. Our society has made great strides over the last few decades in that the acceptance and compassion shown to people with mental illnesses and injuries is now what we expect. That is as it should be.

The times when first responders were expected to take all traumatic experiences in their stride or, even worse, hide their pain behind closed doors are hopefully behind us. As a community we needed to move onto a place where pain and trauma do not need to be swept under the rug in order to be thought brave or competent or good enough, and I believe we are getting there. The stigma of PTSD is dissipating.

These changes that make up this legislative amendment are another step in ensuring that first responders who suffer trauma through the broad experience of their employment are adequately compensated and cared for. Crucially, it ensures that there is not an unreasonable or even dangerous delay in PTSD sufferers being able to access the support they need. PTSD symptoms can take a wide range of forms, and some of those symptoms can make it harder for the sufferers to get help. These changes will introduce a presumption that a first responder's PTSD is caused by their employment, unless that can be proven otherwise, eliminating one of the key causes of delays in treatment and support.

Imagine being traumatised by years of trying to save car crash victims or of putting out fires while families alongside you watch their homes go up in flames, only to be met with demands to 'prove it' when you finally reach out for help. These changes mean that our first responders should no longer face the potential for further trauma through the claims process.

Across these service areas there were more than 100 compensation claims for PTSD from the Queensland public sector in the 10 months to May 2020, and more than 90 per cent were accepted. On average, these claimants spent more than nine months off work before being able to return to the workplace with support. These changes are designed specifically to support officers employed under the Police Service Administration Act, authorised officers under the Child Protection Act, corrections officers under the Corrective Services Act, youth justice workers under the Youth Justice Act and fire officers either employed or volunteering under the Fire and Emergency Services Act. They will also apply to doctors and nurses employed in emergency and trauma care, acute care, critical care and high-dependency care roles.

Claims will relate to those who have experienced repeated or extreme exposure to graphic details of traumatic incidents either directly or indirectly as a result of their employment. The amendments in this legislation include appropriate safeguards in terms of access to compensation. For a claim to qualify for the presumptive provisions, the post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis must be confirmed by a specialist, namely, a psychiatrist. Claims can still be lodged if an injured worker does not have a psychiatrist report confirming the diagnosis; however, insurers will then be required to organise and pay for a psychiatrist report at the time of the claim.

Insurers will remain free to accept claims made for PTSD if diagnosed by a general practitioner, with the claimant in such cases bearing the responsibility to establish that their condition is work related. Claims where the presumption of a work relationship to PTSD is operative, the ability for insurers to rebut claims of a work relationship based on evidence that has been provided will remain in place. The usual and appropriate decision review processes will remain in place for injured workers and employers who are dissatisfied with the decision of an insurer.

I am proud to stand in this place as a former industrial officer with the Queensland Police Union of Employees. Our police and other first responders have a rich and wonderful history of standing up for all of us, so I am proud to be able to stand up in here today and stand up for them. In years gone by I have sat with officers struggling with the trauma and magnitude of what they have experienced, either in a specific incident or over the length and breadth of their careers. I have listened to them as they spoke of their battles, the impacts on their health, the toll on their marriages, and their fear—yes, their fear—of being thought less of if they put their hand up and say they need help. I hope we are approaching the point where every officer and every first responder feels that help is at hand if they are struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder. On many occasions I represented those officers before the workers compensation medical assessment tribunal, with the vast majority of those cases being stress related.

I will give members a bit of a history lesson in terms of workers compensation for police officers. They were not covered by a workers compensation act until 1990. It was a Labor government coming into power that provided assistance to our brave, professional police officers. They had to wait for a Labor government to introduce protection and coverage under the Workers' Compensation Act 1990. Prior to that, the only way they could access assistance for a work related injury was through the sick leave bank. Now they have workers compensation thanks to a Labor government.


I will read into *Hansard* a passage from the second reading speech at the time which was given by Terry Mackenroth, the then minister for police and emergency services. He said—

Police officers will also have the equivalent of full workers' compensation coverage in the appropriate circumstances so that no police officer who is injured at work, or on the way to or from work, is in any worse position than any other working member of the community.

This a standard that a Labor government introduced into this parliament.

I also want to put on record my appreciation of many of the submitters who gave evidence on this bill—in particular, Ian Leavers, the President of the Queensland Police Union of Employees. He fought long and hard not only for the police officers he represents but also for first responders. Also, on many occasions I engaged with the Ferny Grove police in my electorate. They are honourable and decent people, like all police officers, and do a sterling job—in particular, the officer in charge, Jeannie Murray.

In conclusion, I want to thank Minister Grace for introducing this bill into parliament, a bill of a sort that is introduced by Labor governments on a regular basis, supporting workers. I know that she has the back of many of those workers. Well done. I am very proud to commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (3.30 pm): I rise to speak to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I note that the bill introduces presumptive workers compensation laws for first responders diagnosed with PTSD which seeks to make it easier for first responders to claim workers compensation for PTSD—an objective which I believe is an important step to supporting the first responders who sacrifice for Queenslanders each and every day. As members know, this is an issue that is close to my heart, not only because of my own experience suffering from PTSD and depression, which was a consequence of my military service, but also because my wife, Anna, served as a Queensland police officer.


It is my view that governments at all levels have a moral obligation to support those who have sacrificed their mental and physical health in performing important tasks which, while necessary, often have a significant detrimental effect on those who perform them. I am confident that most Queenslanders appreciate the significant burden that dealing with situations like violent assaults, child abuse deaths, horrific motor vehicle accidents and the like places on frontline responders such as police officers, ambulance officers, QFES officers and volunteers.

Along with the police, our corrective service officers often deal with the worst elements of our society and, consequently, are exposed to trauma which many Queenslanders could not imagine. It is therefore appropriate that they too are captured as first responders within this legislation. On that note, I would like to recognise the experience and contribution of the member for Caloundra who spoke about his experience as a Queensland Corrective Services officer, and the challenges that came with that, during his maiden speech. This bill seeks to better meet government's moral obligation in that regard. While I accept that there will be an additional cost to the workers compensation scheme, it is my view that society as a whole should meet that cost for frontline responders.

While I support moves to reverse the onus of proof to enable frontline responders such as police and fire and ambulance officers to receive workers compensation for PTSD, I do have concerns about the broad definition of 'first responders' referred to in some of the submissions to this bill. Paramedics, police officers, firefighters, ambulance officers and other emergency personnel are trained to provide assistance in time critical, and often life-threatening situations. They are clearly first responders. The definition of 'first responder' should also rightly be defined to include child safety officers and Youth Justice staff members as they respond to frontline issues.

However, there is a real risk that expanding the presumption beyond traditional first responders will open the floodgates for other non-first responder industries to be part of this scheme including private businesses and private employees. Unions have already called for the laws to apply to electricians, not-for-profit community service employees and disability service workers. This would severely impact the Queensland WorkCover scheme due to the potential enormous number of statutory claims. For the employer, such an approach would consume time and resources and would create added complexity in the event that an employer needed to rebut the claims. These further changes would also impact the ability of employers to meet increased premiums, potentially putting the entire system at risk. It would create a significant burden for employers who wish to rebut an unjustified claim.

In conclusion, I believe that this is a positive initiative and I am pleased to support it, but it should be limited to frontline emergency workers who bear the burden of regularly dealing with traumatic events that have the potential to result in PTSD.

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (3.34 pm): I support the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I would like to start by placing on record my recognition of the police officers, firefighters, ambulance officers and all of those other groups of workers who have to deal with very traumatic situations. I have been on the 'cleaned up' side of things in hospital where patients have been through the emergency department. It is still quite confronting to be looking after people who have been through such traumatic situations. I can only imagine what it is like on the side of the road.

Like all nurses and doctors, I have an obligation to stop if I see an accident and render assistance. Whenever I do see an accident and pull up, I do not know what I am going to face. Thankfully for me I have never had to face anything too harrowing and serious. I can imagine that if you did that day in day out, not knowing what was at the end of a drive to an accident, it must be very challenging. This bill is a really important step because it is going to improve the chances of the effectiveness of treatment and rehabilitation. For that reason alone, it is an incredibly important step forward.

PTSD is a mental health condition triggered by a terrifying event, either experiencing it or witnessing it. In my roles I have probably had more experience with people who have experienced it. The first time I was aware of dealing with PTSD was as a nurse in the ICU at Greenslopes. Twenty-five years after the end of the Vietnam conflict we had patients regularly coming through the intensive care unit for other operations who were clearly suffering from PTSD and were under the care and treatment of the very good Keith Payne mental health unit at Greenslopes hospital. You could see the impact it was having on those individuals, their families and the broader community.

Also, during my time at the rehabilitation unit at the Royal Brisbane Hospital in particular, I dealt with people who had been through quite severe and significant workplace injuries, as well as car accidents and a range of other traumatic experiences. Again, that made me realise how debilitating PTSD can be for people. Fortunately, I think in that 12- to 13-year gap between working in ICU at Greenslopes and then at rehabilitation at the Royal there had been a lot of recognition of and work done in the area of PTSD. We have reasonably good diagnostic tools and we have some reasonably good evidence based treatments.

As with any disease process, universally you could say that early intervention is always going to improve your chances of better outcomes. That is certainly the case here. This parliament and the minister and the department have recognised this in some of the actions that have already been taken. In 2019 the parliament passed amendments to our workers compensation laws that required insurers to take all reasonable steps to provide claimants with psychological injuries reasonable treatment and support services while their claim was being determined. That was a really important step forward, making sure that people who are making a claim are getting access to counselling, support and medical treatment. Further, the funded Workers' Psychological Support Service is another really important step forward in making sure that people who are seeking compensation or have been affected by trauma related to their working life have access to good support.

We know that not every single person who experiences trauma will go on to develop PTSD. There are a range of factors that will increase their likelihood of developing PTSD following a single or repeated exposure to traumatic events. One of the factors that I think is most prevalent to this bill is anxiety. According to the information from the Mayo Clinic, a person is much more likely to develop PTSD after a traumatic event if they have other mental health problems such as anxiety.


As a union official and in my dealings with constituents the process of making a compensation claim for any type of injury can be lengthy and can create anxiety, even when that process is going well. By taking a presumptive approach this legislation will remove a source of anxiety. When you combine that with the other measures that have been put in place by the government, such as the Workers' Psychological Support Service and the requirement for insurance companies to take early intervention, we will put people in a position where they will be able to seek access to early diagnosis and treatment. If we do that fewer people will develop PTSD, so this bill is a really important step forward in relation to preventing the anxiety that can contribute to the eventual development of PTSD.

I do want to comment briefly on the committee's recommendation around the DSM. It is a well-established tool that has been used in mental health and broader health settings for as long as I can remember. It is an extremely effective tool. It is evidence based. It is well supported across the disciplines and it is regularly reviewed and updated based on the latest evidence. It is the gold standard for diagnosing anyone in the mental health space.

While I respect the committee's views in relation to that, I do think it is important to put on record that the DSM is our basic diagnostic tool when it comes to mental health. We have to be careful with it because oftentimes people are out there identifying other diseases and claiming they are diseases


when in fact that is not necessarily supported by the evidence and certainly not by the DSM. It is not a political document: it is a clinical document. It is well researched and evidence based, so I think it is good that we have not necessarily taken that recommendation on board.

I thank the committee for their great work. They have done a good job on this bill. I want to thank all of the submitters and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (3.41 pm): First responders are the heroes of our communities, and the LNP's support of the bill is recognition of that. Many members in this House were formerly police men and women who put their lives and minds on the line every day when they were sent to traumatic events, whether it be road accidents, homicides or other very traumatic situations. I also recognise the member for Thuringowa, who was formerly a paramedic, and the member for Greenslopes, who was a nurse. They put themselves in very difficult situations that many of us could not handle on a day-to-day basis. Fires also face horrific fire events and road accident rescues which are very traumatic. Nobody should be under any illusion as to the difficulties faced by these people in their daily jobs. That is why there should be no excuse for any abuse when it comes to those people in our community. That is also why we need to support those men and women first responders who get ill when they are helping us.

This legislation is similar to the presumptive laws that were put in place a couple of years ago for firefighters with respect to certain respiratory illness. That commonsense amendment to WorkCover legislation was implemented in 2015 and so far it has not, as far as I am aware, led to any of the slippery slope scenarios in terms of huge runs on WorkCover claims or anything like that. I acknowledge the concerns that have been raised about putting an undue burden on the WorkCover system. We always need to be mindful that, when we bring in laws like this which will extend the coverage of WorkCover, we do not create a system that is too unwieldy or too costly for taxpayers or contributors to the WorkCover system. This bill is not one of them. We need to support those who support us. We also need to recognise that trauma in our workplace has many hidden costs, whether it is road trauma, trauma related to violent crime or trauma related to child abuse material or events. All of these incur costs to the community and costs to the individuals and their families who are associated with it.

As other speakers have mentioned, I believe that having this type of legislation in place and providing more support to those on the front line can help mitigate the costs associated with trauma by addressing it in a more open and forthright manner. I refer to the explanatory notes for the bill, which refers to a lot of the things I have spoken about in terms of our first responders 'experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of traumatic events', in particular 'first responders collecting human remains' and police officers who are repeatedly exposed to child exploitation material or horrific violent homicidal events. These are the things that many of us never have to face and many of us would never want to face. In supporting this bill we are supporting those who support us in our community. The heroes are our first responders.

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.45 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I thank both the previous committee of the 56th Parliament and the current committee for its consideration of the bill. I thank the minister for seeing this bill through to the parliament, noting the extensive work and consultation that has gone into developing this bill.

This bill is one that is important to me. In contributing to this bill I declare: that I have served as a sworn police officer in this state for 20 years; that in that time I have had my own mental health issues and subsequent battles with the service following a mental health diagnosis; and that my husband is still a serving police officer here in Queensland.

When I stood in this House just over three years ago to give my address-in-reply I outlined the pride I had in serving this state as a member of the Queensland Police Service. In that speech I made specific reference to my desire to be a champion for the general duties officer—the uniformed first responder—in this House, so it is as a champion of the general duties police officer that I offer my support and contribution to this bill.

I have seen the enthusiasm that people have when they join the Queensland Police Service. I have conducted many police recruiting interviews. I have sat with hundreds of civilians as they signed and I co-signed their first QPS employment contract. I have marched with hundreds more as they graduated as sworn police officers on that most joyous day. These people joined the Police Service to make a contribution to their community—a difference. They see the positives that police officers can bring about in keeping people safe. Very few of them, if any, are prepared for what they will see on the road. There are just not that many jobs out there that really prepare you, because in general duties you

will see it all. They will see death—and lots of it—in almost every single imaginable way, the sudden and the not so sudden. They will see the results of, and bear witness to, extreme violence. They will see the worst of human depravity visited upon the most innocent. They will see and deal with people who are experiencing the worst day of their lives, and they will be the bearer of the worst news. They will put words to the news that you cannot bear to hear.

Some wretched few will have to make the split-second decision that ends someone else's life. They will carry that around and then they will go home. They will have dinner with their kids, put them to bed and wake up the next day for their next shift. Rinse, repeat. There is only so much that one can do to prepare a police recruit for this. For many of the police recruits I accompanied to the morgue it would be the first time they had seen a dead body. The mental health and trauma resilience training at the academy can only do so much when there is little real world context and emotion at play. There is only so much you can role-play or put on butcher's paper.

I remember my first shift on the road after graduation. I was 21. It was a fatal car crash on Nerang Broadbeach Road. It would be the first of dozens that I would attend throughout my career—holding someone's hand because that is all you could reach in the mangled wreckage of a car as they sobbed, cried and took their last breaths. The suicides, the stabbings, the gunshot wounds, the lost limbs, the dismemberments, the violent murders, the drowned bloated bodies, the sudden unexplained deaths of infants. We all have a dark sense of humour and the most morbid dinner conversations. It is kind of how we cope.

It can blur. They can all fade into this dark picture but some of them do not. The faces, the bodies, the feeling of dread, the sounds of the guttural cries of grieving relatives—it pervades and it lingers. It sits at the bottom of your chest like a weight. Time eventually does lighten that weight but only until the next job, and then that cumulative weight just sits so heavy that sometimes you feel like you cannot get up. When you cannot get up and when you cannot put into words what it is that dragged you down there in the first place, when you most need help, that is when the first responder is meant to navigate the mental health and workers compensation scheme—if that person is even strong enough to do so.


I have spoken before in this House about the stigma of mental health and seeking help within the police culture, so I will not spend time going over those well-known cultural barriers again. Suffice to say that putting your hand up to ask for help is no easy thing. Beyond Blue's 2018 report *Answering the call* revealed that mental health and psychological injury claims for first responders were 10 times higher than the general workforce. One in three police and emergency service employees experience high or very high psychological distress. It also found that of those who made claims 75 per cent found that the actual workplace compensation system was detrimental to their recovery. What system does that? The very system one needs to navigate to get better actually makes them worse. One submitter viewed the compensation process as highly retraumatising. If I can say one good thing for the Queensland system, it is that in my experience it is still 10 times better than the military compensation and rehabilitation service.

The difficulty often experienced by emergency service responders—the ones who rock up to these jobs day in, day out—is the ability to link a psychological injury or diagnosis to a particular event. For those of you who are familiar with filling out the types of claim forms out there, the first page normally requires the complainant to fill out the time, date and place that the injury was sustained. For many first responders, they are unable to identify one particular incident because it is the result of a cumulative exposure to trauma. This bill provides first responders and eligible employees of first responder agencies suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder with easier, timelier access to necessary support and compensation by reversing the onus of proof and deeming their injury to be work related. I acknowledge the categories of employees that are captured under the provisions of this bill and note the role that the 12-month review will have in determining whether sufficient employment categories are covered in this bill. I also note that the minister will table the outcome of that 12-month review.

This bill is important. Do not underestimate the lives that are precariously balanced as shattered, broken people—the ones who put their hands up to serve the community for the greater good—navigate the system looking for help. I have been to far too many funerals. If all it took was love and support to help these people, to bring them back from the brink, so many more of my friends and colleagues would still be here today.

It has been just over three years since we lost a great friend and colleague, Senior Constable Bruce Cooper. Bruce served 10 years in the New South Wales police and then 10 years with the QPS. Bruce struggled with what he saw and what he did in the service and the jobs that he went to. Bruce coped by drinking. He was medically retired in 2008. So many people reached out but it was not enough.

Once he was medically retired, the organisational support just was not there. Ironically, sadly, they were all there to manage the police incident that ended it all. I would like to acknowledge in this House the work of Mark Kelly and the team at Blue Hope. They stand ready to help current and former serving officers and I urge any and all former and current serving members to reach out when it is too much. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.54 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. At the outset I want to commend all of our first responders in Queensland and thank them for the work that they do. I wish to thank the Education, Employment and Training Committee members on both sides of the House for their consideration of the bill. I note that there were seven recommendations made by the committee. I want to draw the attention of the House to recommendation No. 2 from the committee which states—

... an employee of a local government whose duties correspond to that of an ambulance officer, a corrective services officer, or a fire service officer, or who is required to attend and secure a site to provide safe access for other first responders.

This recommendation is, unfortunately, quite broad. Given the government's acceptance of that recommendation in the amendments, it is quite concerning that there has not been full consultation with the local government sector. There are some 40,000 employees in the local government sector potentially involved. There are local government staff who have to undertake roles that you might not expect from local government employees. For instance, in the Paroo shire, their staff are the undertakers, providing burial services to the community.

That brings us to the problem highlighted by the Queensland Law Society, where they made mention of the anomaly in the legislation drafting of 'first responder'. Numerous occupations and people in the funeral industry have duties that do not prevent death or injury but they are involved regularly in dealing with the aftermath of death or injury. Local governments have staff in the funeral industry directly employed. However, they are not considered to be a first responder by the legislation. During disaster situations, local government staff are often working alongside first responders, and I commend those local government staff for the work they do. It is a very difficult job sometimes in very traumatic circumstances.

This recommendation from the committee is not an amendment that should be done on the run by the Labor government. It has been dropped on the local government sector at the last minute and, Minister, it is quite vague. How will the local government work out which positions it applies to and how much will this cost the sector? We already have the Auditor-General warning about financial sustainability, and here we go with further potential cost impacts on the local government sector.

Minister, where is the actuarial modelling of the costs or impacts on the scheme? Such changes should have been taken through proper consultation processes and given scrutiny in the legislative processes to allow the sector to fully appreciate the outcomes and costs to ensure that those who should be included are included. This parliament has seen far too much rushed legislation resulting in unintended consequences impacting on the local government sector. Just look at what happened with the legislation for mayoral and council vacancies, and look at what has happened with the sacking of councillors. This government needs to stop the legislation on the run for the local government sector. We do not want any more pineapple situations.

I note that the minister outlined in her second reading speech that the government will be accepting recommendation No. 2. I note the explanatory notes state that the Office of Industrial Relations extended invitations to discuss the proposal to clarify the inclusion of first responders in local government. However, the explanatory notes do not mention the outcome of that consultation. Have those discussions in fact occurred? Have the industry groups that were consulted agreed or have they disagreed? This parliament does not have that information. The minister should clearly spell this out to the parliament.

What were the views of the stakeholders following these invitations that were issued by the Office of Industrial Relations? What were the views of the stakeholders on the amendments? Minister, it would be appropriate to update the House on these stakeholder views. There are complex roles across the local government sector and I urge the minister to address these concerns in her summing-up. I also urge her to do proper and meaningful consultation with the local government sector. There are now some 40,000 employees across Queensland who want to know a lot more about how this legislation will impact them.

Speaking of the minister's second reading speech, I would like to make note of where the minister referred to the current workers compensation scheme. For the benefit of the House the minister said the Queensland scheme had one of the lowest premiums in the country. It is a matter of fact that the minister inherited a well run, low-cost scheme because of the heavy lifting done by the LNP when they

were in government. It was also the LNP who introduced presumptive legislation for firefighters and rural firefighters. After the LNP introduced this legislation, the government said, 'Oh gee, that's a good idea. We might just adopt that and do the same.' Again, the heavy lifting was done by the LNP to look after workers.

The objective of the bill is to provide an alternative claims pathway for first responders with PTSD that presumes they have a work related injury unless it is proven that their injury was not caused by work. This may potentially result in behavioural changes which, in turn, may increase the number of workers compensation claims lodged and accepted for claims within the scope of the bill. Potential claims costs due to behavioural change will be borne by the employers of the first responders through their workers compensation insurance premiums. I will outline a couple of concerns raised by the Queensland Law Society.

The QLS raised concern about the viability of the Queensland WorkCover scheme including the potential floodgates which may be opened by the broad definition of a first responder and eligible employee as currently proposed. It is important not to misread the intent of the QLS as they agree without reservation that workers with work caused psychiatric and psychological injuries should be entitled to workers compensation and support. However, they state that the broad legislative changes, which are not supported by empirical evidence, risk negatively impacting the scheme and must be carefully considered to ensure that the public interest of preserving the viability of the scheme is balanced against the issue being addressed.

I do want to raise an issue about workers compensation for those who live along the borders of this state who are Queensland residents but work in New South Wales. I received this letter from a concerned mother whose son had a serious motorbike accident whilst working on a rural property. She states—

My son, Thomas, had a workplace accident in New South Wales and was admitted to Dirranbandi hospital. He has a fractured leg and will need a plate, screws and a rod inserted. We followed the correct protocol and contacted insurance for a claim number as he was being flown to St Vincent's Toowoomba for the surgery.

Unfortunately the swelling in his leg started and the surgeon made the decision to hold off until the following Monday. I drove him down to Toowoomba (on advice from surgeon) so he could wait for his surgery.


At a pre surgery visit with the surgeon, he was advised that the workers compensation insurance was not approved and he was unable to go ahead with the arranged surgery unless Thomas was willing to pay the \$10000 + cost if the insurance was not approved.

He is still waiting in Toowoomba for the approval, he has been contacted by the insurance company to say it could be approved this week or up to 21 days.

The surgeon is madly trying to get him now listed through the Base Hospital to enable his surgery to go ahead.

The work cover was finally approved nine days after the accident and surgery occurred 12 days after the accident. During this time Thomas had a badly broken leg.

This case highlights the need for a cross-border commissioner who can develop pathways for interstate workers compensation schemes to operate in conjunction with our Queensland health system. It would greatly assist Queensland residents who have workers compensation in one state but are hospitalised in their resident—Queensland—state.

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (4.03 pm): I rise to speak on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I would like to thank the minister and the committee. This bill was examined by the former committee that I was on prior to the 2020 election. After hearing the member for Warrego I thought that people on the other side were starting to get what this legislation is about, but unfortunately some people do not. It is about the workers. It is about a debilitating disease, PTSD, that affects a lot of people. I know of some of the stresses that my colleague who sits beside me, the member for Thuringowa, is under from his days as a paramedic. We all know of this. We have all had friends or work colleagues who have suffered in some way from this. I do not say that I fully understand because I have never been a first responder. I could not imagine what our police officers, ambos or correctional services officers go through. One of my friends opened up a cell door one day and found one of his prisoners hanging. I know that affected him greatly, and I still see him today. He went on a self-medication trip, as we all do. We called it 'Dr Dan's' but that did not help either. It is very sad to see this. This is what this legislation is about. This is what a Labor government does.

We were talking earlier and I have heard members opposite talk about the cost of workers compensation. In all the years I have employed people and all the years I have had businesses my workers compensation bill has always stayed even, but my general insurance bill has gone through the

roof. The insurance bills for my businesses, my cars et cetera have gone through the stratosphere and yet the workers compensation bill has been managed well over many, many years. We hear that the workers compensation bill will blow out. However, it was one of the lowest costs in my business in terms of insurance.

When we look at PTSD, we have to look at not only its effect on the individual but also on their immediate families and their work colleagues. I thank the minister, and I worked closely with the minister on this. I know that there is no person in this chamber—and I have known the minister for a long time—who champions workers' rights more and ensures workers are looked after. For the member for Warrego to say that this is knee-jerk legislation is an insult; it is an absolute insult. This legislation is well thought out legislation. This legislation is for the workers. This legislation is for families. This is for the wives and for the husbands. This is for our emergency services people. I was listening to the member for Macalister talking earlier. We should think about the police officer who has to go to a family and tell them that their son or daughter or their husband or wife is not coming home due to an accident or some of the road trauma that the ambos and the fires experience or when they have to go to a house fire and bring children out.

This legislation is good legislation. It is well overdue. This is what a Labor government does; this is what we do: we deliver. If there is a minor cost I think we all should bear that through the community to ensure that people are well looked after, that their PTSD is diagnosed and that they get treatment. As the member for Macalister said, after the officer left, the treatment stopped. We have to make sure we look after people with PTSD continuously because it is an insidious disease.

I support this bill 100 per cent. This is why I am proud to be part of a government—and proud to know this minister—that brings in this legislation for workers throughout Queensland.



Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (4.07 pm): It is interesting to follow the contribution of the member for Maryborough who spoke about the well-managed workers compensation levies. I speak as someone who also had to pay those levies through a prior business. It is obvious that in his business he may not have appreciated that the workers compensation levies he was paying were well managed by the LNP government of which I was a member; we brought the rate down. When you run an ice cream shop it is unlikely you would get a workers compensation claim because you are unlikely to be injured very much. That is why. If there was ever a claim made by someone—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Pause the clock.

Mr Saunders interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Maryborough, you are warned under the standing orders. I have paused the clock. I have asked for silence. I cannot hear the member on his feet.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your protection. If you have ever been injured in an ice cream shop, which is the business that the member had—

Ms Grace: That's a disgrace.

Mr LANGBROEK: No, I am serious. What would happen under the workers compensation scheme is that the money that was paid—

Ms Grace interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Cease your interjections, please, Minister.

Mr LANGBROEK:—to the particular employee would be recouped by the workers compensation fees over the next three years.

Ms Grace: So what? You've got to be a dentist, do you? Snobbery. It's a disgrace.

Mr LANGBROEK: If those opposite are prepared to listen—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Minister, you are warned under the standing orders. Member for Everton, you are warned under the standing orders. Please cease your interjections. I cannot hear the member for Surfers Paradise.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. By the way, if those opposite were prepared to listen a little longer, I was going to say that in my profession of dentistry there is also quite a low rate of workers compensation premium because there are very few injuries to dental staff that are usually affected by workers compensation. Therefore, whether it is an ice-cream shop or a dental

surgery, the important issue here is that workers compensation premiums were managed by the LNP, which inherited a system that made us amongst the most expensive in the country. When we left government the minister inherited a system that is the best.

If you are in those blue collar environments such as plumbing or any of the trades, where employers have to pay when a claim is made through workers compensation, the issue remains that the payments made to those workers are subsequently recovered through increased premiums for the employer over the next three years. That is not insurance. That is still an issue in our system and is something that this government has failed to address.

I note that the member for Maryborough spoke about the fact that a Labor government introduced this presumptive legislation. As the member for Kawana said in his contribution as shadow minister for industrial relations, it was our government that brought in presumptive legislation for firefighters. Legislation gets amended over time, and this side of the parliament supports applying presumptive legislation to other jobs. It was our government that brought it in. The member for Everton was part of that government. I was part of that government. We were proud to bring that in. Let's not be too precious about who brought in what and when. Under a former Labor government, workers compensation had to be saved because it was hundreds of millions of dollars in debt. That is what really happened over history. It was a broken system that Santo Santoro had to fix when he was in government between 1995 and 1998.

Government members interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: They are the facts. Those opposite can argue as much as they like, but they are the facts. A debt of hundreds of millions of dollars had to be fixed by us and by those opposite. Now we are adding to that legislation.

I acknowledge the poignant contribution of the member for Macalister as someone who has served—as have some members on this side—in a first responder role. Those sorts of jobs are incredibly traumatic. They are the sorts of things that can lead to PTSD and other conditions that we are now addressing with this legislation. They are the real-life heroes of our state. We acknowledge all the time that they work hard to keep us safe—more than ever during floods, bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that they have a high risk of developing PTSD.


According to Beyond Blue's 2018 survey *Answering the call* it was found that first responders' claim rate for mental health conditions or psychological injuries was tenfold that of the adult Australian workforce. I have had police tell me about situations where they have taken officers, as the member for Macalister mentioned, to look at a situation where someone may have died in a house such that the officer who has never seen such before is never able to deal with that situation again. In fact, sometimes they are not able to stay in the Police Service. None of us are saying that we do not believe these things happen. Of course we do. We acknowledge that and government is acknowledging that more compensation and support needs to be available for those people.

I note from the explanatory notes that the purpose of the bill is amend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Regulation 2014 to bring in presumptive workers compensation legislation to enhance workers' claims experience and the mental health outcomes of first responders in Queensland. This bill seeks to introduce presumptive workers compensation laws for first responders diagnosed with PTSD by allowing first responders easier and more timely access to support and compensation without needing to prove that their PTSD is a work related injury. The presumption of injury provision and reversal of onus of proof means that, where a person is diagnosed by a psychiatrist as having PTSD and at any time before the diagnosis was employed as a first responder, that person is taken to have an entitlement to compensation for that injury. This is unless evidence is presented by the first responder's employer to the contrary.

The bill's amendments have a rather broad scope in their coverage of first responders. A first responder is defined in the bill as a worker whose employment requires that worker to respond to incidents that are life-threatening or otherwise traumatic. This category includes police, ambulance personnel, paramedics, firefighters, child safety officers, Youth Justice staff members, emergency nurses and medical practitioners. Additionally, other workers in first responder departments are covered by the bill where their employment requires the worker to experience repeated or extreme exposure to the graphic details of traumatic incidents; for example, as provided in the bill, a fire communications officer who responds to calls for information and advice in emergency situations or a worker who investigates complaints of sexual abuse.

The Queensland Law Society is one stakeholder that took issue with the scope of the application of the proposed presumption to all mentioned classes of frontline workers. The LNP supports a strong and sustainable workers compensation system that ensures all Queensland workers with physical or mental injury or illness are able to, as far as possible, successfully recover and safely return to work. For this reason, the LNP is not opposing the bill but raises concerns as to the broad definition of first responders. The overriding issue is that the occupation categories canvassed in the bill depart from what the general public would ordinarily consider as first responders. For example, whilst child safety officers and Youth Justice staff members make critical and important decisions in their respective roles, these occupations are beyond what is typically considered a first responder job. Additionally, given that there is no closed list of first responder jobs in the bill before us, it is likely that occupations may be prescribed by regulation at a later date. By doing so, this affords Labor the discretion to expand the presumption beyond first responders without consultation or parliamentary scrutiny.

The inclusion of coalmine workers as first responders is being heavily advocated by the Construction, Forestry, Mining, Maritime and Energy Union. Unsurprisingly, the committee's recommendation to amend the bill to include coalmine workers as first responders is made, seemingly, to satisfy the union. Legislation that has for its objective the improvement of the position of workers in terms of being looked after and supported should of course be passed. For this reason, the LNP will be supporting this bill, but it is equally important that the Queensland workers compensation scheme is fit for purpose in respect of meeting the requirements of all stakeholders, including employees and employers. In light of the issues discussed earlier, there are real risks associated with the broad scope of workers who may be covered by the presumptive legislation proposal.

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (4.17 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill has a number of critical elements that work together to produce what is in essence a very simple but very important goal. This bill is about caring for those who care for us. It is about caring for the people who take care of all Queenslanders. It is about caring for our first responders. We see our police, firefighters, emergency services officers, staff and volunteers, correctional officers, community corrections officers and paramedics all working in the community every day to keep us safe. Their presence is an everyday constant. So familiar are we with their reassuring presence that it would be possible to take that presence for granted, but we must never do that. This Labor government never will do that.

We have seen over the past year just how vital our frontline people are when crisis strikes. It has been our frontline people—first responders, police officers and staff, firefighters, emergency services staff, officers and volunteers, paramedics, custodial officers and community corrections staff and officers—who have kept Queenslanders safe during the pandemic. They have kept our borders secure on the roads and in the airports. They have ensured our quarantine hotels are secure. They have made sure our community is safe.

The legislation we are debating is the result of the dedication and unrelenting efforts of the people who represent the best interests of our first responders. I must acknowledge that it was a few years ago that Police Union president Ian Leavers came to me about this idea. Since then, he and I have worked relentlessly on this proposal. The Palaszczuk government made it an election commitment to the Queensland Police Union. Today is the culmination of the efforts of Queensland Police Union. I pay tribute to Ian Leavers and the Queensland Police Union for their contribution to this legislation.

All government workers—all employees that are captured by this bill, including police officers—will now benefit from this advocacy. This is the end result of what can be achieved when workers have a strong union like that we see at the Queensland Police Union. Its strong leadership team, particularly Ian Leavers, Mick Barnes and Shayne Maxwell, should be justifiably proud of what it has been able to deliver for police and other frontline workers. I can honestly say that without Ian, Mick and Shayne this bill would never have been debated in this place.

We must never forget that the work that police officers, our emergency services volunteers, staff and officers, our firefighters, our paramedics, custodial and community corrections officers and staff do is challenging and confronting. It can be dangerous and it can be traumatising, and they are just like us—they can be impacted by that tragedy—and they are not immune to the trauma they deal with on a regular basis.

I also want to acknowledge the strong advocacy of other unions—that is, Alex Scott and Michael Thomas from the Together union; John Oliver from the United Firefighters Union; Adrian Stafford and Neal Francis from the Senior Officers Union; and all unions that have been representing workers about

this important legislation. This is about workers' rights and about making sure that those people who keep our community safe are afforded the best possible support in their time of need. They have fought the good fight to ensure that their members—those members who keep the community safe, who fight fires, who respond to road crashes, who keep correctional centres and communities secure—get the support they need. I want to quote the Together union, which acknowledged this important reform. It said—

This is a very important reform. We know that many of our members are exposed to traumatic events during the course of their work. This legislation will ensure that when our First Responders, our Correctional Officers, Child Safety Officers, SES staff, youth workers and those others included in the Legislation need support they get it, rather than being further traumatised by the process of asking for help.

This legislation will help our first responders get access to all of the care and support they need. This legislation will mean that police, firefighters, emergency service volunteers, officers and staff, custodial officers and community corrections staff will no longer need to prove in the first instance that their injury is work related. They will no longer have the added stress and trauma of needing to prove this before getting treatment. Now police and other first responders will be able to come forward and seek treatment early without needing to go through a lengthy determination process.

In addition, the government's watershed investment in policing will also deliver specialist staff who will be joining a QPS wellbeing centre to help the rehabilitation of recovering officers. Our election commitment was that there would be a minimum extra 10 injury management consultants to support the work of the Queensland Police Service in supporting its workforce. This means doubling the number of injury management officers and means police will get more assistance in a more timely manner when they need it most.

I know too that many of the agencies for which I have portfolio responsibility are doing more to support their workforce to ensure that their workforce gets the best possible support. These efforts will foster positive and supportive organisational cultures that focus on people and put wellbeing first and foremost as a priority. We must never forget that our emergency service workers—our first responders—work in some of the most dangerous environments and consistently place themselves between danger and our community. Our police do it; our firefighters do it; our emergency service volunteers, officers and staff do it; our custodial officers and community corrections officers do it; and our paramedics do it.

This bill recognises the selfless dedication of those who protect our community and this bill puts into practice the deep appreciation of all of us for the efforts of those who keep Queenslanders safe. They care for us, but we must also care for them. I must say that this bill is also unashamedly pro worker—that is, putting workers' supports and workers' protections first and foremost. That is a proud legacy of this Labor government and a proud legacy of Minister Grace's responsibility as the Minister for Industrial Relations. Workers for decades and generations to come will be grateful for her efforts and also the efforts of this government in protecting workers and putting workers first. I commend the bill to the House.



Mr PERRETT (Gympie—LNP) (4.24 pm): I rise to speak on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. This bill seeks to address the impact of psychological injuries and the often emotionally draining requirements to access workers compensation. It will reverse the onus of proof through the presumptive laws and provide an alternative pathway for claims. The explanatory notes state that it will promote earlier claims acceptance by presuming it is a work related injury unless proved otherwise—in effect, presumptive workers compensation laws for first responders diagnosed with PTSD. According to the explanatory notes—

Presumptive laws do not change workers' compensation entitlements but instead provide a different pathway for certain claims to access the scheme by reversing the onus of proof. Under presumptive laws, a specified injury (e.g. PTSD) is deemed to be work-related, unless there is evidence to the contrary.

Current claimants must prove their employment is a significant contributing factor in causing the psychological injury. However, because exposure to trauma can accumulate, it is sometimes hard to identify one specific incident which caused the injury. Despite this, already 80 per cent to 90 per cent of PTSD WorkCover claims are accepted.

Most members of the public have a general idea of who is a first responder. This legislation originates from the findings of a 2019 Senate committee report. It defined first responders as paramedics, police officers, firefighters and other emergency personnel who provide assistance in time critical, often life-threatening, situations and those who do the same in a volunteer capacity and emergency control centre workers. It found that one in three of those employees experience high or

very high psychological distress compared to one in eight Australian adults and one in four former employees experience probable PTSD compared to one in 10 current employees and one in five experience very high distress.

Not only does the bill have a far broader definition; the committee recommendations seek to make it even broader. Under this bill, police, ambulance, child safety officers, corrective services officers, police recruits, Youth Justice staff members, fire service officers, SES members, rural fire brigade and volunteer firefighters and fire wardens as well as doctors or nurses employed in emergency and trauma, acute care, critical or high-dependency care are all identified as first responders. However, several unions and the AMA have asked to expand its coverage further.

The CFMMEU wants coalminer workers included. The Electrical Trades Union wants to include frontline electrical workers and control centre operators in electricity supply, generation and distribution to those in rail and transport and main roads. The nurses union wants all nurses and midwives included. The Australian Workers' Union wants to include disability services workers and protective security workers in hospitals. The Services Union wants to include local government, not-for-profit social and community services workers who are obliged to encounter traumatic events. The AMA wants to include general practitioners.

Following this, the committee made seven recommendations, with three of them seeking to expand who is a first responder and to include other psychological injuries to have a presumptive claim. Those recommendations are to include coalmine workers performing the statutory roles of open-cut examiner, explosive risk zone controller or Mines Rescue team member; an employee who, as part of their regular duties, is required to attend and secure a site to provide safe access for other first responders or whose employment requires them to recover human remains; and an employee of a local government whose duties correspond to that of an ambulance, corrective services or fire service officer or who is required to attend and secure a site to provide safe access for other first responders.

It also recommends including additional occupations and other psychological injuries. These changes could potentially impact the viability of WorkCover, especially for occupations and industries not traditionally considered first responders and if all psychological injuries are included. For example, if any employee in Youth Justice, Child Safety or other departments is included, it would include administrative workers. There are almost 32,000 employees in those departments as well as casual and part-time workers and volunteers. The average cost for mental disorder claims is \$47,480. Broadening any definition of first responder and injuries covered will potentially create a massive financial burden on both public and private entities.

The Queensland Law Society has major reservations about the scope of this bill regarding the reversal of onus of proof, evidence to support the range of workers covered and the potential impact on WorkCover. We already know the government is fond of reverse onus of proof legislation. Farmers and landholders have firsthand experience. The QLS said that the onus of proof is a fundamental legal concept which should not be breached without appropriate justification. It also said that presumptive legislation must be justified on a scientific and epidemiological basis. The QLS is concerned that the broader definition of first responder, eligible employee and relevant volunteer will open the floodgates on claims. It said this potential negative outcome was also outlined in the Department of Education's briefing note as evidence that provides for an estimated 20 per cent additional PTSD claims. Given the nature of this bill and what it will deliver for workers in this state I do not oppose the bill.



Ms PUGH (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.30 pm): A few weeks ago in my electorate, not far from my home in Riverhills, there was a tragic collision. A motorcycle collided with a car and sadly the young man on the motorbike lost his life at the scene. Along with the rest of my community, my heart goes out to his family and friends. Our first responders were on the scene incredibly quickly and they did a wonderful job. When I checked in with our first responders a few days later it was clear that the incident had taken a toll on them—how could it not. Nobody in my community who drove past the accident that night was unaffected by it.


To provide that support for families at a time when they are going through, as the member for Redlands spoke about earlier with her family's experience, one of the most devastating days that a family can have is a skill, but it is one that exacts a price for our hardworking frontline staff who volunteer to carry out this role. It is not a sign of weakness to seek assistance when you do this job day in, day out. Asking for help is one of the strongest things you can do. By passing this bill we are normalising asking for help. We as a society and a parliament are recognising that it is completely understandable that being repeatedly exposed to traumatic events in your line of work may impact on your mental health and it is imperative that if it does you should be encouraged to reach out and seek help.

In my community, well past the time of an incident I have seen our local first responders reach out to the survivors of incidents such as house fires and help them. In fact, a few years ago, and I profiled this on my social media at the time, I took my youth member for Mount Ommaney to see the temporary home of our local fires while we were upgrading our existing station. She requested that if I ever visited the local fire station that she be allowed to come with me because, in fact, her own house had burned down a few years ago and her younger brother had died in that fire.

At the station that day she met some of the officers who had responded to the fire and who had a better recollection of that event than she did because she was so traumatised by it. For one of the officers there it was the first fire that he ever went to. It was his first ever call-out. He was so kind, lovely and gentle in speaking with Cheska. He made the offer to speak with her further if she ever wanted to. It impressed upon me what a special group of people it is who put their hand up to be frontline responders and how they deserve our support and our respect. I am so glad that we are able to do that by passing this bill today.

As we know, this bill allows first responders and eligible employees of first responder agencies suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, to get easier access to necessary support and compensation by reversing that onus of proof and deeming their injury to be work related while leaving open the opportunity for evidence based rebuttal if it is found that, in fact, that injury did not occur in the workplace. We know that from 1 July 2019 to 31 May 2020 there were 113 PTSD claims in the public sector, with 29 claims from the Queensland Police Service reflecting their exposure to time critical and life threatening incidents. Of these 113 claims, 92 were accepted for first responders, noting that these claims tend to be more serious with longer durations. There was an average of 208 work days lost. These more serious incidents do have lower return-to-work outcomes.

I have spoken before in this House about suicide. It is an issue that is close to my heart. I suspect it is an issue that is close to the hearts of many in this House. We know that it is the No. 1 cause of death in men aged 18 to 45 and we know that first responders have a significantly higher rate of PTSD than the general community. As I said before, normalising the provision of support for frontline workers with PTSD is critical to ensuring that our frontline staff know that they can and they should seek help when they need it. I finish by thanking the many first responders who have shared their stories with me as their local member. These stories are private, they are not for sharing in this parliament, but nonetheless they have been instrumental in bringing about the changes that we are seeing today to ensure that our frontline Public Service staff get the help and the support that they need and that they deserve. I commend this bill to the House and I commend the public servants, the doctors, the nurses, the police, the ambulance officers, the fires, the custodial staff and so many more who look after our community.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (4.36 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. At the outset I take the opportunity to thank and commend all of our first responders, those in various emergency services, for the work that they do, but in particular for the work that they have done over the last 12 months.

In Queensland the compensation scheme that is in place for those who suffer a work related injury is established under the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 which allows for an employer's obligation to be covered against liability for compensation and damages either through a WorkCover insurance policy or under a licence as a self-insurer. The legislation that is before the House today is specifically seeking to enact amendments to the workers compensation scheme as it pertains to first responders who are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

By way of background, in 2019 a ministerial stakeholder reference group was formed specifically to consider the findings of a number of reports, including a review in 2018 by Phoenix Australia of the workers compensation claims process for first responders claiming for psychological injuries; a report in 2018 by Beyond Blue titled *Answering the call* which revealed substantially high rates of psychological distress, mental health conditions, as well as suicidal thinking and intent and planning amongst first responders when compared to the general population; and a report in 2019 issued by the Commonwealth Senate following an inquiry into first responder health which recognised the need for early intervention mental health support and made recommendations across the areas of prevalence reporting and management of first responder psychological injuries, workers compensation, return to work and post retirement support.

What the reference group found, and according to the explanatory notes, is that while trauma related injuries such as PTSD from single or cumulative trauma were covered under the workers compensation scheme, the enacting of presumptive workers compensation legislation may assist in overcoming barriers to accessing compensation such as difficulty meeting the legislative test for injury

given instances of first responders being unable to identify a single event causing their injury due to their cumulative exposure to trauma. In other words, under the current scheme the onus is on first responders to prove that their employment is a 'significant contributing factor' in causing their psychological injury.

Therefore, and following the findings of the aforementioned reference group, this legislation introduces a presumptive workers compensation law and will reverse the onus of proof by placing the evidentiary burden on employers. This presumption will apply only where there is a psychiatric diagnosis of PTSD for defined first responders and eligible employees.

Whilst no-one can argue against the intent of ensuring the injury claim process for first responders is as supportive as possible and does not further exacerbate any trauma or injury, unfortunately there are a number of structural and long-term issues that are worth highlighting and must be further considered by the Queensland state Labor government. One of the primary concerns and issues highlighted through consultation on this legislation is the fact that the terms 'first responder' and 'eligible employee' have not been specifically and sufficiently defined in the legislation. Those key terms are, in essence, defined as meaning a paid work or volunteer employed in a profession prescribed by regulation and where the person's employment requires the person to respond to a life-threatening or traumatic incident.

A number of stakeholders submitted to the committee their concerns with regards to these definitions being wholly insufficient and possibly leading to an adverse consequence. By way of just one example, in its submission the Queensland Law Society stated that it was concerned that both the terms 'first responder' and 'eligible employee' were 'extremely broad' and there would be a broad scope of persons who may be covered by the proposed inclusion of 'relevant volunteer'. As such, the Queensland Law Society held that the proposed definitions as they currently stand risk a negative impact on the viability of the WorkCover scheme.

That being said in relation to ensuring the due diligence and financial sustainability of the scheme, I would like to refer to the submission by the Australian Medical Association of Queensland and ask the Minister for Industrial Relations to provide further clarity. As a former president of the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland and a former medical superintendent with right of private practice, I specifically ask the Minister for Industrial Relations to clarify whether medical superintendents with right of private practice and medical officers with right of private practice as well as credentialed visiting medical officers to emergency departments in rural communities across Queensland will be covered under these arrangements. I worked in those aforementioned roles in a number of rural communities such as Mungindi, Biggenden and Oakey. There were many occasions when I was responsible for clinically assessing and treating patients who were involved in motor vehicle accidents and farm related trauma as well as domestic and family violence situations.


As many in the medical profession will know, working in either solo MSRPP or combined MSRPP/MORPP rural communities, responding to and treating such emergency clinical events takes place in either a Queensland Health owned facility or alternatively in a government community health centre. There is no doubt that such professional experiences can cause significant distress and result in significant mental health disability, including major depressive disorders as well as PTSD. We all know of the unfortunate explosion at the Grosvenor mine in Central Queensland. The response was coordinated through Moranbah Hospital, which is a 12-bed facility. It was very fortunate that on the day a rural generalist with anaesthetic skills was able to attend to a number of patients there. Certainly that is but one example of medical and health professional staff who may develop sequelae as far as their own mental health is concerned, whether it be developing a depressive disorder or a post-traumatic stress disorder condition following dealing with such instances. Therefore, I would appreciate the minister clarifying whether coverage will be extended to those frontline medical and health professionals.

It is important that as elected representatives in the Queensland parliament we take the time to consider, scrutinise and evaluate the sustainability and viability of systems such as WorkCover in Queensland. While these matters of coverage and insurance are, of course, important for employees, it is equally important to consider the many other circumstances or situations in the broader community where such provisions of insurance coverage are either lacking or non-existent. If we look at the example of employers, whilst they can take out a range of insurances there are situations where insurance is unable to be provided by private insurers or where it is too prohibitive. This is when state compensation schemes could assist in providing coverage for not only employees but also employers.

Recently I was discussing this very notion with a local business owner and operator at the Bellbowrie shopping centre whose recent health has been very problematic. That was part of a broader discussion that I was having with him on a range of current challenges facing business owners relating

to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated business restrictions, including various compliance obligations on tax and reporting as well as important and timely compliance with workplace health and safety regulations. He raised those issues with me. I wish to reiterate how important it is that this state Labor government, while seeking to legislate for a particular set of as yet not fully defined workers and employees, does not lose sight of the broader economic landscape and ensures our workplace health and safety regulations do not further or unfairly prohibit business growth at a time when our economy needs it the most.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank all members of the 57th Parliament's Education, Employment and Training Committee, including the LNP members: the deputy chair and member for Southern Downs, and the member for Theodore. I acknowledge the assistance provided by the committee secretariat whose role and function is very important when we scrutinise and have oversight of legislation. I also acknowledge all of the stakeholders for their contributions to the consideration of this legislation.

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (4.45 pm): I rise in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. Before I start, I acknowledge the very courageous, heartfelt and personal contribution given earlier by the member for Macalister.

Presumptive legislation creates a rebuttal presumption that a first responder has developed PTSD because of their work. Presumptive legislation will provide much needed validation that PTSD is a workplace injury for emergency services providers. Most pressing, presumptive legislation will foster timely access to compensation and treatment for first responders diagnosed with PTSD. By reversing the evidentiary onus, presumptive legislation means that first responders with PTSD are not tasked with proving that their work has been a significant cause of PTSD. The routine exposure to traumatic circumstances and the cumulative effect of that trauma also disadvantage first responders if compensation legislation requires the identification of a single traumatic incident. Applying for workers compensation schemes and employer settlement can be lengthy and exhausting both emotionally and financially. Those issues may be mitigated by presumptive legislation.

By including mines rescue team members and local government employees whose duties correspond to that of an ambulance officer or fire services officer under the pathway, we recognise the dangerous nature of their work and the potential consequences of their service while providing a means to address the effect afterwards. The drawing up of this bill has been informed by the diligent work of the minister and member for McConnel, the parliamentary committee and those organisations and unions that made submissions in the formulation of this bill and its amendments.

It is hard to define PTSD as it presents differently in everyone. The explanation of the Department of Veterans' Affairs is that PTSD is a psychological response to the experience of a tense traumatic event, including those that threaten life. For military veterans the trauma may relate to direct combat duties, being in a dangerous war zone or taking part in peacekeeping missions under difficult and stressful conditions. It is normal to experience distress when confronted with trauma and most people recover over the first week or two, particularly with the help of caring family members and friends. However, for some people the symptoms do not seem to resolve quickly. It is also common for symptoms to vary in intensity over time. Some people go for long periods without any significant problems only to relapse when they must deal with other major life stresses. In rare cases the symptoms may not appear for months or even years after the trauma.

A great deal of work has happened here in Australia and abroad. I will speak on how similar legislation exists in other jurisdictions. Tasmania was the first Australian state to adopt legislation for PTSD. The Tasmanian Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Presumption as to Cause of Disease) Act 2019 provides presumption as the cause of PTSD for relevant workers. Those workers are defined as workers who are employed by the Crown or appointed under an act of the state, a government business enterprise or a state owned company. Consideration in Tasmania has been given to extending this provision to the private sector which we have already acknowledged in our amendments that corresponding private sector jobs will be eligible. In 2013, amendments to the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 established a rebuttable presumption that certain forms of cancer developed by first responders like firefighters are taken to be work related for the purpose of claiming workers compensation.

In Western Australia, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services explained that its insurer, RiskCover, has for over six years accepted liability for all PTSD claims made by first responders and funded preventive therapies on a without-prejudice basis before determining liability. On 13 November 2013, division 4A of the Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act came into effect, providing for a rebuttable presumption that supports claims by firefighters employed by the Department of Fire

and Emergency Services who contract one of 12 specified cancers. Several amendments have been made to clarify the application of these presumptive laws to current and former state employed firefighters.

Canada leads the world on many health and safety issues for firefighters. In Canada, the province of Alberta was the first to amend its Workers' Compensation Act in 2012, giving first responders—including firefighters, police officers, sheriffs and paramedics—an entitlement to compensation for PTSD without being required to prove that their condition is work related. The legislation was updated in 2018 to include correctional officers and emergency dispatchers.

A submission from Fire Chief Ken Block, from the City of Edmonton, Alberta, highlighted the main features and benefits of Alberta's presumptive legislation. For a worker employed in any of the occupations listed and diagnosed with PTSD by a physician or a psychologist, the workers compensation board will presume the condition was caused by the employment unless the contrary is proven. A diagnosis of PTSD by a medical or psychological professional must be made using current criteria established in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the DSM, which is published by the American Psychiatric Association. The presumption allows injured workers to receive workers compensation coverage and treatment for PTSD as soon as possible. Since then, five out of 10 Canadian provinces have introduced presumptive legislation relating to PTSD.

Mr Forrest has had input into drafting presumptive PTSD legislation and has spoken on the issue around the world. He explained that the introduction of presumptive legislation addresses the inherent problems with having to prove the cause of a workplace injury like PTSD. He said—

... this issue is as complicated as the human mind. When I sit down, I look at the legislation and ask, 'How are we going to fix this legislation?' It has to provide a safe place for emergency workers to go, because you have to understand the nature of what PTSD is. PTSD basically removes you from society and you lose trust. If you don't have an environment that's culturally aware of what you're going through, people will turn away from treatment and they'll turn away from the possible compensation. It usually ends in very tragic circumstances. Members need support and treatment; they do not need a questioning and justifying environment where they have to justify why they're even there to put in the claim for PTSD.


The Canadian example is instructive. In many provinces, to qualify as traumatic mental stress an illness had to result from an acute reaction to a particular unexpected traumatic event. Such a clear and identifiable event was not necessarily compatible with the development of PTSD by reason of cumulative exposure to trauma. To address this, PTSD was dealt with uniquely, with Canadian provinces including specific provisions for the condition. This means that an acute reaction to a particular identifiable event no longer needs to be established.

Without going to the relevant cost of compensation or how well the scheme performs fiscally, as it has already been covered by others here, what this legislation means to those who serve our community is peace of mind—police and corrections officers, paramedics, firefighters, including auxiliary and volunteers, teams that work in mines rescue, domestic violence and youth workers, SES and ED nurses and doctors. My apologies if I have missed any. Unfortunately, no amount of controls government can provide will stop the dangerous and traumatic experiences that those who protect us confront and deal with. First responders are our defenders. I acknowledge the members from both sides of the House who have served in these demanding roles. I myself am a former firefighter.

I note how attitudes have changed in our society, as mentioned by the member for Burdekin. The old pub debrief has fallen out of favour and the workers themselves have shown initiative by implementing things like Mates Looking After Mates. I have seen many helped in this way by their colleagues.

Finally I would like to recognise the tireless work of the UFU Queensland Branch and its secretary, John Oliver. I have had the pleasure of being his comrade in my role as president of Aviation Branch. John and the UFU Queensland Branch have lobbied for this legislation tirelessly for many years, even in the dark days of the Newman government.

As a society, we owe those who protect us. They deserve help when they need it. This bill takes care of this so that our frontline people can focus on being healthy and happy rather than worried about how they pay for their care or look after their families. As the member for Cooper already outlined, there have been many great achievements for workers and their families. The member for Ferny Grove mentioned getting police officers better protection. I am extremely proud to be here today and be part of the Palaszczuk Labor government. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (4.55 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. As so many other members of this House have done today, I thank our first responders for the incredible work, commitment and sacrifice that so many have made, particularly over the past 12 to 18 months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I note at the outset that this legislation particularly is focused on addressing those workers who are wrestling with the impact of PTSD. I note that there is still so much that we need to learn about this challenge. It comes in all shapes and forms. People react and respond very differently to the circumstances and pressures that come through their day-to-day work. Like so many others in the House have said, we support this legislation because it is so important to take care of our first responders.

I note that under the current workers compensation scheme the onus is on first responders to prove that their employment was a significant contributing factor in causing their psychological injury. However, I also note that under the current scheme about 80 per cent to 90 per cent of PTSD statutory WorkCover claims are accepted. This legislation essentially seeks to close that gap and to make compensation and support for individuals and families more accessible.

I note also the broad terms with regard to the definition of first responders that are covered under the bill. I think it is appropriate that police officers and police recruits, ambulance officers, child safety officers, corrective services staff, Youth Justice staff members, fire service officers and so many other first responders, including doctors and nurses and others who work in allied health areas, particularly when they are working within emergency, trauma, acute and critical care, should also be eligible to be considered under these presumptive conditions.

I reiterate the concerns raised earlier by the member for Surfers Paradise. The Newman government undertook significant reforms to workers compensation legislation. We also introduced presumptive legislation, or more inclusive legislation, in some categories because our genuine desire was to try to fix some of the inefficiencies in the system and improve access to help, remuneration and support while at the same time seeking to make the system more cost efficient.

With the House's indulgence, I would like to share a little story. About three years ago, a very good friend of mine experienced a significant workplace accident, resulting in significant back injury. It is not PTSD, but I share the example because of the journey. As the member for Surfers Paradise said, many workers go through the process of applying for workers compensation and then further compensation in the system only to find that by the end of the process, which can be incredibly long and frustrating, by the time the lawyers take their share, by the time they pay back the value of the workers compensation payments they received over that period of time while their case was being managed, and then by the time they pay for all the specialist appointments over time, there is actually very little left for them. That was the experience of my friend in this particular circumstance.

While I support the need to provide great workers compensation and support for those who are injured, whether psychologically or physically, I also believe that we need a system that works harder for victims or for those who have suffered or for those in need of financial support. What we are seeing in Queensland is a system that at times can be incredibly bureaucratic and gets incredibly bogged down with process. I can assure the House that last year during COVID it was even more challenging for my friend given that so many workplaces had people working from home or appointments were via videoconference, Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Teams. Then there were the challenges around some of those assessments being called into account because of the process undertaken in doing the report or assessment.

This is incredibly important legislation, as many in this House have said. I have enormous sympathy for our first responders, particularly our police and ambulance officers. As one of my friends said to me, 'There are so many things in this job that you cannot unsee.' The trauma that some of our first responders deal with must be absolutely horrific.


When visiting one of our health services recently I spoke with some of the staff in the emergency department. We were talking about some of the incidents that they have to deal with. There was one very recent accident that they shared a bit of story about. I said to the doctor I was chatting with, 'How do you unpack that? How do you deal with that when it gets to six o'clock in the evening or eight o'clock at night or the end of your shift or six o'clock in the morning when you have been on night shift? How do you unpack that when you get home and put it to one side and get back to some normalcy?' It is important that we have good systems in place in our health services and indeed in all of our frontline services to support staff.

In the short time that I was the assistant minister for child safety I had the pleasure and privilege of visiting many of our child safety service centres. The frontline responders in that space do an incredible job and do us proud under very challenging circumstances. It is easy for us to gloss over the fact that the work they do might, at one level, seem very routine, but I can assure the House that when a child is removed from its family or where a child safety officer or the police are called in to deal with a particularly traumatic situation where children are needing to be removed there is nothing routine,

simple or unemotional about the process. These people are dealing with very challenging, emotional and highly charged situations. It is important that we have a system that provides a level of comfort and assurance to our first responders so that when they need the help and support of the government through the government's workers compensation insurer it is there.

I am sure that there are many who would probably wish that this sort of legislation was in place 10, 20 or 30 years ago. A very good friend of mine, a former police officer, has on occasions shared some fairly harrowing stories over a glass of red and dinner. I absolutely admire the work of our police. I do not believe that Queenslanders can fully understand or appreciate the challenges that many of them face and the trauma that they have to deal with. This friend of mine was under fire in a siege and subsequently received awards for bravery, albeit some 20 years late. This friend spent a number of years as part of the paedophilia and trafficking ring investigative teams in Queensland back in the dark eighties.

Like so many in this House, I am pleased to speak in support of this legislation. I note there are some shortcomings with it and some concerns around the cost of premiums. It is beholden on us as a government and as a parliament to ensure that we provide rigour and review through our committee structure and departments and ensure that while we provide better service Queenslanders also get great value for money.

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (5.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. Every single day our first responders, paid and volunteer, head out on their shifts to do the essential work of keeping Queenslanders safe and protecting our community. Queenslanders know that keeping them safe is what our government is all about. It is right up there with keeping workers safe—at the very heart of our values. Supporting our first responders, who do so much for Queenslanders in their time of greatest need, is the highest possible priority for our Palaszczuk Labor government.

The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 provides first responders with an important safeguard if they experience post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the work they do to keep Queenslanders safe each and every day. The bill means that first responders struggling to cope with PTSD will not need to demonstrate that their injury was caused by their work. Instead, the usual onus will be reversed and the first responder's injury will be presumed to be a result of their work unless evidence shows otherwise. This reduces the barriers for first responders to come forward and seek treatment early. Anything we can do to reduce the stigma related to workplace psychological injuries is especially important for first responders where there has traditionally been a culture of toughness and resilience.

Presumptive workers compensation laws for first responders who have developed PTSD as a result of repeated attendance at traumatic incidents or being exposed over and over to information about traumatic events are essential to ensuring their long-term mental health and rehabilitation and maximising the chances of them being able to return to work. Evidence is mounting that the cumulative impact of these experiences is an indicator for PTSD. Those cumulative impacts create particular barriers to access for first responders because, unlike a regular worker who experiences a one-off catastrophic event at work, first responders usually cannot point to a single, isolated incident that has resulted in their PTSD. Claims for psychological injuries such as PTSD tend to be extremely complex. They normally take longer to determine and, unfortunately, with longer claim times comes higher risks of workers' conditions worsening.

I commend the minister and the Education, Employment and Training Committee for the high level of consultation and careful consideration of existing literature that has gone into this bill. Evidence provided in the 2019 Senate education and employment references committee's report titled *The people behind 000: Mental health of our first responders* was harrowing. In his submission to the committee serving firefighter Mr Andrew Picker said:

Our work as First Responders is not a sterile office environment. We put our hearts and souls into our work ... We have lost friends in our work. Our families risk losing a son, a daughter, a father, a wife when we go to work. We have had colleagues significantly burnt or injured, shot or wounded, beaten and bashed, fallen from heights and hit by vehicles ... Our actions or inactions are something we must carry with us for the rest of our lives ... It is an honour and privilege to help others, but just as we care for others we also need to be cared for.

Beyond Blue's national survey of 20,000 police and emergency services workers regarding mental health and wellbeing issues led to the November 2018 *Answering the call* report. The *Answering the call* report found that 10 per cent of first responders had probable PTSD, with significant distress or impairment to their functioning. Another five per cent had experienced suicidal thoughts in the last 12 months. These rates are two to three times those in the average Australian population.

For first responders struggling with PTSD, the strain of demonstrating their injury arose as a result of their work may be a step too far. Across Australia, of those who had lodged a workers compensation claim, many experienced the process as unsupportive, stressful and unfair, and some reported that it had a negative impact on their recovery.

Having myself been through a Comcare claim following a very serious accident at work, I remember the distress and helplessness that the claims process itself can create. How much more challenging must this be when your injury is psychological rather than physical—so you do not have X-rays or hospital admission reports to show—and worse again when, due to the repeated and cumulative nature of exposure to trauma in your work, you may not be able to point to a single incident or event that led to your injury. Adjunct Associate Professor Ray Bange in his submission to the Senate Committee said—

Demonstrating work-related mental harm can be an onerous process for someone who is already in jeopardy ... Paramedics have said that the stigma involved in declaring distress and gaining recognition of harm, and the perceived difficulties in obtaining redress through ... workers compensation, tend to inhibit reporting and contribute to overall stress.

No longer will first responders need to prove their PTSD was the result of a particular traumatic incident at work. Their injury will be presumed to be work related unless there is evidence to the contrary.

I reached out to some of the first responders who care for people in my electorate of Pumicestone to hear what these changes will mean to them. Amy and Rob are critical care paramedics in the CCP Pod at Caboolture that was formed in the last term to care for people facing the most dire health emergencies across the north of Moreton Bay and beyond. Amy said—

We will never be able to manage our world and prevent PTSD from happening. It's about how we manage it afterwards. If you feel like you are supported afterwards it makes all the difference. If people in general society came to these jobs with me and saw the 90-year-old who jumped off a building because she had a terminal diagnosis, we would never have to argue about these issues. It lights a fire in me to think about it.

Rob told me—

Each day and each job, we just don't know what we are walking into. We can't put a number on what exact cases we go to could lead to PTSD. Among ourselves we call it "the straw that breaks the camel's back".

I note the member for Hinchinbrook's comments to that effect. Rob continued—

It's unpredictable what could be the thing for each person that causes them to freeze, to have that fear of going back to work. With PTSD your mind holds onto the memories from a bad job. It doesn't let go. It gets repeated every time you open a newspaper, every time you turn on the TV, and then you get called back to another one of those jobs and it all starts again. And you know it will be weeks before you can have peace again.

Rob particularly mentioned trauma endured by emergency medical despatchers, saying—

EMDs are also under immense pressure with the calls they are taking from people in crisis, listening to people who are about to lose a loved one and having to instruct them to give CPR and tell them an ambulance is coming. They are there listening when someone takes their last breath, and then coping abuse when there's nothing more they can do.

I note that this bill will ensure that emergency medical despatchers, who are repeatedly exposed to accounts of traumatic incidents, will also be spared having to prove their PTSD was caused by their work.

I could not help but compare the member for Kawana's self-serving and self-aggrandising contribution with the heartfelt and thoughtful words of the member for Macalister. We are fortunate to have her experience in this place. I also want to acknowledge other first responders in this parliament on both sides and those who have done the work of first responders including the member for Moggill; the member for Caloundra, who shared some very thoughtful words with me regarding the work of custodial corrections officers; the member for Nicklin; and the member for Greenslopes, as well as others I have not had a moment to acknowledge.

We are so insulated from reality every single day by the work of first responders. We do not have to go to jobs where a child has run out on to a road to chase a ball because they do that for us. Most of us never have to face up to what it truly means when someone drink drives or speeds or when an elderly person decides to end their life. First responders protect us with their bodies and their minds to save our bodies and our minds from harm. Ensuring that if they suffer post-traumatic stress disorder their path to care and support is that little bit smoother is the very least we can do in return. I am proud to commend this bill to the House.



Ms CAMM (Whitsunday—LNP) (5.14 pm): I am pleased to contribute to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I would like to start by acknowledging the work of the Education, Employment and Training Committee—the chair, the deputy chair and the secretariat. The committee report was thorough and outlined significant research that I think supports the objectives of this legislation.

I also want to highlight the importance of this legislation in that it provides recognition and validation of the critical role that first responders play across our community. I would also like to acknowledge those in the House who have served as first responders—in particular those first responders across my own electorate of Whitsunday, which takes in the northern beaches of Mackay and the Whitsundays, who play such a critical role in keeping us all safe but also who respond in dire times of need.

It is also important to highlight that the implications from potential trauma, whether that be cumulative or one of trauma, is now recognised with these improved pathways for claimants to access the WorkCover scheme and provisions. However, it is also just as critical to ensure that we continuously closely monitor the rollout of this legislation and how it is taken up across our state to ensure that those who most need the support that is underwritten by WorkCover in this regard receive it.

The social and economic cost to individuals and their families and more broadly our community of those who live with post-traumatic stress disorder without support or assistance would be significant and detrimental not only to their individual health but also to their friends, family and work colleagues. Statistics of accepted claims—which were outlined in the committee's report—from the public administration and safety sector that highlighted the significant trend across the QPS, QFES and the Queensland Ambulance Service, as well as Queensland Health more broadly, speak for themselves. They are dealing with more complex and traumatic circumstances across our community—in particular, responding to domestic homicide, to an increase in suicide statistics and also to child abuse across our community. We recognise that many of those first responders do suffer significantly and need to be recognised and looked after.

I would also like to highlight and welcome the committee's recognition of coal workers who are required to perform first responder duties in the event of mine accidents, and I acknowledge the comments from my colleague the member for Burdekin. Whilst we know that the mining industry more broadly across our state works towards zero harm, it is a high-risk industry. This has been demonstrated through the tragic circumstances surrounding Grosvenor in 2020 with five miners who received significant injuries and burns, as well as at Curragh mine in 2020 with a fatality from a crush injury whilst carrying out maintenance works, and at Carborough Downs in 2019 with a fatality from a roof fall at the face of a longwall.

I know that, as well as myself, many members in the House have inspected coalmines and underground mines. It is a dangerous and risky profession. I want to highlight and recognise the concerns raised by the CFMMEU, who do not feel that this legislation goes far enough. We do understand that at times workers at those high-risk sites are exposed to what is significant risk, particularly if there is an accident. They may not be deemed as first responders, yet they are first on the scene. We do recognise that the traditional avenues are still available to access WorkCover on the back of any impact of an incident.

As previously outlined by the member for Southport, I would also like to recognise the work of our child protection and youth justice officers across the state, the significant exposure they have to traumatic incidents and the cumulative impacts of continually having to investigate child abuse and neglect in the saddest of circumstances. I also acknowledge the submissions and concerns raised by local government which operates a frontline service of sorts. I know that many former colleagues across local government have come into contact with challenging and traumatic circumstances at different times, and I acknowledge the concerns that local government has raised.

I would like to highlight that across my electorate last weekend we had SAREX, which is a search and rescue operation and exercise carried out by Whitsunday Water Police in conjunction with the SES from Airlie Beach, the Queensland Ambulance Service at Cannonvale, and the RACQ CQ Rescue chopper in partnership with VMR Bowen, VMR Burdekin, VMR Whitsunday, VMR Mackay and Midge Point. I would like to seek clarification from the minister regarding the current VMR and blue water review reforms and implementation plan to ascertain the definition of those volunteers who fall within VMR and whether they are deemed to be first responders recognised under this legislation. In my electorate the VMR has played a critical role. I ask the House to cast its memory back to when there were significant shark attacks across the Whitsundays. The VMR volunteers in my seat of Whitsunday were first on the scene with CQ Rescue helping to coordinate quite devastating scenes across not only one incident but several repeated events. I hope the minister will clarify whether volunteers across those services are also recognised.

It is very important that we consider over the course of the next 12 months how we are going to roll this out—I look forward to the minister tabling the report—how we will see improved outcomes for first responders across our community while also identifying any unintended consequences as a result of this legislation, because it is important that it is also evaluated and assessed. I support the recommendations in this legislation in the interests of first responders and our broader community.



Mr MADDEN (Ipswich West—ALP) (5.22 pm): On 26 November 2020 the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing, the Hon. Grace Grace, introduced the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 into this Legislative Assembly. The bill was referred to the Education, Employment and Training Committee for detailed consideration. The committee tabled its report on 12 February 2021. The committee made a number of recommendations, including that the bill be passed.

This bill is identical to a bill of the same name introduced by the minister on 12 August 2020 and referred to the former Education, Employment and Small Business Committee of the 56th Parliament. Unfortunately, that bill lapsed with the dissolution of the 56th Parliament by proclamation on 6 October 2020. As the minister said in her first reading speech when this bill was presented to the Legislative Assembly on 26 November 2020—

This bill provides an important safeguard for first responders entering the workers compensation scheme by introducing presumptive workers compensation laws for our first responders and eligible employees of first responder departments diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD.

Presumptive workers compensation laws allow easier, more timely access to necessary support and compensation by reversing the onus of proof and deeming an injury to be work related, unless there is evidence to the contrary. Presumptive laws do not create new or change any existing workers compensation entitlements, but instead provide a different pathway for certain claims to access the scheme.

First responders include ambulance, police, and fire and emergency officers. They play a critical role in protecting and serving our community. Due to the nature of their duties they are often exposed to traumatic, life-threatening incidents. We are becoming increasingly aware of the impact on mental health from the acute and cumulative trauma exposure experienced by many first responders and the importance of supporting their mental health and wellbeing. Consequently, in 2018 the Queensland government engaged the Phoenix Australia Centre for Post-Traumatic Mental Health to independently review and benchmark the workers compensation claims process for first responders claiming for psychological injuries.

The Phoenix Australia report made various recommendations to support the health and wellbeing of first responders. Many of these recommendations have been implemented already in complementary legislative amendments made in 2019. Beyond Blue's 2018 report *Answering the call* revealed substantially higher rates of psychological distress, mental health conditions and suicidal thinking and planning among first responders compared to the general population. The survey also reported that claims rates relating to mental health conditions and psychological injuries for first responders were 10 times higher than the general Australian workforce.

In 2019 the Commonwealth Senate inquiry for first responder health, otherwise known as *The people behind 000: mental health of our first responders*, recognised the need for early intervention and mental health support and made recommendations across the area of prevalence, reporting and management of first responders' psychological injuries, workers compensation, return to work and post-retirement support.


After these reviews were concluded the then Queensland minister for education and minister for industrial relations established a stakeholder reference group that included representatives from: the Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union of Employees, the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Police Union, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Together Queensland, United Firefighters Union of Queensland—and I thank the member for Nicklin for providing me with a pin from the United Firefighters Union of Queensland to wear tonight—United Workers Union and WorkCover Queensland.

The stakeholder reference group found that despite changes to the WorkCover legislation there are still barriers and gaps that impact on a first responder's ability to make a WorkCover claim arising from workplace trauma. Areas of concern identified included: stigma, workplace culture, the claims determination process and return-to-work opportunities. Also, because of the nature of their work many first responders are unable to identify one particular trauma event giving rise to their health problems when an injury is due to cumulative exposure to trauma. This bill puts in place presumptive laws that aim to streamline a first responder's ability to make a WorkCover claim arising from exposure to trauma.

In closing, I would like to thank the minister for introducing the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I would also like to thank the Education, Employment and Training Committee and submitters, as well as the committee secretariat and Hansard.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge our first responders and thank them for putting their own lives at risk to protect our society. In my former life as a lawyer, I guess I was one removed from the activities of the police. I would often meet with the police in court and I would be vaguely aware of what went on. It was the same with ambulance officers and members of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. One of the things with our job—and I think I can speak for all members of this House—is that we have frontline contact to the Queensland Police Service, the Ambulance Service and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. I guess I was a little bit naive previously. I see firsthand on almost a weekly basis the life they are confronted with and the circumstances they have to expose themselves to given the nature of their job. I am also appreciative of the personal stories told by some members of this House with their own struggles with PTSD. It is something that we have to deal with.

I remember when I was a lawyer and I did personal injury claims that we were more worried about a broken arm than the mental trauma suffered by the person who was injured. This legislation goes some way to moving workers compensation forward so people are properly compensated for mental trauma identified with PTSD when they make a personal injuries claim. Again, I would like to thank our first responders for the wonderful work that they do.

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (5.31 pm): Firefighters, paramedics, doctors, nurses, police officers and SES workers—these are the people who this bill will affect. Across the political divide, we all agree that these local legends are the people we see in the community who are working hard to keep us safe. Floods, bushfires, COVID-19 and triple 0 calls—it does not matter what is happening. They are always there ready to protect us and it is this government's job to protect them. Queensland's real-life heroes may be captured in print, in photographs and in the irresistibly popular Australian firefighters animal lovers calendar, but they are just as human and vulnerable as you and me, Madam Deputy Speaker Lui.

These first responders are not invincible. By the very nature of their job, Queensland's first responders are exposed to an array of traumatic incidents and, as such, are reported to have a high risk of developing PTSD. A 2018 survey by Beyond Blue, *Answering the call*, found that first responders' rate of claim for mental health conditions or psychological injuries was 10 times that of an average adult in the Australian workforce. This finding is well supported. It is for this reason that the LNP will not be opposing this bill. The LNP supports a strong and sustainable workers compensation system that ensures all Queensland workers who suffer a physical or a mental injury or illness are able to recover and receive the support they need to do so.

There are first responders in my electorate of Currumbin who would stand to benefit from the amendments proposed by this bill should they find themselves suffering the effects of trauma as a result of what they are exposed to on the front line. These are locals who face death and violence on a near daily basis; they are people who deserve to be protected by this government.

This bill aims to amend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Regulation 2014 to introduce presumptive workers compensation laws for first responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. As the Leader of the Opposition has often said, we will be the first to recognise when the government does something right. This bill aims to improve workers compensation claims and mental health outcomes of first responders in Queensland by allowing first responders easier and timelier access to support and compensation, and we are with the government in this endeavour.

The bill makes support and compensation available without a first responder having to prove that their PTSD is a work related injury. The presumption of injury provision and the reversal of the onus of proof means that, where a person is diagnosed by a psychiatrist as having PTSD and at any time before the diagnosis was employed as a first responder, that person is taken to have an entitlement to compensation for that injury. This is the case unless evidence is presented by the first responder's employer to the contrary.

Notably, the proposed amendments presented in this bill have a broad scope in their reference to the term 'first responders'. First responders are defined in this bill as workers who, due to their employment, are required to respond to incidents that are life threatening or otherwise traumatic. This can include police, ambulance personnel, paramedics, firefighters, child safety officers, Youth Justice

staff members, emergency nurses and medical practitioners. I also note the amendments moved by the minister to include coalminers, and I welcome this amendment because who could forget the horrific Grosvenor mine blast which left those first responders deeply affected with ongoing trauma and pain.

Additionally, other workers in the first responder departments are also covered by the bill. This refers to workers whose employment requires them to experience repeated or extreme exposure to graphic details of a traumatic scene. This includes workers exposed to child exploitation material as part of their employment—for example, in having to classify child exploitation material to prepare a case for prosecution. As a former prosecutor in the child exploitation team, I have firsthand experience with the work related trauma that can be caused by the very necessary role that officers play in having to view and classify child exploitation material in order to successfully prosecute a case. I myself employed tools to minimise my own trauma when dealing with evidence in child exploitation cases. I made sure I never viewed the material after 2 pm so that the image did not stay with me when I went home for the day. Despite the best endeavours of employers and workers to put in place measures to prevent mental trauma, persistent and extreme exposure to such graphic and abhorrent images can take its toll, no matter the tools you employ to protect yourself, so I welcome these amendments.

To demonstrate the LNP's conviction here, I note that it was an LNP government which first introduced presumptive legislation for firefighters and that the architect of our workers compensation scheme—a scheme that the minister has acknowledged is one of the best workers compensation schemes in Australia—was the LNP when we were in government. We backed our workers by introducing legislation that led to the lowest workers compensation premiums for businesses, and we are again backing our workers by giving this bill bipartisan support.

I will now turn to those parts of the bill where concerns have been raised. One of those is the broad definition of 'first responders', which I have already mentioned. The Queensland Law Society was consulted as a stakeholder through the process of drafting this bill. The QLS noted an issue with the scope of the application of the term 'first responders' and its proposed presumption to cover all classes of frontline workers. The issue the QLS takes with this is that the occupation categories canvassed and noted by the bill depart from what the general public would consider to be first responders. For example, the Electrical Trades Union proposed that electricians should be covered by the first responder definition. It seems to me that having such a broad definition which includes all professions somewhat belittles the people who are actually frontline workers exposed to graphic trauma on a daily basis, so I am glad that the minister is looking at this and has not accepted all of the committee's recommendations in this regard.

Further to this, I note that the bill creates an opportunity for occupations to be prescribed by regulation at a later date. While *prima facie* this seems reasonable, upon closer consideration concerns have been raised that this affords the government the power to act with discretion to expand the presumption beyond first responders without consultation and without democratic parliamentary scrutiny. My constituents have elected me to represent their best interests. This becomes increasingly difficult when the Labor government introduces legislation with the intent of creating loopholes which will cut elected representatives who are not in government out of the picture. Notwithstanding, the LNP will be supporting this bill, but it is important to keep in mind that the Queensland workers compensation scheme must be fit for purpose in relation to meeting the requirements of all stakeholders, including employees and employers.

I would like to conclude by expressing my immense gratitude to all of our first responders and those working on the front line. To each and every one of you I say thank you, but I want to make particular mention of some of these local legends servicing my electorate of Currumbin: the volunteers at the Currumbin Valley Rural Fire Brigade and the Tallebudgera Valley Rural Fire Brigade, including first officers Steve Dalton and Ben Naday, and all of the firefighters at the Bilinga Fire and Rescue Station; all of the police men and women at the Palm Beach Police Station, Coolangatta Police Station and Elanora police beat; all of the staff and paramedics at Coolangatta Ambulance Service, including the current acting officer in charge, Luke Wyatt; and the nurses, doctors and staff at the John Flynn emergency hospital, including Dr Ben Walters, who is the director of the emergency department.

Thank you for your contribution to this state and to the Currumbin community, and thank you for the sacrifices you make on a daily basis by exposing yourselves and your minds to great risk in order to protect us. Queensland is a better place for your contributions, and I am pleased that this legislation will go some way to provide more strength for your arm as you respond and support Queenslanders and our Currumbin community.



Mrs GILBERT (Mackay—ALP) (5.40 pm): I would like to contribute to the debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. We all respect the work of our first responders. We do not always, though, pay attention to the immensely difficult and at times traumatic situations they find themselves in. By just doing their jobs, they face a lot of trauma from time to time.

When young children are asked if they would like to be a firefighter, a police officer or a paramedic, these positions are usually romanticised. It is all about the adventure involved in performing their duties. When we stop and reflect on the possible situations encountered by the brave men and women who take up these types of positions, we realise that our first responders are truly our community heroes.

We must also pay tribute to the work of our volunteers who train and perform life-saving duties in times of distress—our rural fire brigades and our SES volunteers. They are the people we see directing road traffic at accidents or putting out grass fires and bushfires. They get calls for help during adverse weather events, when the rest of us are all tucked up safely at home. They also need protection and they need avenues for support when they are required.

First responders play a critical role in protecting and serving our Queensland communities. We have all seen our first responders face some of Australia's biggest challenges in recent times—from catastrophic bushfires to floods, horrific and tragic domestic violence incidents and our ongoing battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the end of 2019 at Brisbane Airport I spoke to firefighters returning home after performing duties at the fire front in New South Wales. One of the firefighters fought back tears, telling me of the tragedies they had witnessed with the horrific death of animals and hearing the animals' screams as they were trapped in the fires. This experience will travel with these firefighters throughout their life.

Each and every day our first responders are exposed to traumatic incidents that most of us could never imagine. Attending to these types of incidents, whether it be a one-off catastrophic event or a gradual build-up over many years, takes a toll on our first responders' mental health.

Who is covered in this bill? The bill states that a person can only be considered as a first responder if their duties require them to respond to time critical, often life-threatening traumatic incidents. A similar bounded definition is provided for eligible employees to ensure the scope of the presumption is limited to those most at risk of cumulative exposure to trauma. The inclusion of any new occupations or employees in the regulation must first meet the criteria in the act. The scope of the regulation-making power balances the need to provide necessary legislative clarity for insurers to determine those within the scope of the bill while providing flexibility to ensure that the legislation keeps pace with the changing nature of work, new or amended job roles and titles or machinery-of-government changes, and accommodates like-for-like roles when there is supporting empirical evidence.

Safeguards in our government and our parliamentary processes also ensure any changes to regulation will have proper oversight. These include the need for regulatory impact statements overseen by the Office of Best Practice Regulation; full and comprehensive consultation, both within government and externally; cabinet and ministerial approval processes; and final oversight by the executive council before any approvals can proceed. This approach safeguards the intent of the regulations into the future.


The presumption applies to workers or volunteers who are employed as a first responder—police officers, firefighters, ambos, coalmine safety officers, and the list goes on—as well as eligible employees of a first responder department whose employment requires them to: experience repeated or extreme exposure to graphic details of traumatic incidents as they attend the scene of traumatic incidents, for example, a person whose employment involves recovering human remains; experience traumatic incidents as they happen, for example, fire communications officers responding to and providing information in response to emergencies or corrective services officers observing disturbing footage via CCTV; or investigate, review or assess traumatic incidents that have happened to other persons, for example, those people who are exposed to graphic details as part of investigating crimes of child sexual abuse.

I have witnessed firsthand some of the trauma that our first responders have to deal with. My husband and I were the first on the scene at a head-on collision. Accidents in the movies seem neat and tidy, but in real life people do not die in a neat and tidy way. It is not very nice to see. When fires start, you cannot just put them out. There is a lot of panic. For the first responders who attended to that accident, in which five people were tragically killed, that was not the first accident they had attended that week. I take my hat off to them. For a long time I used to think, 'How can they keep on doing this?' I am so pleased that we are bringing in this bill so they can get care when they most need it.

When I visit the first responders in my electorate I always take time to ask them how they are and make sure they are seeking help if they need it. We must always make sure we check in on our first responders in our electorates, because they are the people who will look after us when we need care.

This bill will make it easier and more timely for employees to access work related post-traumatic stress disorder compensation. For those stress disorders that are not covered in this bill, the current avenues to make a compensation claim remain. This bill takes the pressure off people who are already traumatised by the accidents and events they have attended to get the care they need straightaway. Without this pathway and this legislation, the process can be quite lengthy and quite gruelling for our first responders.

I would like to finish by thanking all of our special Queenslanders who are our first responders. They choose to go into this line of work, sometimes because as kids they thought it would be a great thing to do. They certainly are very special people and they love the work they do, so we need to make sure we look after them. I support this bill. I also support the minister's foreshadowed amendments.

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.49 pm): Every day, in some way, our community is deeply thankful for our heroes who take many forms—incredible people who put themselves and their lives on the line for us, keeping us safe or saving us. Firefighters, police and paramedics—we have heard so many—are just some of these heroes. In Noosa, as across Queensland, we are blessed with really incredible teams. In the past two years alone in my electorate, between our unprecedented fires, fatalities on our roads and in our waters or as part of securing our community during the COVID emergency, dealing with traumatic sights and emotions that the rest of us do not is part of their daily reality.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, is described as severe and persistent stress reaction after exposure to a traumatic incident or series of traumatic incidents. It can come about many months or even years after exposure. The impacts can be equally traumatic not only to the PTSD sufferer but also to their loved ones. We have heard many heartbreaking stories from MPs today.

As we have heard, in 2018 a Beyond Blue survey found higher rates of psychological distress, mental health conditions and suicidal thinking and planning among first responders. WorkCover claims are 10 times higher than for the general Australian workforce. They also found that police and emergency services personnel who are exposed to the workers compensation system reported it unhelpful or even detrimental to their recovery. Some 61 per cent reported a negative impact on their recovery and 69 per cent reported that they had received limited to no support during the claims process.


The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 seeks to amend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Regulation 2014 to introduce a presumption of injury for workers compensation claims by first responders and eligible employees diagnosed with PTSD. It focuses on providing an alternative claims pathway for those with PTSD that presumes they have a work related injury, in effect reversing the onus of proof, unless it is proven that their injury was not caused by work. The aim is to promote early claims acceptance. This is really important when first responders are already under severe duress.

There are many roles across the public and private sectors in which workers may be exposed to traumatic incidents and may be affected by PTSD. Though not captured in this bill, we acknowledge the impacts of trauma on them. Our military, journalists who report trauma, people living with domestic violence and victims of violent crimes are just some examples.

The committee has recommended a series of amendments to the bill to provide the presumption of injury for PTSD to additional workers, including coalmine workers—we have seen an amendment foreshadowed—and employees who as part of their regular duties are required to attend and secure a site to provide safe access for other first responders. Workers whose employment requires them to recover human remains; employees of a local government whose duties correspond to those of an ambulance officer, a corrective services officer or a fire service officer; and those required to attend and secure a site have also been considered.

The Queensland Law Society raised concerns about the viability of the WorkCover scheme if the presumptive legislation is introduced, including potential floodgates which may be opened by the broad definitions of 'first responder' and 'eligible employee' currently proposed. In response, the department advised that it does not expect the introduction of the presumptive legislation to be detrimental to the viability of the workers compensation scheme. The committee has recommended that a review be conducted 12 months after commencement to consider additional occupations highlighted by submitters to this inquiry.

As a society, looking out for each other includes having the legislation with which to do so, especially for those who look after us. I thank the committee and their secretariat, the department, submitters and attendees at the public hearing for their examination of the bill. I give deep appreciation to all of our first responders in all realms.

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (5.54 pm): I rise to join other members of this House to speak in support of this very important reform, the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. It has been said in this House many times before, but the past year and a bit and what we have all lived through with the global pandemic has really put Queenslanders to the test. We have been tested by things such as the impacts on industry, on our workplaces, on our families and on our jobs. We have been tested by things such as the obligations around isolation. We have been tested by things such as restrictions on gatherings. By working together and following the medical advice, Queensland is the envy of the world. The reason we are the envy of the world is that here in Queensland people feel safe and confident. Our restaurants and tourist venues are full and people are back at music and sporting events. People feel safe here in Queensland.

It has to be acknowledged as part of this debate that no-one has worked harder to keep Queenslanders safe throughout COVID-19 than our first responders and those critical frontline health workers. Rightfully so, they have been dubbed our health heroes. They are heroes because they have been called on to put their shoulder to the wheel and save Queensland lives. That is exactly what they did. In fact, it is what they signed up for and this past year they have shone brightly. For those reasons—and because of what they have signed up for in their careers—I think they deserve our unending gratitude and support. The legislation we are considering tonight is aimed at doing just that. It demonstrates that we care for the contribution they make and that we recognise the toughness of the work that they perform. It recognises that it causes pain and that we hear them when they say that something needs to change.

While this bill will provide incredible support for a range of frontline workers, I take this opportunity to focus on the frontline responders who often are first on the site at those traumatising scenes that other members have spoken about with great passion tonight. In particular, I refer to paramedics or ambos. I think they have one of the hardest, most challenging jobs one could imagine. It is very pleasing to hear from those who work in the profession that they also find it to be one of the most rewarding jobs one could ever do. It is a job that too often we the public generally take for granted. It is a service available to all Queenslanders, no matter their background. It is a service that is free of charge. It is available at a moment's notice and it is of the highest quality that one will find anywhere in the world. It is performed by workers who show incredible courage and resilience in the face of regular exposure to trauma. A submission to the inquiry states—

... legislation profoundly validates and recognises that PTSD and other mental health issues are likely and serious consequences of first responder's work.

I think that is right. The submission continues—

Such validation—

and they are talking about the validation that we are giving that trauma here tonight—

would improve awareness and acceptance of this condition and encourage treatment seeking behaviour.

In my time as a union official with United Voice, now the United Workers Union, representing paramedics and ambulance officers, I heard stories from members who serve in the Queensland Ambulance Service that would traumatise even the strongest among us. That confirmed for me that those men and women are courageous, highly trained and skilled, dedicated to bringing lifesaving emergency treatment to seriously ill and injured people. However, they also told me stories that they often face abuse and violence, sometimes from the very patients that they are trying to save. That is a scourge on our community that the union and our government are working to eradicate.

For too long the psychological impacts on our ambos have gone untreated or unnoticed, unrecognised or without compensation. The other week we commemorated Workers' Memorial Day and recommitted to the principle that every worker deserves to come home safe at the end of each day, and this bill recognises that that applies to their mental health as well. Every worker and in particular first responders deserve to come home and be given the support they feel that they need to have good mental health.

For too long access to workers compensation was a lengthy and exhausting process, both emotionally and financially. The submission I was referring to from the United Workers Union says that the requirement of first responders to recount traumatic events during the claims process exacerbates


the experience of PTSD, ultimately worsening their already diminished health. As its submission to the committee points out, the current onus in that adversarial structure of the claims process inherently casts doubt on the worker and serves to delegitimise their experience and delegitimise the severity of the injury.

What we are saying tonight is that we recognise that and we recognise the challenges faced by workers who are living with a mental health condition at the same time as trying to navigate the workers compensation arrangements. That is why what we are doing tonight is so important. What we are doing here tonight will mean that those members—those first responders and those other workers who are covered by this reform—who are simultaneously struggling to cope with that trauma and a serious mental health condition will not have doubt cast upon their condition. That will make it easier for those paramedics and others to come forward and, importantly, seek treatment early when it can be most effective.

It removes the biggest barrier to those health heroes seeking help. No longer will they need to prove that their PTSD was as a result of a particular traumatic incident at work. That is incredibly important as well, because the duty of trying to identify a specific traumatic event in a job where traumatic events are your bread and butter seems to me to be entirely unreasonable. Those are the technicalities, but ultimately these measures are about respect for those professionals. They are about us showing compassion by recognising the unique demands of their work and also a process of reducing fear and stigma of seeking help. That ensures that these workers are able to access support and treatment when they need it most and, frankly, that will save lives.

Finally, I want to point out that these reforms do not come about by accident. They are as a direct result of activism of workers and their representatives. In particular I want to give a shout-out to the United Workers Union and a government that puts Queenslanders first. Members know that I am a proud member of the United Workers Union—a union that has fought long and hard to transform the working conditions of Queenslanders. I understand that it has taken their wages and conditions from some of the worst in the nation to some of the best in the nation.

I am proud to serve in this House with former and serving paramedics in the member for Barron River and the member for Thuringowa and I want to thank them for their years of service to Queenslanders. The stigma that surrounds mental health is being challenged every day. There is more work to do, but this reform will go a long way to helping complete that work. We on this side of the House are proud that it is a Labor government that has brought this reform, because it is only Labor that will deliver for working people. It is only Labor that will back in our first responders not just today but each and every day. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (6.04 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. In doing so, I want to thank Queensland's first responders for the invaluable work they do every single day to keep us, our families and other Queenslanders safe from harm. The member for Scenic Rim said it very well when he said that first responders are our community's heroes—sometimes for the amazing efforts of a single, heartbreaking event and other times for their ongoing dedication to duty. Thank you.

As a consequence of the role they play in our society, Queensland's first responders often experience situations and scenarios that would leave many frozen and speechless. On a daily basis they face the most traumatic incidents imaginable and come face to face with the horrible realities of events that have sometimes gone terribly wrong. When called to duty they give their all to save us and serve us, often with little regard to their own health and wellbeing.

I am proud to have been a frontline police officer for almost 30 years and I am even prouder of my role as an officer in charge, supporting, encouraging and leading my colleagues. I recognise my parliamentary colleagues who have served in the Queensland Police Service—the member for Burdekin, the member for Ninderry and the member for Macalister—and also former members Marty Hunt from Nicklin and David Batt from Bundaberg, whom I spoke with recently about this bill and some of its benefits and shortcomings.

I know others in the House have had experience as first responders and I also acknowledge their contributions, but today I speak from my experience as a frontline police officer supporting others both as the officer in charge but also as a rehabilitation officer. Police officers and other frontline workers join their desired profession for honourable reasons—for example, to contribute to the common good or simply to help others. Police in particular are proud of the role that they play in the community, or should I say more articulately that all police were once proud of the role they played in the community, but sometimes things go wrong. Sometimes the trigger is a single event and other times it is from multiple and sustained pressure, but other times it is arguably the system itself.

Our frontline officers are the best of the best, but we all age and the police, from my experience, need to find improved ways to see frontline officers transition into valuable coaching and mentoring roles without losing financial rewards by losing their operational shift allowances and other penalty loadings. Many police keep going in their operational roles because they simply cannot afford to lose these operational loadings. Some officers keep going and then suffer the consequences of mental health and disability, including post-traumatic stress disorder. I researched this phenomenon through a masters program funded by the Police Service through the University of Southern Queensland directed towards improving the sense of purpose of operational officers.

There are many motivators and demotivators that affect police and other first responders, and it is complex. Many can be fixed through efforts within existing IR frameworks within the Queensland police through improved use of best practice operational management and practices. I encourage the police and other agencies to invest in solutions that include succession planning whilst ensuring financial burdens are not on top of operational pressures. I am encouraged that this bill intends to guard our first responders and reassure them of their rights as workers in a dangerous role by making it easier for them to claim workers compensation for psychological injuries if they require it.

Developed in line with an increasing awareness of the impact that experiencing traumatic events can have on an individual's mental health, this bill reverses the onus of proof and creates a presumptive assumption that, unless proven otherwise by an employer, a first responder seeking to make a workers compensation claim has a psychological injury.

Before I delve deeper into the bill and what it means, I want to thank the Education, Employment and Training Committee, the committee secretariat and all submitters for their contributions towards the bill's development. The bill is a step in the right direction towards acknowledging the dangers of post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological disorders amongst first responders.


Indeed, in 2018 a Beyond Blue report titled *Answering the call* revealed substantially elevated rates of psychological distress, mental health conditions and suicidal thoughts and planning amongst first responders. It further reported that claims rates related to mental health conditions and psychological injuries were 10 times higher than average for Australian workers. These findings were also acknowledged in the 2019 Commonwealth Senate inquiry, *The people behind 000: mental health of our first responders*. This inquiry further recognised the need for early intervention mental health support, making recommendations across the areas of prevalence, reporting and management of first responder psychological injuries, compensation, return to work and post-retirement support. Each of these reviews also suggested a framework of presumptive laws to improve the first responder claim experience, which this bill broadly adopts.

Widely supported by stakeholders and submitters, this bill appears to apply much needed reforms for first responders. The exception to this support was from the Queensland Law Society. Heavily opposed to this bill, the society highlights concerns regarding the presumption of injury provisions and the bill's unnecessarily broad definition of 'first responder'. In its current form the bill defines a first responder as a worker or relevant volunteer employed in an occupation or profession prescribed by regulation. Further, the definition states that the person's employment requires the person to respond to incidents that are life threatening or otherwise traumatic and for which time may be critical to prevent actual or potential death or injury to persons or to prevent or minimise damage to property or the environment.

The explanatory notes further refine this definition to suggest that it would include police and corrective services officers, youth and child safety officers, paramedics, paid and volunteer firefighters, SES volunteers and doctors and nurses employed in emergency trauma care, acute care, critical care and high-dependency care. This definition might seem appropriate, but the problem is that it is not the definition used within the bill. Instead, the bill includes a broad definition open to interpretation in the hope that common sense will prevail. Unfortunately, common sense is no longer so common and this bill's definition of first responder remains ripe for exploitation.

Unsurprisingly, one group lying in wait to exploit this oversight are some of Queensland's unions. Always ready to reap the rewards of propping up the Palaszczuk Labor government, unions in Queensland, not content with the existing definition, are calling for it to be widened. From the CFMMEU to the Services Union, unions across the state are calling for the expansion of this already too broad definition to include just about any worker in Queensland. While I acknowledge that anyone working in our state may well encounter a traumatic event in their line of employment, very few will face the same trauma as our first responders. In this way their roles are unique and they therefore deserve the special considerations this bill would provide them.

Fortunately an alternative to this ill-conceived definition exists. The formerly mentioned 2019 Commonwealth Senate inquiry into the mental health of first responders, from which the ideas behind this bill stem, offers a narrower definition in line with community expectations. The inquiry defined first responders as paramedics, police officers, firefighters, ambulance officers and other emergency personnel trained to provide assistance in time critical, often life-threatening, situations. It is clear this bill's definition of first responders is not without fault and, while it certainly covers all whom it intends to support, it does have room for an unjustified interpretation. Further calls for it to be widened are simply ludicrous and must be treated as such. Ultimately, this bill is a good step in the right direction and that is why I join my colleagues in the LNP in not opposing this bill.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (6.13 pm): When we are at our lowest moment we reach out to a special group of Queenslanders to help us. They answer that call and are there for us. Recently I joined a special group of these responders, a group from Logan West, at a truly heart-wrenching memorial service in Browns Plains. I was joined there by the members for Waterford, Algeester and Woodridge. We were at the memorial for a one-time resident of Jimboomba and then of Browns Plains who died in a fire that had traumatised the entire local community. The events of the fire are still before the courts, with an individual facing charges, so I will be very restrained about the description of this traumatic event.

While our thoughts at that memorial were with the victim of the fire, as I looked around the group that was gathered there I knew that these events had also profoundly hurt those who had to be witness to this fire. I thought of those who were called to respond first to this disaster, the firefighters, who had to be there to risk their lives and fight the fire to save the houses nearby and then to see the victim; the police who had to record the terrible scene, to investigate and then arrest an individual; and the ambulance officers who would have also attended the scene and were helpless to use their skills in this terrible circumstance. I wish that no servant of the public of Queensland, such as our ambulance officers, police officers and firefighters, ever had to witness the terrible side of life in Queensland; however, these brave Queenslanders put up their hands to take on this difficult task.

So often after being a witness or involved in a truly traumatic event these people serving Queenslanders bounce back and continue to be there for other Queenslanders in their hour of need. We should recognise that a single traumatic event, or the cumulative effect of these events, hurt some of these brave Queenslanders. Over recent times we have continued to grow our understanding of the effects of humans being confronted by traumatic incidents outside the normal experience of human expectations of life. We have grown to understand the damage and, importantly, the healing of what mental health professionals have identified as post-traumatic stress disorder. We know this can be debilitating for those whom it affects. We owe it to those who suffer this serious workplace injury to ensure that they are treated fairly and are helped by our workers compensation system.

We all recognise that workers who suffer psychological injury through their work deserve compensation. Further, we recognise that in some cases it can be difficult to ascribe damage to a particular event or even link it to a series of events. For many people who are regularly called upon to be on the scene first at a violent or traumatic event, it might not be easy to identify an event that was completely out of the ordinary from everyday work. However, as the explanatory notes make clear, there is a difficulty in identifying the cause of mental health conditions after many years of cumulative exposure and we should recognise that the extreme event that happened in an emergency worker's life many years ago may have effects not even the worker themselves fully recognise until much later in their work life.

Some workers might also be reluctant to overcome the stigma of revealing they have suffered a mental injury. They might be reluctant to lodge an application if they have had advice that a specific issue that created the injury is difficult to identify. For these people the process itself would be difficult. It would be stressful and costly and in some cases add to the very pain that they suffered through their workplace. Recognising that particular classes of workers, those who are regularly exposed to trauma, are much more likely to suffer PTSD associated with their work, this bill seeks to reverse the onus of proof when these workers are seeking help through the workers compensation system.

It is important to note it does not create any new compensation entitlement for these workers. They are no different to others seeking entitlement. It also does not give the person involved any more or any less treatment or other benefit. It only smooths the path for those who are diagnosed with the injury. The person must still go through a pathway to have their condition diagnosed and there is still the opportunity to prove that the injury did not happen in the workplace. The onus is to prove that the worker's injury did not happen in the workplace, instead of the onus being on the worker to prove that it did happen in the workplace.

The 2018 Beyond Blue report, *Answering the call*, identified significantly higher rates of psychological distress, including diagnosable PTSD, suffered by workers who are first to respond to trauma. Some might ask why we have such a high bar as part of the pathway by ensuring that people are diagnosed by a psychiatrist. Importantly, the bill makes it clear that the insurer can accept a claim based on the diagnosis of PTSD by a general practitioner and that is an important safeguard for quick access to compensation. However, a robust diagnosis by a psychiatrist ensures that workers are seen by a clinician experienced with the nuances of how PTSD may present in those with cumulative trauma and who can identify the best and most appropriate treatment to maximise a healthy outcome. It is important that those who are injured have access to the best possible medical health care from the time of diagnosis.

The diagnosis makes reference to DSM-5, the manual of psychological conditions. It gives clear guidance to the legislation and can be updated by the profession to ensure that it is well understood. It is based on multiple factors, including the clinical judgement of a psychiatrist. It is important that there is that consistency and value. We have noted that in many cases PTSD is accepted as part of the process. However, we are making it clearer for those who perhaps do not have a singular issue for the establishment of their PTSD that they have a pathway to make a claim, which I think is important. If over 90 per cent of PTSD claims are granted, it is important that we do not have unnecessary delays and costs but move as quickly as possible to compensation and care for those injured in this way.


When the member for Kawana spoke we had an insight into the attitude of the LNP to the workers compensation scheme as the member focused solely on the costs of the system and seemed relatively uninterested in Queenslanders who are injured in the course of their work. Of course, we also know that when the LNP was in government they restricted access to compensation by injured Queenslanders. We know that injured workers are not the priority of the LNP. We know that those workers would suffer if the LNP were to once again control the Queensland workers compensation system.

I was particularly disappointed when the member for Kawana said that small business would be concerned only with premiums. We know that small business people are the heart and soul of our communities. None of them would want to deny access to compensation for the police officer who protects their small business if he or she suffers from workplace-caused PTSD. They would not want to deny the same thing to the ambulance officer who dealt with a crash outside their office or the firefighter who protected the business next door.

I note the fantastic police of the Logan area. I note the Logan West, Jimboomba, Crestmead and Logan Village Yarrabilba police stations; the Jimboomba and Logan West ambulance stations and the fantastic workers there; and of course the new Yarrabilba and Munruben ambulance stations. I note that, in relation to this bill, in this place we have many workers with life experience. Surrounding me are the member for Lockyer, the member for Macalister and the member for Caloundra who, in their previous profession, would be affected by this legislation.

Mr Madden: Hear, hear!

Mr POWER: I am sorry, member for Ipswich West: lawyers do not get to be recognised in that way but I know that you appreciate their work. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (6.24 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. While this is not an issue with which I am overly familiar, how could you not have heard some stories or had interactions with people who have had these sorts of stresses put on them? Like every good opposition or crossbench member, we try to give a rigorous critique of anything that the government does and certainly I try to do that. However, it is pretty hard to do that here as I think the government's intention is virtuous so well done. This fills a gap and there is a need for it, so I am happy to acknowledge that.

The member for Kawana raised a pertinent issue about costs. We have to be cognisant of that with any legislation that we pass because it will have an impact somewhere. Like the member for Logan pointed out, we balance that against the need from the community. On that basis it would be very difficult to deny people fast and needy access to a scheme such as this.


I cannot say that I have had a lot of experience of PTSD through discussions with constituents or through my general life experience, but I know of an ambulance driver—who represents a bit of a periphery issue as they are not ambulance officers—who has expressed some concerns about a deficit in services, which I think is pretty important. For me it particularly rings true when talking about services in small towns, so another concern I have with a scheme such as this is what it means for smaller

towns. The meaning of the scheme can be very clear for Brisbane, Townsville or Cairns where established services are based, but what will it mean for someone in Richmond, Julia Creek or Mount Isa?

Mount Isa has a big deficit as there are no inpatient services for mental health. The condition of someone who is totally stressed and has an acute need can be exacerbated by a lack of services. This affects people not only in Mount Isa but also in the entire catchment of the North West HHS. Someone who presents with acute stress may be sent away from their family and their support network to Brisbane or Townsville, possibly for weeks, and that is something to be considered.

In the north-west there is an urgent need for a mental health inpatient service. We have staff but there is no inpatient mental health service. If someone is showing signs of acute stress you cannot take them in for treatment over a number of days. When we establish something like this we have to think about the services available at the back end, particularly in remote areas where services are not readily available. The rollout may sound good but there can be big gaps.

The only other point that could add some value is that clearly there will be gaps and people will say that it does not fit, but that is the nature of much of the legislation that we pass in this place. Provided there is a review at some point, which has been flagged, I think we are on the right track. I say well done to the government. I think we are doing a good thing to help people in need. The KAP will support the bill.

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (6.27 pm): I rise to support the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I am very proud to be a part of the Palaszczuk government that will introduce what I consider to be one of the most important pieces of legislation for our frontline responders in Queensland. From the outset I thank the ministers involved and a number of ministers were involved. I know Minister Crawford had carriage of this bill in the previous term. To Minister Crawford, Minister Ryan and Minister Grace I say thank you so much. I thank the committee for the work they did in this important space.

I apologise if my voice is a little croaky. I sounded like Barnsie in my MPI speech. It is due to the Cowboys beating the Broncos on Friday night.

Gallows humour is often used by emergency services personnel when discussing topics that are serious or considered too painful to discuss. I might insert a little bit of that in my contribution. I warn members that some of it will be graphic but it needs to be shared. I want members to understand this by looking at it through the lens of someone who has worked in emergency services for over 30 years. I am reminded of going through the Ahpra registration process in March of last year. They wanted 5,000 hours for the past 10 years of work; my statement of service had 50,839 hours. That is just in 25 years full-time, let alone the honorary work or on-call work.

As many members know, police officers, fireies and nurses are constantly vigilant in getting up and going to work the next day. I think the member for Macalister said it well: you do not sleep well. It is set, reset, rinse, go back and do it again the next day. It is incredibly difficult.

As a union delegate I sat with many affected members, at their GP getting assessed under a workers compensation review, who did not get what they needed. I was later at a funeral. I will just say that I lost a couple of mates along the way. This legislation will save lives.

I cannot believe the similarities between my experiences and the experiences of someone who lives 1,400 kilometres away. I only have had the pleasure of meeting the member for Macalister in this term, but she has talked about day one. I want to reflect on my day one in the Ambulance Service. I had done five years in the hospital and I thought that had stood me in good stead for day one. My day one in 1990 involved a hanging, a stabbing and a motor vehicle accident. You never forget your first day. You do not forget your last day, either.

In mid-1995 I was stationed at Black River station north of Townsville. It was a single-officer station on the highway which covered about 80 kilometres of highway. I was there to relieve the former officer; he never came back. I sat with him out the back. We smoked quite a bit and he broke down. He had been there two years and he said that he just could not do it anymore.

Someone who had studied medicine, who was a critical care paramedic like myself, came along and did a thesis on road trauma in North Queensland and identified that station. I was attending about 12 motor vehicle accidents on the highway per month. As a single officer, I was so grateful that I had our rural volunteers—rural fireies and SES. I want to thank the minister—I spoke to her earlier—because they were often the first people on scene to help you with some of the most graphic things you will ever see. I am talking decapitations. I am talking people literally torn apart—limbs missing. I note the

similarities with an experience of the member for Macalister. One that will live with me forever was an incident near Rollingstone of a fellow who was entrapped by his legs. It was futile. We were just waiting for the fire to get there to cut him out. We had a brief conversation as he took his last breaths and he died in front of me. That is the stuff that a first responder goes to each day.

Then there are the kids: the babies who are pulled from pools, the babies who are thrust into your arms by parents who have backed over them, and the SIDS cases. As a CCP you are called out to everything. When you are a parent, when you go home you just hold your baby or you are too frightened to open the door of their nursery the next day. That lives with you, but we get past it.

We have some good coping mechanisms in the service these days. I thank our peer supporters and the people who are there to provide support. People often wonder why I continue to be in the service. It is because I find it hard to let go. These are people you have shared experiences with, and I am very proud to be part of an ambulance service. Think about those 50,000 hours and multiply that by 4,000 paramedics or the thousands of nurses, fire and police. Multiply that and just pause and think for a moment. I do not care what this costs. This is about looking after people in our community who look after us. This is one of the best pieces of legislation I am so proud to be part of to see this passed.

I will not even start on domestic violence. As I think the member for Macalister said, one of the most depraved things you could possibly see is a two-year-old stabbed multiple times in a domestic violence incident. I remember going to a lady who I thought was dead. I rolled her over and she took a breath. Her face was kicked in. She had full facial fractures. You could not recognise her; she was covered in blood. I looked at her supposed partner who had stabbed himself. All I remember was that his boots and his socks were covered in blood from where he had kicked her face in. I did not care whether he lived or died. Thankfully, she lived. Those are the kinds of cases that our first responders go to every day.

As chair of the Health and Environment Committee, paramedics and police wrote to our committee in terms of reliving incidences from 20 years earlier where people had suicided. Others came before us and talked about the memory of seeing the guns on the ground where people had shot themselves. These are people who deserve the very best of support. This government is giving them that.

I want to give a shout-out to my friends. I love you guys—I have made a lot of friends in this place—but politicians do my head in. My friends are fire, ambulance and police I have known for decades. I am so pleased that our EMDs are being recognised, too, because, as a clinical deployment, part of our role was working in comms and listening to those first calls. I am so glad that the EMDs who have to take those calls are a part of this.

I again thank the minister. Thank you for the thousands of people that you and this government will help save in years to come because this legislation is needed. Never again will I have to, I hope, sit with family of a peer who has taken their life because of the traumas they have faced and perhaps the support they did not get that they can now get under this Palaszczuk Labor government. I think you can all be very proud. I commend the bill to the House.




Mr KNUTH (Hill—KAP) (6.37 pm): I agree that this is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation that has come to the parliament since I was elected in 2004. I acknowledge the role that our first responders play in emergency services, in attending on accident victims in the quickest possible time. There is an increasing awareness of the impact on mental health from the acute and cumulative trauma experienced by many first responders and the importance of supporting their mental health and wellbeing. The bill meets the objectives of introducing the presumption of workers compensation for our valuable first responders and eligible employees who are diagnosed with PTSD by a psychiatrist.

I acknowledge the member for Thuringowa. I think this is very important. My best mate was a paramedic who had worked in the areas of Normanton, Black River and Thuringowa. He was very strong. We would go pig hunting together. He was used to attending a lot of accidents. I stress this fact as it is so important. He attended an accident scene where the car looked like his wife's car and the person killed in that car accident looked like his son. That fellow has never recovered from that. He resigned from the Ambulance Service and has never recovered. He is one of my best mates. These are the sorts of issues that many first responders face. I think if this legislation were around in his time 20 years ago, it would have helped him.

I note also that mine site accident first responders will be eligible for workers compensation under the bill. This is certainly welcomed by those working in the mining industry throughout the state. The strain on first responders has been amplified over the past 12 months because of COVID-19. That has to be acknowledged. We have seen the deadly result of mental health issues affecting armed services

personnel. This has led to a royal commission into defence force and veteran suicide. I believe this legislation goes a long way to recognising and addressing the mental anguish our first responders are subject to when they are exposed to the horrific accidents occurring every day. I support the bill and commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (6.40 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I say from the outset that I was not planning to speak to this bill but the government whip asked me to given my background. I thank members of the House for their supportive words. A lot of people get to experience traumatic events throughout their lives. They come across accidents. Sometimes people experience different things in the workplace.

There is a select cohort that we are talking about this evening. I know that you, Mr Deputy Speaker, are from that cohort yourself. I speak of first responders and frontline workers—those who are paid and not paid and who carry out this work on the front line. They are military, emergency services, medical and law enforcement workers and others.

My story is one of lived experience. Like other members of this House, I devoted my life to a career on the front line before I came into this place. Many people in this House know that I was a paramedic. I served as a full-time paramedic for 15 years and as a casual paramedic for five years prior to that. My story regarding trauma and emergency services began much before that because I was firefighter in Victoria for many years.

Growing up on the family farm, at the age of 13 I experienced the Ash Wednesday bushfires which were bearing down on the family farm. My father, who was the captain of the brigade, and happens to be at Parliament House tonight to have dinner with me, was out on the truck and it was Mum and I who had to try to manage hundreds of head of cattle, amongst everything else, whilst trying to stop our farm from being ravaged by one of the worst bushfires in Victoria's history. We had friends who died. We had friends who lost their farms. We had friends who lost hundreds of cattle and their livelihoods.

I went on to follow in my father's footsteps and joined the fire brigade as a volunteer. A few years later, at the age of 22, I was a lieutenant in the Rutherglen Fire Brigade, which is in northern Victoria. I was the first person into a house that was on fire with a person reported missing. In the process of searching for that person in that building, in the smoke on the floor of a bedroom I came face to face with a person with significant fatal wounds. That was the first time I had seen a dead person. It was just me and that person. It was a startling experience. I can still picture that in my head.

While I was at Rutherglen we attended multiple significant fatal accidents on the Hume Highway between Wangaratta and Wodonga. I can recall that at least three of those were fatal accidents involving truckies burnt inside their cabs. By this stage I was about 23. Counselling was non-existent back then. You worked it out amongst yourselves. A few mates would come over and you would have a few beers. We did our best to try to comfort each other. We got through.

After Rutherglen I moved down to a place called Colac in south-west Victoria. Colac has a population of around 15,000 people. As you do, I transferred my membership down there. I was in the fire brigade there. Colac turned out to be one of the trauma capitals of regional Victoria. I served in the fire brigade there for 12 years and became a full-time paramedic. I did more road trauma there than I care to think about. I recall a job where I climbed across three deceased people in a vehicle to get to a fourth. I recall a job where I was in a car working on a severely injured patient while lying on top of a deceased patient, with my head barely six inches from theirs. That is what you had to do. That was my job. I can remember attending five people in a Tarago who were deceased and a sixth who was not. This is what you did. This was the life of a paramedic. This still is the life of a paramedic.

On 2 December 1988, as a lieutenant in the Colac Fire Brigade, I went to job at a place called Linton, just south of Ballarat. There was a major bushfire there. We had a bad wind change coming across. We knew it was going to be bad. I was working in a strike team command vehicle. The strike team command vehicle is the vehicle in charge of about five tankers. There are five firefighters on a tanker so there is a team of about 28 people.

We recalled our crews out of the bush. We knew that the wind change was going to bad. Across the command channel I heard these words: 'Mayday, mayday, mayday. Linton control this is strike team 701.' They said, 'Go ahead 701.' They said, 'Mayday, mayday. We cannot account for the Geelong West tanker.' Five firefighters lost their lives right then and there due a wind change that went horribly wrong.

Those five firefighters were volunteers from the Geelong West brigade. I knew some of them. They died barely a couple of hundred metres from where I was. We were powerless to do anything. There were further radio conversations that I heard that I do not want to repeat, but we knew they were dead. I can still remember that radio transmission. I can close my eyes now in 2021—many decades later—and hear it.

Further into my career I saw more cardiac arrests and more fatalities than I can poke a stick at. Climbing across a person in a car I can remember seeing a phone sitting in the console. The person was deceased. They were decapitated. There was brain matter all over the place. I was kneeling in it. It has a very distinctive smell, which some people would know. The phone was ringing and it said 'Mum'. I did not answer it and neither did the police officer I was with.

A few years later in Murray Street Cairns a woman murdered seven of her kids. I was thankful not to be one of the paramedics who went into that house, but I was on shift. I was on shift when the paramedics returned from that job and walked back into the station. I now know what shell shock looks like. They looked like they had come straight from the trenches in France. They told me in very graphic detail what they had seen and what they had heard. I could tell that there was a long road to recovery for them.

This is my story. Other members of this House have similar stories. It is not a competition to see whose stories are better than others. It is about making everyone aware that this is the life of a first responder. This is what they put up with. Whether they are out on the road, whether they are in an emergency department, whether they are behind the radio or the phone in a call-taking centre, this is the life of someone who dedicates their life to first response, to the military and other jobs.

I have no doubt about it that I live with PTSD. I have never been diagnosed. There are times where it sneaks up on me. I can close my eyes and picture every single one of those jobs and many more that I have not mentioned. I can remember once in Colac a paramedic named Anthony Hann who recognised as a workmate of mine that something was wrong. He came up to me one day at work and gave me a big print. It was a montage of photos of me at different jobs that had been taken by the press. My feet were hanging out of cars. Sometimes all you could see was my bum hanging out of a window. On it he put the notation: 'Be proud of what you've done.'

At that time I was in a really black spot. That lifted me out. This is what this bill does. It will help those frontline staff lift themselves out. This is about making sure that our frontline staff do not need to fight the government for what should simply be recognised as a consequence of working on the front line.

Interestingly, members of the House might like to know that the incident controller of the job I talked about at Linton, where five firefighters died, was a man called Greg Leach, who is currently the QFES Commissioner. Greg and I go back to that very spot. I support the bill. Well done, Minister.



Mr BERKMAN (Maiwar—Grn) (6.50 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This is a bill that I support. It is very important legislation. It is an issue that has been on my radar for some years now. As far back as July 2019 I had a constituent get in touch with me and I wrote on their behalf to the then minister for fire and emergency services about the need for a presumptive provision in workers compensation legislation specifically relating to PTSD for firefighters in that instance.

There is much in the bill to applaud and it deserves our support, but there is much more to be done. I want to use my contribution this evening to put on the record some of those concerns raised by submitters on the bill. A number of submitters pointed out the need to extend presumptive workers compensation to a much broader range of mental illness or to all trauma related psychological injury. Submitters included the EWU, the firefighters union, QCU and the Together union.

Concerns were also raised that it is unclear how long a claimant needs to have worked in the role to be eligible for the positive presumption to apply. Brian Ranse—a veteran, a firefighter, a first responder in various roles, who has accessed treatment for PTSD via DVA—pointed out that one need only have worked one day in these roles to be affected. I think we have heard that as well in some of the accounts from members here in the House. Brian says that the law should clearly state that they are eligible in that case, as I understand it.

Others have said there needs to be a stronger requirement for the rebuttal of the presumption so only demonstrable and reasonable evidence can be relied upon. Together and the firefighters union raised this in their respective submissions, noting the trend to point to unrelated personal or unsubstantiated circumstances. The EWU explicitly noted divorce or separation or the loss of a loved one as an example. The department says it will prepare guidance materials for employers and insurers

to inform them about the strength of evidence required to be presented to prove that employment was not a significant contributing factor to a PTSD injury. A legislative requirement for reasonable evidence would be even stronger.

I am somewhat disappointed by the government's refusal to include a schedule of eligible workers in legislation rather than in regulation, despite the committee finding that this is inconsistent with FLPs and recommending otherwise. This was raised in various submissions including the firefighters union, QCU and Together. It may be something of a concerning pattern of government, or legislation broadly, to shift decision-making power to the executive exercise of power without proper scrutiny or input from the parliament. This brings into play a potential future narrowing of the scope of eligible employees. The list of eligible workers could be included in legislation consistent with existing presumptive legislation. Just like we do in other legislation, this could include a provision to add to a schedule in regulation. Thereby we could protect those workers from easy amendment out of the presumption but allow future expansion.

I want to raise some concerns that the government has decided to go ahead with a requirement for claimants to be diagnosed with PTSD by a psychiatrist in accordance with DSM-5 given the number of concerns that were raised in submissions about the appropriateness of this code. Even the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists said in their submission that, while diagnostic manuals and tests like the DSM are useful to support a diagnosis, they do not make a diagnosis. They suggest that to better allow for the complexity of patients' presentations the law should instead allow psychiatrists to make PTSD diagnosis based on their own training and experience.

Others without a vested interest in psychiatry point out that the requirement for diagnosis to be performed only by a psychiatrist could be prohibitive for some claimants, with significant up-front costs, waiting times and access issues in rural communities. Both the firefighters union and the Queensland Council of Unions said in their submissions that the laws should at least allow for diagnosis by either a psychiatrist or a psychologist with suitable training and expertise. Dr Lynda Crowley points out that one of the problems with the DSM diagnosis—and this is actually enshrined in these laws—is the suggestion that PTSD is limited to exposure to death, serious injury or sexual violence. In this day and age it is well acknowledged and accepted that trauma related mental health issues are far more varied and complex in both cause and manifestation.

The government's response to these concerns is, in essence, that DSM-5 is used all around the world so we will just stick with that. In doing so, I am concerned that we are proceeding with a restrictive and potentially problematic pathway for diagnosis that does not properly account for the complexity of trauma and mental health. As is perhaps becoming all too common, this legislation does not address what appear to be legitimate concerns from a number of experts.

The same is true in some respects in relation to the limited eligibility proposed in this bill. A number of submitters called for a greater scope of employees to be included. The AWU pointed to disability services workers and carers working in high-risk areas. The Services Union I think pointed to not-for-profit, social and community service sector workers who provide counselling and direct support to victims of domestic and family violence or other trauma. The ETU talked about frontline electrical workers and control centre operators who deal with serious accidents. The QNMU spoke of midwives.

The CFMMEU spoke of a broader range of coalmine workers who are required to respond to serious accidents. The AMA referred to GPs. Together put forward that the definition of eligible worker should 'include all workers who are exposed to trauma by either a single traumatic event or the cumulative effect of repeated trauma as a direct result of the nature of their work'. Cynicism around Labor's need to please the CFMMEU aside, I agree that all of those workers deserve to be covered under the bill, rather than just the slight expansion that we have seen in these amendments.

I want to turn briefly to the important role that fires play. The trauma experienced by some first responders often cannot be mitigated. In the case of firefighters, there are vitally important steps that we could and must take. The climate crisis has already made fire seasons longer and bushfires more severe. The black summer bushfires were confronting enough for many of us in our lounge rooms—seeing the smoke in the sky, watching the catastrophe unfolding on the news and checking the map to see how close our loved ones were to the danger. That experience cannot even remotely be compared to the way these fires impact on those on the front lines.

Firefighters, both paid fires and volunteers, are the ones confronting the heat and the flames and the devastation up close. They are making incredibly tough decisions under extreme pressure. No matter how hard they fight, they will still have to reckon with what has been lost after the flames have gone. That is never going to be an easy job. We have heard from countless firefighters that it is even harder when you know things are only going to get worse.

During the black summer bushfires former heads of the New South Wales, Queensland, Victorian and Tasmanian fire services all called for urgent action on the climate crisis. They pointed out that just a one-degree increase has placed more lives at risk including firefighters. Former New South Wales fire and rescue chief said explicitly that climate change has 'supercharged' the bushfire problem. Meanwhile the big parties back in fossil fuels driving this very same crisis. Just this week we have seen another self-congratulatory media release from the Labor government talking about how wonderful it is to have approved 10 new gas-prospecting authorities in the last year and releasing 80,000 square kilometres of Queensland land to gas companies.

This bill is a good step and I agree with its intent, but in this respect we are effectively parking ambulances at the bottom of the cliff as we continue to pander to the interests of coal and gas donors.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Member, I would bring you back to the long title of the bill, please.

Mr BERKMAN: There is more the government could and should be doing to limit exposure of this kind in the first place. I do not mean any disrespect in making these observations, Mr Deputy Speaker. These are the brutal facts we are dealing with when we look at climate change and the impacts it will have on first responders.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask you to come back to the long title of the bill please, member.

Mr BERKMAN: I will use the last few moments I have to put on the record my deep appreciation to all of our first responders. They do tough, very often thankless and deeply traumatic work. I do want to thank the members who have given us their own personal accounts of their experience on the front lines. In this debate it is very important for us to hear it.

Debate, on motion of Mr Berkman, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Gill, Mr T; Caraffi, Ms J


 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (7.00 pm): I rise this evening to briefly share the story of Tony Gill, Jane Caraffi and their mutual love not only of each other but of the visual arts. Tony, who joins us in the gallery this evening, is a bloke from Biloela. After studying hotel administration in Switzerland and a decade working in hospitality on Dunk, Lindeman and Fraser islands and cinema management, Tony eventually settled in Montville and opened Tony Gill Galleries in 1995. Jane, a former nurse who is originally from London, arrived in Queensland while travelling in 1993. She settled in Maleny and opened her own gallery in 1998. A shared interest in photography introduced her to Tony. Their love of photography, art and galleries blossomed into romance and marriage, and like all Aussie blokes Tony did very well for himself. He is batting well above his average when it comes to Jane.

In 2002 Tony and Jane moved their gallery to Cairncross Corner on the road between Maleny and Landsborough, and Art on Cairncross was born. Not content with creating an art lovers' mecca and a home for the Sunshine Coast hinterland's famous ceramic, glass and sculpture artists and painters, Tony and Jane have always invested time, energy and money into promoting the arts, tourism and the hinterland. Tony has served on Hinterland Tourism where he met my other guest this evening, Mr Ferre de Deyne, owner of the Big Kart Track, art collector and benefactor. Together Tony and Ferre founded the Sunshine Coast Art Prize. Tony and Jane are the force behind the Sunshine Coast hinterland art gallery trail map and website. They were awarded 2019 Sunshine Coast Regional Council Creative Citizens of the Year. They have provided artwork that has hung in the opposition office here in the Parliamentary Annexe. Their crowning glory is that for the past decade Tony and Jane have judged my Christmas card competition.

In March 2019 Jane was struck down by a rare and complicated illness, autoimmune encephalitis. It baffled medics, had her in an induced coma and had the amazing staff at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital designing her treatment on the fly with little research or knowledge of the illness to guide them. Whilst Jane's recovery continues positively, she and Tony have decided after 26 years to close their gallery this Sunday. Something tells me that whilst we bid a fond and sad farewell to the physical gallery, we will not see the end of Tony and Jane's contribution to the arts or to our region. I know that Tony, alongside Ferre and myself, will continue to work on establishing a world-class regional art gallery in the hinterland that celebrates the Glass House Mountains, our rich Indigenous heritage and the arts.

Tony and Jane, as you close the doors on your gallery this Sunday can I express my sincere thanks for all you have done for the arts, for tourism in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, for my own art education and that of countless locals and tourists and the artists you have worked with throughout the years. You will be missed.

Brisbane Jets; Bundamba Electorate


 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (7.03 pm): West is best. That is the message I shared in a recent letter to Australian Rugby League Commission chairman Peter V'Landys. Like my fellow Ipswich MPs, I am backing the Brisbane Jets' bid to join the National Rugby League as the code's 17th team. Headed by Ipswich Jets chairman Steven Johnson, the western corridor campaign continues to gain momentum as the league looks to add another south-east side from 2023, and Queensland's fastest growing region is perfectly placed.

We are a proud defence region. Australia's biggest RAAF base at Amberley employs more than 5,000 people and the Jets name is already engrained in our community. The western corridor, more specifically Ipswich, is a long-time league heartland. Just this season we have seen local product Sam Walker become the most talked about rookie in the competition, replacing yet other Ipswich born player, an injured Luke Keary, at the Sydney Roosters. That success is only set to continue in line with population growth. By 2026 our local community will be home to about 20,000 Rugby League players—almost 30 per cent of the expected 73,000 across the state. The countdown has started and the Brisbane Jets are ready for take-off in the western corridor.

Ongoing population growth is also driving demand at our local schools. Last week we celebrated the official opening of a new \$10 million building at Fernbrooke State School. One of Ipswich's newest schools, Fernbrooke opened in 2017 in response to significant growth in the Redbank Plains area. Student enrolment has now passed 1,000. The new two-storey block accommodates years 5 and 6 students in 12 classrooms and also provides six teacher prep spaces, an outdoor learning area and student and staff amenities. Local projects like this are building on our record \$1.9 billion education infrastructure investment in 2021, supporting over 4,800 jobs as we continue our safe and strong COVID recovery. The Palaszczuk government has budgeted \$102.9 million to maintain, improve and upgrade Ipswich schools this year. We are also planning for new schools in the surrounding suburbs of Redbank, Ripley, Springfield and Brookwater.

Along with supporting local jobs, this ongoing recovery has seen our community calendars spring back to life in recent months, and for our local community this means the imminent return of the Ipswich show this weekend. The 148th show will be held as a COVID-safe event this Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Congratulations to Ipswich Show Society president Darren Zanow and all of the volunteers from the organising committee for working so hard to bring back our show after the challenges of 2020.

Gold Coast Electorate, Hooning and Crime

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (7.06 pm): I have been warning the Brisbane Labor government for some time now of the ongoing hooning and crime problems that continue unabated on the Gold Coast and in my electorate because of a diminished traffic police presence on our local roads over the period of COVID-19. Gold Coasters are fed up with the crime crisis plaguing our city. Given that Brisbane Labor has refused to supplement Gold Coast police staffing levels, leaving them with an insufficient number of officers, and given that juvenile justice laws have been weakened under this government, it is unsurprising that hoons have become more brazen and there is an increase in criminal behaviour.

The fact that the Attorney-General is already open to reviewing the youth justice laws that were only passed in the last sitting week does not give me much confidence in the government's ability to protect the Gold Coast community. I table a *Courier-Mail* article by Brendan O'Malley and Danielle Buckley detailing this.

As a recent example from my electorate, teenagers stole three cars from Monaco Street and were allegedly seen to be driving recklessly at high speed. They have subsequently been charged. I table Jacob Miley's article detailing this.

The police laying charges in this case stands in stark contrast to the anecdotal evidence, which seems to suggest that strong laws in relation to vehicle confiscation are not being applied as often as they used to be. It is good that the hoons are being put on notice by the police.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Member, are you referring to a matter that is currently before the courts?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am not sure, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will just take some advice. Sub judice provisions apply from when a charge has been laid to when the matter is resolved by the courts. In the absence of surety in your situation, I urge caution.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, and I did use the word 'allegedly', Mr Deputy Speaker, but thank you for your guidance.


Whilst the threat of punishment may be successful in deterring some Gold Coasters from hooning, it has certainly not provided an answer to the problem of dangerous driving that persists in my electorate. There has been an increase in the number of constituents contacting me in fear and frustration because of rampant reckless driving. One constituent voiced concerns to me over the offensive and excessive noise in the inner Broadbeach area general rated by 'speeding Harley bikes and high-powered vehicles'. I table that correspondence.

Along Ferry Road, car enthusiasts gather frequently to spectate illegal street and drag racing. A few weeks ago, hoons allegedly racing around the Isle of Capri slammed into the parked car of a local resident. I table images providing visuals of these two events.

There is a deluge of hooning events and I have been sounding the alarm bells over and over again. That is why I have organised two petitions on behalf of my constituents. The first is for the placement of permanent speed cameras on the Gold Coast Highway near Admiralty Drive, Surfers Paradise. The second calls for additional personnel and associated resources for the Queensland Police Service on the Gold Coast to make communities safer. The member for Burleigh is supporting a youth offenders petition. I table, amongst the things I have tabled, Brianna Morris-Grant's *Gold Coast Bulletin* article detailing this petition.

It is clear that the government is asleep at the wheel. Brisbane Labor does not get the Gold Coast.

International Workers Memorial Day; Labour Day; Redcliffe Dolphins

 **Mr KING** (Kurrumbidgee—ALP) (7.10 pm): I rise to pay my respects for two important milestones we have marked in the past two weeks: International Workers Memorial Day and Queensland's Labour Day. Last month I proudly attended International Workers Memorial Day and helped to lay a wreath at Emma Miller Place in Roma Street, Brisbane with my ministerial colleagues, the members for Springwood, Miller and Townsville. For those who do not know, 28 April each year is International Workers Memorial Day—a day organised by unions across the world to commemorate workers who have tragically lost their lives at work. This year we remembered the 32 workers who died on the job in Australia up to the end of April—32 workers who said goodbye to their families and went off to work and never came home. In 2020, there were 178 Australian workers who were killed at work, and in 2019 there were 183 people who died on the job in this country. In the last 12 months, 26 Queenslanders have lost their lives while trying to earn their livelihood.

This year the international theme for International Workers Memorial Day is 'Health and safety is a fundamental workers' right', and I agree. Every death at work is one too many. We can do better; we must do better. We also must focus beyond the risk of purely physical workplace injuries and seek to eliminate the adverse mental health impacts of unsafe workplaces. I welcome the Premier's announcement recently that we will review our state's industrial laws with the goal of strengthening them where sexual harassment is concerned as another step in the right direction. I welcome opportunities for our government to work in partnership with the union movement and all workers to continue to strengthen and improve our workplace laws across Queensland and across the country.

This brings me to the second occasion I want to highlight today—our celebration of Labour Day on Monday, 3 May. Members were out in force, showing strong union pride after a COVID-19 enforced hiatus in 2020. I was especially proud to say that my union, the mighty Electrical Trades Union, won best contingent on the day.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr KING: I want to thank everyone who participated on the day—either by joining us in town or by cheering us on at home. I take that interjection from the member for Logan who is quite proud of the ETU as well.

Labour Day is very special to me as a member of the trade union movement and a member of the Australian Labor Party. Our party was founded back in the 1890s to fight for better rights at work. It is what drove me to become a union member, a delegate and then a representative in this place. The

LNP tried to deny our history and squash the celebrations of our achievements for workers when they shifted Labour Day from May in 2013. We fought back, with the Palaszczuk government restoring our May Day public holiday in 2016, and we on this side of the chamber will continue to fight every day to stand up for Queensland workers.

With the brief time I have left, I would like to reiterate something I said last sitting week about the NRL bid and the mighty Redcliffe Dolphins. Ipswich should not get it. I do believe it should be the Redcliffe Dolphins all the way.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Before I call the next member, I would have to say that the speakers are really testing the impartiality of the Deputy Speaker here tonight. We will see how the member for Burnett goes.

Burnett Region; Bundaberg Region Promotion Night



Mr BENNETT (Burnett—LNP) (7.13 pm): Back to adjournments, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly. It has been one year since the initial COVID-19 travel restrictions were lifted and Burnett was re-opened for business. The incredible resilience our tourism and other small business operators have shown throughout the pandemic is commendable. This pandemic has shown that the people of Burnett are a tough, determined bunch who can rise above any challenges thrown at them. I am proud to stand here and shout out that the beautiful Burnett is well and truly open for business, with our local operators exceeding all expectations and bouncing back in a spectacular fashion.

Anyone considering booking their next holiday should look no further than our slice of paradise. The line-up of experiences simply cannot be beaten. In the words of our passionate Bundaberg tourism team, it is—

... the town the turtles call home, where beach meets reef, your plates are always filled with abundant local produce and the rum is always world-class.

I am thrilled that a number of our local attractions and award-winning businesses, alongside wonderful community groups, will soon descend on Parliament House for the highly anticipated Bundaberg Region Promotion Night next month. This is a bipartisan event with the member for Bundaberg.

Ashley and Carly Clark are a shining example of locals who continue to strive to provide visitors with first-class experiences, and I am excited to say they will be joining us for the regional promotion roadshow. The Clarks run Splitters Farm, a 160-acre working farm bordering Splitters Creek—a freshwater nature reserve just a short 10-minute drive out of Bundaberg. What initially started out as a working farm and sanctuary for rescued farm animals has transformed into so much more. Splitters Farm is now one of the region's fastest growing agritourism businesses, offering a unique rural and farm stay experience, complete with glamping facilities for those seeking extra comforts. They have big plans to expand further, and I cannot wait to share these exciting details with the House in the near future.

Tinaberries is another family owned and operated farm experience that will be joining us next month. I highly recommend that people add Tinaberries to their bucket list so you can pick your own strawberries and taste their farm fresh homemade ice cream, which can be enjoyed in their lush gardens. Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort is another Bundaberg bucket list item. The family run and operated ecotourism business is home to more than 1,200 species of marine life, including majestic manta rays, turtles and other marine life, and the unspoilt coral reef.

Of course, I cannot talk about the region without mentioning our award-winning distilling companies: Kalki Moon Distilling and Brewing and the world-famous Bundaberg Rum Distillery. This is another bucket list item that will not disappoint. They will also be on show here in Parliament House, demonstrating how they are in the Bundaberg-Burnett region 'Raising the Bar'. There is not enough time to talk about all the wonderful things on offer in our region. Members will just have to come along and experience it for yourselves. We look forward to being able to shine a spotlight on what we hold dear—our ventures, our tourism operations and much more—in celebration of their achievements at the Bundaberg Region Promotion Night. It is on 17 June. All members are welcome. Come along and share what we know is the best place in the world to live and raise a family.

International Nurses Day; International Day of the Midwife



Mr SKELTON (Nicklin—ALP) (7.16 pm): I rise to acknowledge international nurses and midwives week. I wish to offer my apologies first and foremost to Kyle Penhaligon, the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union, the Nambour General Hospital—our wonderful hospital of the hinterland—and the

nurses and midwives of our region. Unfortunately, I cannot be with you all for breakfast tomorrow morning. Tomorrow we celebrate Nurses Day. In this chamber where we sit I have a great friend in the member for Greenslopes, who is himself a former nurse. I applaud him and his tireless service, which was recently seen in the long walk for Parkinson's disease. I also thank the member for Mudgeeraba.


I would like to have recorded in this chamber the contribution of Ms Jean Haimes, the nurse manager at Nambour General Hospital. Jean has worked at Nambour General Hospital since the 1970s. Prior to that she worked in Bundaberg, Longreach and Roma. Even though Jean is now a manager, I am reliably informed that she is still rolling her sleeves up and performing the tasks required of a nurse every day. Jean has had an amazing career. All of our nurses are amazing. Jean embodies that sense of duty, compassion and empathy. This willingness to put others first and assist the most vulnerable in our communities is the character of our nurses and midwives. Jean's many years of service and the affection that her colleagues and community have for her are truly well deserved.

I ask all of us in the community to thank our nurses and midwives—not just tomorrow or during nurses week but every day. In these uncertain times of the pandemic, our health professionals have kept us safe. They have been our front line. They have held the torch for us all. In the words of Winston Churchill, never before have so many owed so much to so few. In parting, I would like to acknowledge my partner Agnes and her work in aged care and all those nurses working there as well.

Interruption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER'S STATEMENT


Tabled Paper, Sub Judice

 **Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Before I call the member for Mermaid Beach, one of the documents tabled by the member for Surfers Paradise may offend standing orders in relation to sub judice so I have asked the table staff to review those documents. The Speaker will make a ruling on that in the morning.

ADJOURNMENT

Resumed.

Gold Coast Turf Club

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (7.20 pm): For the umpteenth time—initially announced when Peter Lawlor was the racing minister back in 2011—the Minister for Racing has announced a \$31 million package for the Gold Coast Turf Club to facilitate a tunnel under the racetrack, an all-weather racing track and lights on the course proper for Friday night racing. Good luck Gold Coast Turf Club with that for, as most dodgy operators infamously say, the cheque is in the mail.

It is the issue of Friday night racing that concerns me most. As anyone with a modicum of racing knowledge would know, if you race Friday night you will not be racing on Saturday afternoon. As a Gold Coast Turf Club board member for 14 years, I know that the Gold Coast Turf Club generates its well-known public attendance on Saturday afternoons primarily because of the metropolitan racing in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Any major diversions from the current scenario will see a serious drop in attendance and fundraising capacity of the Gold Coast Turf Club. Our motto used to be 'racing every Saturday in paradise', and that branding was nearly as good as 'beautiful one day; perfect the next'.

Racing Queensland is obsessed with the notion that its betting turnover will be massively increased if it races on Friday nights at the Gold Coast in conjunction with Moonee Valley in Melbourne and Canterbury in Sydney. Both of those venues conduct their meetings with little public attendance on Friday nights, and at the Gold Coast it will be even worse. The hype that it will be the 'Happy Valley of Australia' is pure fiction, as gambling in Hong Kong is a different world to Australian racing. On Friday nights the Gold Coast Turf Club will be competing with the array of restaurants, nightclubs and pokie palaces for the younger patrons, while the over-50s, who are the majority of Gold Coast members, will be tucked up in bed.

I cannot stress enough how much I believe this is a serious negative for the future of the Gold Coast Turf Club, which is a venue and an organisation extremely dear to my heart. I understand the logic behind the other proposed asset improvements to the club. If that government cheque ever arrives, as a member of the club for 40 years I will look forward to the opening of those new facilities.

In reality, Friday night racing is a turn-off for public attendance and industry participants, trainers and jockeys preparing at 3 am Saturday for their big money day on Saturday afternoon. This is a short-sighted gamble by Racing Queensland to try to show that they are doing something to generate more turnover, but it is to the total detriment of the Gold Coast Turf Club individually, which is hobbled in this decision by its desire to seek funds for its other facility improvements. Shame on Racing Queensland. Let them limit their night racing to a midweek at the Gold Coast so that the Gold Coast Turf Club can continue to race on Saturday afternoons where they generate their enormous income and support the Queensland racing industry.

Lytton Electorate; Handley, Miss OE, OAM



Ms PEASE (Lytton—ALP) (7.22 pm): The bayside is flourishing, and with good reason. It is a fabulous place to live, work, raise a family and enjoy. May is the month that we unite against domestic and family violence, and together we baysiders have made it clear that enough is enough.

Over 200 people joined me at our moving and respectful DVF vigil at Pandanas Beach. We heard from Zoe Sullivan and Jo Jackson, both DVF survivors. It was so heartwarming to see so many from different walks of life, young and old, to stand united to rid our community of this terrible scourge.

May is also the month that we celebrate our vibrant small businesses. I know that small business is the backbone of our economy, often our first job, always the first to support local events and each day investing in our economy. I am thrilled to support local businesses and delighted with the efforts of Wynnum Up Late—and a huge welcome to all our new businesses. From chocolates to bras to baby clothing to flowers and restaurants, we are well covered.

I am delighted to be hosting a small business event next week which will see the launch of Wynnum Commerce Inc. and also the reintroduction of the much anticipated Bayside Business of the Month. Wynnum Commerce Inc. is ramping up support, growth and promotion of our local businesses. With laneway events, brewery and homeware trails, it is all happening in the bayside, and in no small way is the commitment of the Wynnum Manly Leagues Club leading the charge. The club has made a significant contribution to our economy and our community; it has contributed over \$7.5 million to our local schools and clubs. Locals have responded to these fabulous new facilities with over 8,000 new members joining up. The staff have been brilliant during the refurbishment, working around many challenges including working in a COVID-safe environment and always with a smile. I give a big shout-out to you all. I know that you will enjoy working in this upgraded workplace. Our hallowed Kougari Oval has also seen a refurbishment with new turf, which I was able to help lay, and a new, improved and smart-looking chook pen.

Sadly, we had the very sad passing of the indomitable Miss Handley OAM. Miss Handley was a much loved local pioneer and educator of young women in the bayside. She was innovative and a trailblazer, enriching young girls' worlds by introducing them to ideas and ideals and exposing them to cultural pursuits. Yes, she really was a woman of strong, indomitable spirit. Whilst she was sad to see the school move from Greene's schoolhouse in Bay Terrace, she was very proud to be part of the new, flourishing Moreton Bay College as it stands today. Vale Miss Handley. You are loved and will be missed by many. Thank you for your contribution to education and the love that you shared with the young women in your care.

It would also be remiss of me not to acknowledge the great work of our wonderful nurses and midwives in our community and thank them for their valuable contribution by taking care of Queenslanders and Australia during COVID.

Moggill Electorate; Carlow, Mr T



Dr ROWAN (Moggill—LNP) (7.24 pm): Recently over 8,000 local residents in the electorate of Moggill gathered at the Brookfield Showground for this year's Anzac Day commemorative service. Our local community ensured that the dedication and sacrifice of all of Australia's service men and women continue to be not only respected but also rightfully honoured. Following this service, the annual Shell Green cricket match was held, with the Army 11 team triumphant over the Brookfield United Lord Mayor's 11 team.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Lieutenant Colonel Rick Maher, President of the Kenmore-Moggill RSL, and all other local RSL members for their efforts in facilitating such an outstanding local service. In particular I also acknowledge Major Chris Moon of the Royal Australian Engineers who was the parade coordinator of the day.

Local commemorative services were also held at the Mount Crosby Bowls Club as well as at Bolton Clarke Fairview, which is located in Pinjarra Hills. I acknowledge Fairview resident and retired Royal Australian Air Force Squadron Leader Brian Farrow, who proudly represented the veteran community at Fairview.


In addition to Anzac Day many other great local community initiatives and events have recently been held. Last month, alongside federal member for Ryan, Julian Simmonds MP, I was delighted to join with residents and plant a tree at the Pullenvale Forest Park Celebration Day. This event was held by the Pullen Pullen Catchments Group. I acknowledge all of their members and also take this opportunity to thank the Brookfield Rotary Club for hosting the sausage sizzle on the day.

More recently, on Saturday of the weekend just gone I joined Councillor Greg Adermann, councillor for the Pullenvale ward, at the official opening of stage 1 of the playground redevelopment at our local Bellbowrie community kindergarten. Last week, I also joined with Councillor Greg Adermann at the unveiling of the newly named Penhaligon Park, along with Councillor James Mackay, councillor for the Walter Taylor ward. The formal recognition and opening of Penhaligon Park was made possible thanks to the combined efforts of the Kenmore and District Historical Society and the Indooroopilly and District Historical Society in collaboration with the Brisbane City Council. I also acknowledge Judy Magub, Bev Walker and all members of their respective historical societies.

This coming weekend marks the Brookfield Show's 110th anniversary, a milestone which will be celebrated by many local residents, as many residents also did at this year's Brookfield Ball, which was held last weekend. I saw the member for Cooper there as well. It was a terrific night. I look forward to joining His Excellency the Hon. Paul de Jersey AC, Governor of Queensland, and President Cath Fullerton and members of the Brookfield Show Society at the official opening on Saturday night.

Finally, I want to also take this opportunity to acknowledge the profound and deep sense of community loss following the death of iconic Kenmore resident Mr Edward (Ted) Carlow. For over 70 years Ted and his wife, Nola, could frequently be seen out the front of their house on Moggill Road near the Kenmore roundabout. Their friendly smiles and waves were a welcome sight each and every day and certainly brought joy and warmth to many, both young and old. On behalf of the electorate of Moggill, I wish to formally place on record my condolences to Nola, to Ted and Nola's children, as well as their entire extended family. Vale Edward (Ted) Carlow.

Arts Sector

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (7.28 pm): Unlike some of the members here, I am so fortunate I get to live so close to where we work. Every night I get to go home and hang out in my own electorate and try to activate functions and events in my electorate. That is something I really do take advantage of.

Last night I hosted a function just a few kilometres from here in the iconic Hands on Art substation in Paddington. It is a local heritage-listed and iconic venue that celebrates Brisbane's thriving arts scene, and what an arts scene we have here in Brisbane! The evening was one I initiated. I wanted to bring together the arts community in my electorate of Cooper for two really important reasons. Firstly, I wanted them to connect with each other, with their peers. I think we would all agree that the arts sector is one that is often under-utilised and quite isolated and lonely. Often they are people who are underemployed in that sector who want to connect and come up with ideas of how they can leverage their time. I thought it was a really great opportunity to bring them together.

Secondly, I wanted them to hear about what current and prospective funding opportunities the Queensland government has on offer. Notably, the Queensland Arts Showcase Program funding is available now with applications closing later this month. The funding program supports vibrant and accessible arts and cultural experiences for Queensland by individuals, organisations or collectives. There is up to \$30,000 in grants funding for sole operators and \$60,000 in joint funding collaborations or co-funding.

This funding is particularly aimed at emerging artists—trying to get them up and into economic employment. We are trying to make sure that people in regional Queensland and here in Brisbane not only have access to our arts community but also have economic opportunities that go beyond one-off events.

The arts sector is an important sector to Queensland. Members may not know that each year the arts and cultural sector injects around \$8.5 billion into the state's economy and supports more than 92,000 jobs throughout Queensland. As I said last night, I think there is a real opportunity for the arts

sector to tell the story of what is going on here and globally with COVID. Also, there is real commercial opportunity for artists at the moment as people are not travelling but are looking for other ways to invest. That represents a great opportunity.

I put the call out. I was not sure what I was going to get. I knew that the electorate of Cooper has a really vibrant arts scene. We all host events and think we might get five or 10 people to attend. With relatively short notice, we had about 50 people turn up last night to hear from Arts Queensland about the funding that is available. I acknowledge Minister Enoch. We have the \$22.5 million Arts and Cultural Recovery Package for the arts sector right now here in Queensland. It is so important.

I thank Clare, Hamish and Tyler from my office, who brought the evening together. I particularly acknowledge how helpful the officers from Arts Queensland were. Arts Queensland development officer Carly Nering attended after hours. She has a two-year-old who was unwell at the time, but she came after hours and spent all night speaking to people. I am really excited to see what our local arts sector delivers. I encourage all members to connect with Arts Queensland and deliver the same program and activity in their electorates.

(Time expired)

The House adjourned at 7.31 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Andrew, Bailey, Bates, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Boyce, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Camm, 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, Lui, MacMahon, Madden, Mander, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mullen, Nicholls, O'Connor, O'Rourke, Palaszcuk, Pease, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Skelton, Smith, Stevens, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Weir, Whiting