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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Thursday, 24 February 2022

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THURSDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2022



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.

SPEAKER'S RULINGS

Same Question Rule



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have considered the application of the same question rule with respect to the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Working with Children (Indigenous Communities) Amendment Bill. Clause 93 of the government's bill and clause 11 of the private member's bill seek to insert alternative transitional provisions including new sections 594 at the same point of the act. As drafted, these clauses cannot stand together. I seek leave to incorporate my full ruling in the *Record of Proceedings*.

Leave granted.

SPEAKER'S RULING—APPLICATION OF SAME QUESTION RULE TO THE CHILD PROTECTION REFORM BILL AND THE WORKING WITH CHILDREN (INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES) AMENDMENT BILL

I have considered the application of the same question rule with respect to the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Working with Children (Indigenous Communities) Amendment Bill.

On 15 September 2021 the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs introduced the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill is wide ranging and amends a number of acts and a regulation including the Adoption Act 2009, the Child Protection Act 1999, the Child Protection Regulation 2011, the Disability Services Act 2006 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000.

The member for Traeger introduced the Working with Children (Indigenous Communities) Amendment Bill on 1 September 2021. The Member for Traeger's bill is narrower and primarily amends the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 to provide a new blue card framework for Indigenous communities.

The policy approaches in the government bill and the private member's bill are compatible in that the objectives the private member's bill seeks to achieve for Indigenous communities are not included in the government bill. The difficulty is that clause 93 of the government bill and clause 11 of the private member's bill seek to insert alternative transitional provisions including new sections 594 at the same point in the Act and, as drafted, these clauses cannot stand together.

Speakers have refrained from exercising the same question rule in relation to bills that deal with substantially the same subject matter but are genuinely alternative propositions seeking to obtain similar outcomes by different mechanisms, particularly where there are provisions in each bill not dealt with in the other (Speaker Wellington, Record of Proceedings, 8 November 2016, pp 4223-24).

Speakers have also declined to rule a bill out of order before its second reading where only some clauses of the bill may offend the same question rule, leaving the rule to be applied in relation to particular clauses in consideration in detail (Speaker Wellington, Record of Proceedings, 9 August 2017, p 2067).

Accordingly, I rule that neither bill will offend the same question rule for the purpose of their second reading. However, in accordance with previous rulings, should both bills pass the second reading stage, in consideration in detail when these clauses are considered the same question rule will be enlivened to the clauses in the second bill under consideration (Speaker Reynolds, Record of Proceedings, 9 September 2008, p 2559; Speaker Pitt, Record of Proceedings, 18 February 2020, p 325).

Same Question Rule



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have considered the application of the same question rule to the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act and the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. In summary, the same question rule is enlivened by clauses 4 and 5 and schedule 1 of the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill contrary to standing order 87. I seek leave to incorporate the full ruling circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

SPEAKER'S RULING—APPLICATION OF SAME QUESTION RULE TO CHILD PROTECTION REFORM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

I have considered the application of the same question rule to the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2021 and the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021.

On 3 December 2020 the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs introduced the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill was passed without amendment on 23 March 2021. On 15 September 2021 the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs introduced the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

Standing Order 87 provides the general rule of Westminster parliamentary practice that, once the House has resolved a matter in the affirmative or negative, the same question shall not again be proposed in the same session. Similarly, Standing Order 150 provides for the application of the same question rule in relation to amendments, new clauses or schedules of a bill. As previous Speakers have noted, the matters do not have to be identical but merely the same in substance as the previous matter. In other words, it is a question of substance, not form (Speaker Reynolds, Record of Proceedings, 9 September 2008, p. 2559).

On the whole, most clauses in the bill do not revisit issues on which the House has already decided in the passage of the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2021.

However, clause 4 of the bill seeks to replace two provisions in the Adoption Act 2009 which were amended in 2021 by the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2021. This appears to be an example of a particular clause of a government bill seeking to amend a clause of a government bill passed earlier in the session which would enliven the same question rule, contrary to Standing Order 87.


Clause 5 of the bill seeks to insert a transitional provision into the Adoption Act 2009 with respect to the replacement provision, effectively making it retrospective. That is, it is effectively reversing a provision already decided on by the House in passing the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2021. This is contrary to Standing Order 87 and would enliven the same question rule.

Additionally, Schedule 1 of the Bill seeks to amend a provision in the Child Protection Act 1999 which was amended in 2021 by the Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2021. This would enliven the same question rule and, as such, is contrary to Standing Order 87.

Accordingly, I rule that the same question rule is enlivened by clauses 4 and 5 and Schedule 1 of the bill contrary to Standing Order 87. A motion to suspend Standing Order 87 would be required for these clauses and the Schedule to be considered.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Parliamentary Education Material

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Today I am pleased to announce the launch of season two of the Queensland Parliamentary Education videos, with season one premiering in September last year. The simple explainer videos were developed by our Parliamentary Education team—and, no, it is not available on Netflix to stream—in consultation with the Parliament's Teachers Advisory Group to help Queensland students and teachers studying Civics and Citizenship and Legal Studies. Topics in the series include: how laws are made in Queensland; the Queensland budget; and budget estimates. Aligned with the Australian curriculum, they are accompanied by teaching resources including: comprehension questions, worksheets, templates and suggestions for activities, all designed to make it easier for Queensland teachers to fit these resources into their lesson planning.

The Queensland Department of Education is now linking to these resources through its platform the Learning Place, which provides standardised curriculum resources direct to classroom teachers. Our parliamentary education resources are also now available on ClickView, an education platform widely used by Australian secondary school students, from where teachers can collate video resources with direct links to the Australian curriculum. Stay tuned for announcements about upcoming season three!

PETITIONS

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

Coronavirus Vaccination, Exemptions

5,358 petitioners, requesting the House to provide the people of Queensland an explanation as to why MPs and high-ranking police officers are exempt from the COVID-19 vaccinations; under what "Exemption Circumstance" are they exempted; and if exempted personnel be treated as vaccinated Queenslanders [\[187\]](#).

Check In Qld App

2,922 petitioners, requesting the House to remove the mandatory use of the Queensland check-in app [\[188\]](#).

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

REPORT BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Clerk—

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

Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2021

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title—

Omit—

‘Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2021’

Insert—

‘Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2022’

Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2021

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title—

Omit—

‘Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2021’

Insert—

‘Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2022’

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Coronavirus, Update



Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.35 am): I can report to the House that today we have 6,094 new cases, and that includes 3,466 positive RATs. I am sorry to report that there have been eight deaths tragically overnight—four were in aged care. I want to express my deep sympathy to the families at a very difficult time. There have been 11,552 COVID tests. There is good news in the number of COVID hospitalisations, which is continuing to fall. We have 334 people currently in hospital care; that is down from 379 yesterday. It is tracking in the right direction. There is also pleasing news: the number of cases among children is also trending down. Vaccine coverage continues to increase: 92.64 per cent of 16-plus have had at least one dose; 90.71 per cent have had two doses; and 63.59 per cent of the eligible population have had their boosters. Among five to 11-year-olds, 42.28 per cent have had their first dose. Again, a reminder to parents to book children in, especially before March 4.

Weather Events




Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.36 am): Severe weather continues to pose a serious threat to our state. The SES has received more than 240 requests for assistance since yesterday, and swiftwater rescue crews have performed 19 rescue operations in the past 24 hours. Most rescues took place in Cooroy, Gympie, Kin Kin, the Sunshine Coast and surrounding areas. I can confirm that firefighters also performed a swiftwater rescue involving a caravan in Mudgeeraba on the Gold Coast last night. Police have also resumed the search this morning for a 54-year-old man in the Gympie region who went missing in floodwaters yesterday.

Thankfully, intense rainfall mostly remained off the south-east coast overnight, but we have had a briefing this morning and the bureau does expect that rainfall to intensify and move into the south-east later on today. A significant weather warning remains in place from: Maryborough to Coolangatta, and out west to Dalby and Stanthorpe. Intense rainfall is anticipated for many of these regions today. The heaviest rain, of course, is later today and early tomorrow. I am advised that moderate flood warnings are current for: the Mary River, the Stanley River and the upper Brisbane River. I am also advised that the bureau is predicting damaging wind gusts that could be in excess of 90 kilometres an hour later this afternoon.


Our message is very clear to people this afternoon—please listen to your radio, social media, televisions; please keep up to date to see what is happening, especially if you are planning to go out this evening and probably during the pickup time this afternoon for children. The bureau will give the most up-to-date information then. Our final message is very clear—if it is flooded, forget it.

Supreme Court, Chief Justice

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.38 am): I am pleased to advise that the Honourable Justice Helen Bowskill has been appointed Chief Justice of the Queensland Supreme Court. Justice Bowskill has served as the Senior Judge Administrator. Her Honour was a university medallist in law from QUT and was admitted as a barrister in 1998. She practised widely in commercial and administrative law with particular focus on native title. Her Honour was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2013, appointed to the District Court on 10 November 2014 and a judge of the Supreme Court in 2017. Her Honour is well respected and has recently demonstrated her interest in mental health issues facing the legal profession, presenting papers at the Crown Prosecutor's Conference and to Queensland Magistrates in 2021.

The baton that passes to Judge Bowskill has been wielded most admirably by her predecessor. Chief Justice Catherine Holmes is widely acknowledged as one of the finest legal minds our state has ever produced. One day it will go unremarked that both Justices Holmes and Bowskill are women. Sadly we are not quite there, but we are close. It is a source of pride to me that all three branches of public administration in this state are led by women. We also have a female Police Commissioner. There is a truism when it comes to equality that we cannot be what we cannot see. I thank Justice Holmes for her exemplary service and offer every best wish to Justice Helen Bowskill, incoming Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

Protected Areas and Aboriginal Land, Acquisition


 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.39 am): Conservation is a crucial part of our plan to combat climate change and create jobs in regional Queensland. Today I can announce that we have bought more than 131,900 hectares of land in the state's Far North which we will protect for future generations. Bramwell Station and Richardson Station on Cape York Peninsula have been used to run cattle for much of the last century. Through the deal struck by my government this month, these properties will now become protected areas and Aboriginal lands.

This is the largest land acquisition for conservation in Queensland in a decade. It will unite more than a million hectares of protected areas and Aboriginal land with the 372,190 hectare Heathlands Reserve, Jardine River Reserve and Jardine River National Park to the north, the 241,637 hectare Batavia National Park and Michingun Nature Refuge to the south, the 278,668 Bromley and Shelburne Bay national parks to the east and the 135,000 hectare Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve nature refuge to the west. We are about to negotiate with traditional owners to determine which areas will become national park and which areas will become Aboriginal freehold land. This means more protection for our Great Barrier Reef—stabilising two catchment areas that flow into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon; jobs for locals, including traditional owners and park rangers; a step towards treaty and reconciliation with traditional owners; and opportunities for the local tourism industry, conserving more land to be enjoyed for future generations.

I am also proud to confirm that the Junction Roadhouse on Richardson Station and the Bramwell Tourist Park on Bramwell Station will both remain open. These businesses are much loved local icons. Our government will ensure these landmarks remain open, safeguarding the jobs of the locals who work there.

Today's announcement is a direct result of Queensland's nation leading protected area strategy. Under this policy, we have secured over 167,450 hectares of land for conservation since October 2020. With the significant purchases announced today, Queensland's protected areas will now total more than 14 million hectares. On this side of the House we believe in climate change and we back regional Queensland. We will continue to invest in our environment to create jobs and protect our Great Barrier Reef.

Infrastructure Projects

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure) (9.42 am): The Palaszczuk government has been focused on our economic recovery

from the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The proof is in the pudding: our economic recovery plan is working—creating jobs for Queenslanders. We are ensuring the economic growth and resilience of our great state so industry and business have confidence to invest in Queensland to create jobs for Queenslanders. Why would they not? Queensland is the place to be.

There are more Queenslanders in jobs now than ever before—4.4 per cent unemployment and more than 17,400 jobs created in Queensland last month alone. We are experiencing significant investment in big transformative projects—projects like the \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail, transforming South-East Queensland's transport network. Better transport connectivity is crucial to continued growth, prosperity and creating jobs. There is the giant \$3.6 billion Queen's Wharf project that is shooting up beside us. At its peak, more than 1,500 workers will be on site.

Recently, restoration was completed of two of Queensland's most treasured buildings as part of the \$1.1 billion Herston Quarter redevelopment. For almost 100 years, the Lady Lamington and Edith Cavell heritage buildings were home to thousands of nurses before closing in 1993. They have now been restored and this month, for the first time in 30 years, will be home to many cohorts of new students, including nurses studying at RBWH.

More than 550,000 hours of local labour were used to restore the heritage buildings, including installing 850 linear metres of timber balustrade, 12,000 linear metres of verandah decking boards, painting 539 original doors, 230 pairs of new French doors and 318 original window frames, and the replacement of hundreds of panes of glass. The member for McConnel and I were blown away by the restoration works. I would urge members to go and see them for themselves if they get the chance. During construction, Hutchinson Builders training school saw 70 students complete their training onsite and get real-life experience working on a heritage redevelopment and learn a bit about Brisbane's history.

In the lead-up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympics, we will continue to see a pipeline of transformative infrastructure projects that will stimulate our economy and create jobs. The Palaszczuk government will continue to support infrastructure, provide for the future growth of Queensland and, in the process, create jobs for Queenslanders.

Credit Rating; Expo Dubai 2020



Hon. CR DICK (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (9.44 am): With our international borders open and our economy humming, Queensland is ready to roar. We only have to listen to S&P Global, which yesterday reaffirmed Queensland's AA-plus credit rating. No state has a higher rating than Queensland. S&P Global's overview says—

Significant fiscal stimulus and a large infrastructure pipeline support Queensland's economic growth prospects. Financial management practices will continue to support the ratings and the delivery of the state's capital program.

It continues—

The state maintains its exceptional liquidity position and wealthy economy.

S&P goes on to say that by 'successfully containing the virus and an absence of prolonged lockdowns', Queensland 'allowed its economy to outperform peers'. I should also note that S&P Global says Queensland's institutional framework 'promotes a robust management culture and high levels of disclosure and transparency'. It is worth reflecting on. That is what S&P Global says about Queensland. It says Queensland's institutional framework 'promotes a robust management culture and high levels of disclosure and transparency'.

As we commence our journey on the golden decade to Brisbane 2032, there has never been a more important time to know who Queenslanders are and what our state has to offer. To that end, the Premier has asked me to lead a trade mission to Dubai next week. At Expo Dubai 2020, I will join Queensland Olympic—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DICK: Wouldn't they like to be going.

Mr Bleijie: First flight out of here.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Kawana. I would like to give you a one-way ticket, but unfortunately we are stuck with you.


Mr SPEAKER: Treasurer, you will direct your comments through the chair.

Mr DICK: I will move on. At Expo Dubai 2020, I will join Queensland Olympic and Paralympic stars Natalie Cook, Jessica Smith, Curtis McGrath and Cate Campbell to present Queensland's unrivalled business, economic, sporting and lifestyle credentials to the world. I will also meet

representatives of the London 2012 games and the Los Angeles 2028 legacy planning team. The 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform Queensland. We need to harvest the insights and lessons of that small handful of cities around the world with whom we will share the Olympic heritage.

Expo Dubai 2020 has attracted business leaders and investors from around the world, along with 190 countries and an expected 25 million visitors. Queensland is taking the opportunity to host a new energy event to showcase our state to the world—to demonstrate our capabilities in renewable energy, new economy minerals and green hydrogen. To align with the 2032 games, we will host a future cities event—an opportunity to examine mobility and capability solutions that can carry Queensland even higher as we springboard to the future from 2032.

Digital Licences; Transport and Road Infrastructure

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (9.48 am): I am excited to announce the contract to build Queensland's new digital licence app has been awarded to Thales Australia and New Zealand. The incredibly successful trial on the Fraser Coast in the electorates of Maryborough and Hervey Bay—isn't the member for Hervey Bay doing a great job in this parliament?—has encouraged us to roll out a digital version of not only the driver's licence but also a digitised version of both the marine licence and proof of age card. That is welcome news for Townsville boaties and young people. The trial included a sample size of over 750 people, of which 94 per cent responded as satisfied with the app. To ease any concern with those who wish to stick with the physical card in their wallet, this app is offered as an alternative for those who opt for it, not as a replacement of the physical licence.

The digital licence will have additional privacy features. The user of the app can select the information they wish to show depending on what they need. For example, when using it to enter hospitality and social venues, addresses can be withheld. That is an improvement on the physical card. It will be encrypted, password protected, with remote disabling capability if it ends up in the wrong hands. Better yet, Thales will partner with Queensland app developers Aliva and Code Heroes, showcasing the Queensland tech industry and talent. This means Queensland jobs, supporting local IT jobs and encouraging the growth of the Queensland tech industry.

This solution is an Australian first, because it will meet the International Mobile Driver Licence Standard so that Queenslanders heading overseas will be able to use their digital licences. The digital licence app is expected to be ready for statewide rollout in 2023, with a second trial to take place in Townsville later this year. That is very warmly welcomed by the members for Thuringowa, Townsville and Mundingburra.


The introduction of digital licences and IDs, plus our \$371 million investment in smart ticketing systems for quicker and easier transport around our state, shows our commitment to facilitating the latest technology for Queenslanders. It does not stop there. We are delivering a \$105 million rollout of smart motorways technology on the Bruce Highway between north Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast to improve traffic flow. We are rolling out \$30 million worth of the same ITS smart technology on Far North Queensland's Kuranda Range road to improve safety and reliability.

High-tech solutions form an important part of the Palaszczuk Labor government delivering a record \$27.5 billion transport and road project budget in Queensland over the next four years. This means jobs for Queenslanders—24,000, in fact—as the Palaszczuk Labor government embraces the innovation the future affords, as Labor only does in Queensland and will always do. That is one of the key reasons we have a 4.4 per cent jobless rate after it skyrocketed to 7.1 per cent under those opposite.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Chatsworth, you have been consistently interjecting. You are warned under the standing orders.

School Infrastructure

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.52 am): Our COVID-19 health response and economic recovery plan is working, with more Queenslanders in jobs now than ever before. I am proud that many of those Queenslanders have jobs not only building new schools in the fastest growing areas of our state but also improving and upgrading school facilities right across Queensland.

This year we visited three brand new schools opened to students—an almost \$200 million investment supporting 600 construction jobs. It was wonderful to witness these new world-class facilities firsthand with the Premier when we visited these schools earlier this month. Everleigh State School at Greenbank, in the electorate of Logan and next door to Jordan, welcomed over 200 students on day 1. Nirimba State Primary School at Caloundra South, in the electorate of Caloundra, welcomed 160 students. They were the best designed multipurpose court facilities that we have seen. They were truly amazing.

Mr Power: Everleigh is pretty good too.

Ms GRACE: Everleigh is pretty good as well. Coomera State Special School on the Gold Coast saw over 130 new students on its first day. They also had a pretty spectacular multipurpose court.

These schools will provide amazing educational opportunities for their students, but we cannot and will not stop there. As the Premier has said, contracts have now been awarded for four new schools opening in 2023. FKG Group, Hutchinson Builders and ADCO will build stage 1 of three primary schools at Augustine Heights in the electorate of Jordan, Ripley Valley in the electorate of Ipswich, Yarrabilba in the electorate of Logan and a beautiful brand new high school at Palmview in the electorate of Buderim.

These four new schools represent a total investment of almost \$330 million and will support around 900 local jobs. There is a new primary school at Palmview and a new special school at Palmview. Those three schools are probably some of the best world-class facilities that we have seen. They are truly amazing. Member for Buderim, you are welcome!

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: It is amazing that, even when you deliver three beautiful world-class facilities and new schools in their electorates, they still complain.

Stage 1 will see the construction of new multipurpose halls, amenities, canteen, admin blocks and general learning areas, with future stages delivering extensions and additional facilities to cater for growing communities. We know we need to keep pace with the growth that is occurring in our state to provide the facilities required for future students. That is exactly what we are doing. Our \$1.9 billion education infrastructure program is contributing significantly to our economic recovery with 21 new schools built and opened since 2015.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms GRACE: It is really good sometimes to laugh at the member for Kawana.

Opposition members interjected.


Mr SPEAKER: Members to my left!

Ms GRACE: This investment not only includes big ticket items like new schools, halls, performing arts centres and classroom blocks but also includes smaller projects that make a difference to school communities—refurbs to amenities blocks, playground upgrades, security fencing and improved facilities to ensure our schools are accessible for all students, not to mention our air-conditioning of every classroom, library and staffroom right across Queensland. We are very close!

We have another 11 new schools in the pipeline—which is another \$1 billion of investment—including the first inner-city vertical primary school to be built in Toowong in the electorate of Maiwar. We are hoping to land that and compensate for everything, member, as soon as possible.

My department is also actively working to acquire land for new schools in these fast-growing areas so we can secure the best sites for our future schools. We continue our focus on getting people back to work as we unite and recover from the global COVID-19 pandemic. These new schools build on our record education infrastructure investment, which is second to none.

Supreme Court, Chief Justice

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (9.56 am): Today is a momentous day. The Premier has this morning announced that Justice Helen Bowskill, the Supreme Court Senior Judge Administrator, has been appointed as the new Chief Justice of the Queensland Supreme Court following the retirement of Queensland's first woman chief justice, the Hon. Chief Justice Catherine Holmes AC.

Justice Bowskill is well qualified for the position of Chief Justice and brings a wealth of experience and skills to the role. Her Honour was admitted as a barrister to the Supreme Court of Queensland in 1998. She was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland's Trial Division in 2017 after more than 2½ years as a judge of the District Court.

Mr Bleijie: Who appointed her?

Opposition members interjected.


Mr SPEAKER: Order, members to my left!

Ms FENTIMAN: It is good to see such support from both sides of the House of such a wonderfully qualified Chief Justice.

Most recently, Justice Bowskill was appointed as the Senior Judge Administrator in August 2021 and has diligently approached the administrative role of the court since that time. Justice Bowskill is widely respected within the legal profession and is renowned for her measured and compassionate approach in a courtroom. Since her appointment as Senior Judge Administrator, Justice Bowskill has shown great leadership and will contribute greatly to the Queensland justice system in her new role. Justice Bowskill will commence in the role of Chief Justice on 19 March 2022.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Chief Justice Holmes, who has proved a steadfast leader of the Queensland justice system during her tenure as Chief Justice. Her Honour has been a trailblazer in the profession for so many but particularly women, and her leadership of the court during COVID-19 has been commendable, ensuring Queenslanders have continued access to justice during the global pandemic. Chief Justice Holmes is an inspiration to generations of women lawyers in Queensland, with a career spanning more than four decades. I thank the Chief Justice for her service to the courts and to Queensland over her distinguished career. I wish Justice Bowskill all the very best in her new role.

Public Trustee


 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (9.58 am): On 10 March 2021, I tabled a report by the former public advocate entitled *Preserving the financial futures of vulnerable Queenslanders: a review of the Public Trustee fees, charges and practices*. Pleasingly, the report found many of the Public Trustee's customers receive a high level of service for very little or no cost.

However, the Public Trustee is committed to continually improving and becoming a more modern socially and financially responsible service that values human rights, puts customers first and continues to embed greater levels of trust, transparency and engagement. The report made 32 recommendations to improve the way the Public Trustee engages with customers. The majority of the recommendations in the report are for the Public Trustee to consider and implement. The Public Trustee has taken action to address the recommendations in the report, and the largest reform project in the history of the Public Trustee has commenced with an independent review of fees and charges. The work is supported by policy and practice changes across the organisation to ensure immediate action is taken to support vulnerable Queenslanders.

I am pleased to report to the House that the Public Trustee advises he has already implemented many of the recommendations made in the report and continues to work to implement the remaining relevant recommendations. Government has responsibility for 10 recommendations and has already implemented one through introduction of the Public Trustee (Advisory and Monitoring Board) Amendment Bill 2021. Work on the remaining recommendations is underway, including consultation with key stakeholders, to ensure the best outcome for vulnerable Queenslanders. I table a progress update from the Public Trustee on the implementation of the recommendations in the Public Advocate's report.

Tabled paper: Public Trustee: Document titled 'Public Trustee: Progress Overview on Recommendations from the Public Advocate' [190].

Protected Areas and Aboriginal Land, Acquisition

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (10.01 am): It is an incredible privilege to rise to update the House on the Palaszczuk government's latest addition to our protected area estate. As the Premier has

just announced, the government has recently acquired Bramwell Station and Richardson Station in Cape York. These two properties are the gateway to northern Cape York and the northernmost point of Australia: Pajinka, also own as the Tip. Mr Speaker, as you acknowledge at the beginning of every day in this place, we are all fortunate to live in a country that is home to two of the oldest continuing cultures, but we have an ugly and uncomfortable shared history in this country and it is something we need to tell the truth about. As a government, we have a responsibility to do all we can to restore some of the wrongs of the past. One of the most important ways we can do that is through land justice.

This morning I spoke to Gerhardt Pearson, whom I want to acknowledge will be here today along with Richie Ah Mat. Gerhardt was at the first meeting of traditional owners who met in Cape York in 1989 to talk about what would eventually become the program of hand backs that was commenced by the Goss government. We talked about the painful history of people being forcibly removed from their land around the tip of Cape York. Back then they did not believe they would get back walking, living or breathing on country. They never thought their grandparents' footprints would return. The traditional owners of this land have waited—they have waited for more than 30 years, and for generations before that—to have their land back.

The Goss government embarked on a program of land hand backs and it is something that we are proud to continue. The Beattie government enacted groundbreaking legislation to bring about formal ownership and joint management of Cape York Peninsula national parks, and it has been an important partnership forged between successive Labor governments and First Nations people over many years. The next step is for the Queensland government and traditional owners to work together to determine the most appropriate allocation of land for national parks, Aboriginal land and cultural heritage management.

This acquisition forms part of the Palaszczuk government's Protected Area Strategy, with more than 14 million hectares across Queensland now protected in some way. We have also recently acquired The Lakes, a 35,000-hectare property north of Hughenden, which we announced last month. These purchases were highly strategic and carefully negotiated. For the purchase of these three properties we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to The Nature Conservancy Australia, which brokered contributions from charitable foundations, including the Wyss Foundation.

Also part of this strategy is the \$24 million we announced for the appointment of 54 First Nations rangers for 13 communities across Queensland, with more positions to come. I want to acknowledge the former environment minister, the Hon. Leanne Enoch, for announcing those rangers. With their knowledge and connection to land and sea, these Indigenous rangers play a vital role in their communities and in looking after national parks and protected areas. We are grateful for the knowledge they share. I know this is a significant announcement and that many people have been working on it for many, many years. I want to acknowledge those people and the next generations, who will now be able to leave their footprints on this land.

Dixon Frewin, Ms T; Jubair, Dr L



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (10.04 am): I would like to start this morning by offering my deepest condolences to the family of Tammy Dixon Frewin, an Australia Day Citizen of the Year nominee and a much-loved mother, wife, friend and co-worker to her Queensland Health colleagues. Tammy was a cherished member of the Mackay Hospital and Health Service family. In her role as home and community care worker Tammy regularly transported clients to medical appointments in Emerald and Mackay. She developed close bonds with her clients during these trips and could often be seen sharing a laugh and a friendly chat with her colleagues. From all reports, Tammy's positive and infectious personality and her genuine care for others endeared her to clients, colleagues and the broader community.


Tragically, Tammy lost her life in a car crash while transporting a patient on the Peak Downs Highway. Tammy's approach embodied all that is best about the health system: respect and compassion for people under her care. Tammy understood that the delivery of the best possible care mattered and that it has a profound impact on communities. Days after the tragic incident my director-general, chief operating officer and I visited Clermont to meet with Tammy's colleagues, friends and family. I know the gravity of her loss has been felt deeply and profoundly by the Clermont community, including her husband and three sons. Whilst this is a difficult and painful time, I hope they take comfort from knowing how loved and respected she was and for the incredible contribution she made in helping others in need.

I would also like to express my condolences to the family of Gold Coast University Hospital Dr Luqman Jubair, who tragically lost his life in a drowning accident this month. Dr Jubair lost his life in the rescue of a struggling swimmer and tragically was himself dragged out to sea. Dr Jubair's bravery in this emergency is reflective of his compassion in his work as a medical researcher and doctor. He dedicated his life to helping others.

Dr Jubair was originally from Iraq. Upon arriving to Australia he requalified as a doctor and served our community through his profession. Dr Jubair has worked in the COVID-19 wards in West Moreton and most recently at the Gold Coast University Hospital. Dr Jubair was committed to serving the community and travelled to both New South Wales and Victoria to assist in their COVID response. He was involved in conducting world-first research using gene-editing technology to cure cervical cancer. This was hailed as a breakthrough in cancer research when it was published internationally in 2019. I am told that at the time of his passing Dr Jubair was finalising his training in oncology. Today is Dr Jubair's funeral. I am sure that I speak for everyone in this House when I say that I extend our sympathies and condolences to his loved ones.

Vale Tammy Dixon Frewin and Dr Luqman Jubair.


Water

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (10.07 am): South-East Queensland has woken today to another wet morning and significant rainfall is predicted for the coming days. Of course our thoughts are with the people who have been affected and the communities that have been inundated, but when the clouds part there certainly will be a silver lining to this rain. This rain has given the South-East Queensland water catchments a massive boost. As of this morning the SEQ Water Grid is sitting at 71 per cent. That is a 10 per cent increase since the start of summer, putting the water grid more than 15 per cent higher than it was this time last year.

I cannot make the rain fall, as much as I would like to, but the SEQ Water Grid, built by a forward-thinking Queensland Labor government, means we can make the most of these precious drops. It is one of the largest urban water grids in Australia, servicing around 70 per cent of the state's population. Queensland's water resources are vital for our economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing and to drive economic growth and job opportunities for Queenslanders. Our largest water storage facility, Wivenhoe Dam, is above 57 per cent, as I said, and our second largest water storage facility, Somerset Dam, which flows into Wivenhoe, is just under 80 per cent, so this is good news. Operational releases from Somerset Dam happened overnight, and Seqwater is managing the grid to best preserve all of the water by moving water into central areas, including Brisbane, Ipswich and Logan.

We have a number of dams spilling right across the region, and I encourage Queenslanders to stay up to date with the Seqwater app. I know we are the Sunshine State, but a bit of rain certainly does a lot of good in these times. This is great news, but it does not mean we are in relaxation mode here in Queensland. With more heavy rainfall predicted over the coming days, Seqwater is continuing to monitor inflows right across all of our dams. With continued heavy rainfall forecast, we are reminding people, 'If it's flooded, forget it' and to stay away from fast-moving water.

Live Music Industry

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (10.09 am): The arts and cultural sector has been amongst the hardest hit by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and this has been especially so for the live music industry. To date, the Palaszczuk government has committed to more than \$79 million worth of initiatives to support the arts and cultural sector through the impacts of COVID-19. This includes a \$22.5 million Arts and Cultural Recovery Package and a further \$7 million in the 2021-22 budget to support the live music industry.

Queensland's live music sector remains one of the most significantly impacted by the pandemic, which is presenting unprecedented challenges to the sustainability of venues and the careers of artists, arts workers and suppliers who rely upon the industry for employment. I was pleased to recently announce that round 3 of the Palaszczuk government's Live Music Support Program has provided around \$2.8 million in further financial support to many of Queensland's dedicated indoor live music venues. This includes support for small to medium sized venues, including \$180,000 to Solbar in

Maroochydore, \$100,000 to the Brisbane Jazz Club in Kangaroo Point and more than \$30,000 to The Junk Bar in Ashgrove, with support for larger venues as well, such as \$380,000 to the Fortitude Music Hall.

Our latest support for venues through round 3 of the Live Music Support Program brings the Palaszczuk government's total support for live music to \$13.7 million since the onset of COVID-19 impacts in March 2020. This includes direct financial assistance to 37 venues statewide. Queensland's dedicated live music venues have been very clear that the Palaszczuk government's programs have been a vital lifeline for this important part of the live music ecology. One venue operator on the Sunshine Coast recently wrote—

Over the last year we have only been able to keep our doors open due to the generous State Government support.

Paul Day, President of the Brisbane Jazz Club, said—

It is so important for entertainment to survive in these difficult times and it will now at the Brisbane Jazz Club, along with keeping its staff employed, thanks to the Live Music Support Program and the Queensland Government.

The arts, cultural and creative sectors are key to delivering our plan for economic recovery, each year contributing \$8.5 billion into the state's economy and supporting more than 92,000 jobs. The Palaszczuk government will continue to consult with the live music sector and the wider arts and cultural industries to understand and respond to ongoing and emerging impacts of COVID-19.

Resources Industries, Workforce



Hon. SJ STEWART (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (10.12 am): There cannot be a prosperous resources industry without its workers. Their health is a priority of paramount importance to the Palaszczuk government. That is why I was so excited to launch the HEART 5 mobile health unit as it hit the road for regional Queensland. This mobile health unit was developed in partnership between the Palaszczuk government, Resources Safety & Health Queensland, and Heart of Australia. It provides a range of health monitoring services to Queensland's regional mine and quarry workers, which is vital in the early detection of mine dust lung diseases.

HEART 5 is one of a kind. Its groundbreaking engineering, design and construction has drawn on expertise from around the world. Importantly, it was built right here in Queensland, in Narangba—another example of this state's amazing manufacturing capability—creating and supporting jobs as part of the Palaszczuk government's economic recovery plan as we emerge from the Omicron wave.

Queensland's mobile health unit is a world first. It includes a high-resolution, battery operated CT scanner—and I am not talking about AA batteries here. It is designed to work anywhere and everywhere, every time. HEART 5 is outfitted with other equipment vital in protecting the health of our current and former mine and quarry workers—with an onboard chest X-ray machine, complex lung function testing and general assessment services.

With HEART 5, the mobile health unit recommendations made by the parliamentary committee inquiry into the re-identification of coal workers' pneumoconiosis—which a number of members on both sides of the House were involved in—have been delivered. I would like to thank: Dr Rolf Gomes and his team at Heart of Australia; RSHQ; Mining and Energy Union district president Stephen Smyth; the former member for Mirani, Jimmy Pearce; and mine dust lung disease victims' advocacy groups whose voices have been instrumental throughout this process. I would also like to give a shout-out to former minister Dr Anthony Lynham for his work. He did a lot of work; I just picked up the keys and started the engine.

Following HEART 5's launch in Brisbane, I joined the team on the road in Collinsville, where free lung checks were offered to more than 70 retired miners. I am advised that on its first week of official operations, HEART 5 has already detected abnormalities in some lung screenings. Those patients will now be referred for treatment, which is vital early intervention that could save their lives. Heart of Australia is working with local medical providers regarding ongoing treatment. In the past, the tyranny of distance may have delayed patients' access to these highly specialised screenings. As we know, blokes are not good at going to the doctor. This is about the doctor going to them—the help will now go to them.

After Collinsville, I joined the assistant health minister in Mackay to meet with local industry stakeholders at the HEART 5 open day to speak about how this fantastic investment is already helping regional Queenslanders. People travelled from throughout Central Queensland to see this important facility, which shows just how important it is for our resources workers and our former resources workers, after they have hung up their high-vis and their hard hats. HEART 5 demonstrates our commitment to the prevention and early detection of mine dust lung diseases, ensuring better health outcomes for our Queensland workers.

MOTION

Referral to Legal Affairs and Safety Committee



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.16 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly by 31 August 2022 on:

1. issues relating to access to donor conception information, including:
 - (a) rights of donor-conceived persons, including to know their genetic origins;
 - (b) extent to which identifying information about donors should be given to donor-conceived persons, taking into consideration the right to privacy of donors;
 - (c) access to historical clinical records and implications of retrospectivity;
 - (d) access to support and counselling for donor-conceived persons and donors;
 - (e) whether a register should be established; and
 - (f) benefits, risks and implications on donor conception practices arising from any recommendations.
2. That the committee consider:
 - (a) views and experiences of donor-conceived people, donors and industry stakeholders of the current framework;
 - (b) current governance/regulatory frameworks, including registers established interstate;
 - (c) options to manage collection, storage, and disclosure of identifying and non-identifying information about donors, donor-conceived persons and relatives;
 - (d) whether and how to collect and disclose identifying information about donors where a donation was made on the condition of anonymity, including matters relating to consent;
 - (e) whether any model should include information from private donor arrangements;
 - (f) costs of any proposal including to establish and maintain any register and options for efficiencies, including a user-pays model;
 - (g) whether regulating donor conception practices and assisted reproductive technology should also be considered as part of establishing a donor conception register; and
 - (h) human rights engaged under the Human Rights Act 2019.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT



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

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 15 March 2022.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

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

Lobbyists



Mr CRISAFULLI (10.18 am): My question is to the Premier. I refer to comments by the Integrity Commissioner in July of how lobbying may lead to corruption by way of bribery or unfair access and influence on decision-makers. Do Labor lobbyists influence the decisions of the Queensland government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As the Leader of the Opposition would know, public servants provide advice to ministers, and ministers make their decisions. The Leader of the Opposition would also know that there are lobbyists on all different sides of politics and they must adhere to a Lobbyists Code of Conduct, and they actually have to register their details.

Secondly, the Leader of the Opposition would well know that as part of the Yearbury review, there was a strategic review where he looked at a number of issues pertaining to the Office of the Integrity Commissioner as well as lobbying activities. The Leader of the Opposition would also know

that this strategic review is now being considered by the Economics and Governance Committee and there are a range of recommendations contained in that review which relate to lobbyists. I look forward to the Economics and Governance Committee making their recommendations to parliament in consideration of that report, and then the government will respond to that, as is the normal parliamentary business which members are well aware form part of the procedures of this House.

Anacta

Mr CRISAFULLI: I have a further question of the Premier. The opposition can reveal that last week, in the middle of an integrity crisis, triggered by concerns over Labor lobbyists, Anacta donated \$35,000 to the Labor Party. As several clients have either recently received favourable outcomes or have major decisions pending, what steps will the Premier take to ensure the money is returned to remove any perception of bribery, unfair access and influence on decision-makers?

Ms PALASZCZUK: As the member very well knows, any donations that are made to either the Liberal National Party or the Australian Labor Party have to be declared. That is the law.

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is the law of Queensland.

Mr Crisafulli: Are you going to give it back?

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock! Leader of the Opposition, you are not directing your comments through the chair. I ask you to cease interjecting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member should be well aware that under my government we lowered the disclosure limits of political donations in this state from around \$12,000 to \$1,000. The LNP always wants to keep donations hidden. They do like developer donations and they fought this all the way to the High Court.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

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

Ms PALASZCZUK: Their record on donations in this state is zero. It is absolutely zero. We have implemented real-time disclosure—real-time disclosure—so that the public knows exactly who is donating and where they are donating to. Those opposite voted against these law reforms. That is the—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members on both sides of the House, there are far too many interjections. I would like to hear the Premier's answer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We all know how well the LNP kept their lobbyist registers. We heard in countless estimates hearings how members of the opposition failed to keep accurate lobbyist registers. Now it is absolutely transparent about when lobbyists meet with ministers or ministerial staff.

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

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

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me conclude with what I said in my previous answer: the matter is currently before the Economics and Governance Committee and I look forward to receiving their report and recommendations in the House. The Economics and Governance Committee is a bipartisan committee of this parliament—

Opposition members: Ha, ha!

Ms PALASZCZUK: Well, we don't sack committees like those opposite. We don't trash the committee process like those opposite. We respect the institutions of this parliament. We don't throw the opposition out, like we were thrown out when we were in opposition.

(Time expired)

Aquaculture Industry

Mrs GILBERT: My question is of the Premier and Minister for the Olympics. Will the Premier update the House on how the Palaszczuk government's commitment to growing the aquaculture industry is not only producing more seafood but also more jobs for regions like Mackay and North Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Mackay for that important question because on this side of the House we back aquaculture in Queensland. We are seeing growth in the industry like we have never seen before. I thank the member for Mackay because her region is absolutely skyrocketing ahead when it comes to growth in aquaculture.

I can confirm today that in relation to aquaculture, the Mackay region contributes around \$73 million to the state. In Cairns, it is around \$54 million. In Townsville, it is over \$28 million. We have seen a growth in this industry from 2014-15 when it was worth around \$120 million in Queensland to today where it is worth \$194 million. That is an increase of 17.4 per cent. What is the growth in? The growth is in prawns and barramundi—huge increases in prawns and barramundi. Prawn production has increased by 28 per cent to more than 8,000 tonnes, and barramundi by 20 per cent to nearly 3,500 tonnes. Those opposite will not like this because we are talking about jobs: there has been a 9.5 per cent increase in full-time-equivalent jobs in that sector which now employs 800 people.

Because my government recognised that this would be a growth area, we want to make sure that we have the skills and training for young people wanting to enter into this industry. That is why we are building aquaculture training facilities in Bowen, Rockhampton and Cannonvale. This will ensure that our young people have the opportunity. These are the things that Queenslanders are interested in. They are interested in jobs, in jobs growth and in job opportunities. As the Treasurer says, we are leading the nation when it comes to jobs growth. It is so important to make sure that our children have the opportunities of the future. This report that has been released shows a significant increase in the overall value and production of our aquaculture industry in this state.

I was able to see Tassal up-front when I visited near Proserpine and Bowen just recently. The production capacity of this industry is second to none.

(Time expired)

Anacta

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Premier. In the time since its formation in 2019, Labor lobbyist, Anacta, has donated over \$164,000 to Labor, nearly three times more than any other lobbyist. Given Anacta represents multiple property developers who are prohibited donors under Labor's own legislation, can the Premier assure the House Anacta is not being used to funnel illegal donations to Labor?

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members to my right, first of all, the question will be heard in silence. Second of all, the only person to respond to the question is the person the question is being directed at; in this case it is the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Those opposite know that if they have any evidence or any allegations they can refer that to the ECQ.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Waterford, you will cease your interjections. Deputy Premier, you will cease your interjections.

Renewable Energy

Ms HOWARD: My question is of the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure. Can the Deputy Premier outline to the House what the Palaszczuk government is doing to become a hydrogen and renewable energy powerhouse?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Ipswich for her question. I know that she is proud, as are all of the members on this side of the House, of what we have achieved in terms of renewable energy and what that means for the jobs of the future, including the emerging hydrogen industry. Queensland has a proud history of using our natural advantages to create economic advantages. The natural advantages of the future spill into every single one of our regions in the form of sun and wind. We are determined to use those natural advantages to create the jobs of the future in our traditional industries, in new industries in the generation of renewable energy and fuels, and in the supply chains that will feed those industries.

In Gladstone, we signed a statement of cooperation with Alpha HPA, Orica and Rio Tinto to work together to guarantee existing jobs in Gladstone which are reliant on cheap, clean energy. Last week, I added Acciona to that memorandum of understanding. They were very pleased to join our combined efforts to achieve our goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

Shortly before that, I was with the energy minister, the member for Barron River and the member for Cairns at the Cairns port, welcoming the turbines for the giant Kaban wind farm—79-metre turbines, 32 tonnes each. There is 250 jobs in installing that particular wind farm. Let's not forget that is the wind farm that the LNP tried to block. It is the wind farm that the Morrison government tried to veto. They have never supported efforts to create jobs in renewables and secure the jobs of the future. Let's not forget when they abolished the office of climate change. That was 495 of the 14,000 public servants they sacked in 2012. Let's not forget how they called repeatedly for us to abolish our renewable energy target.

Let's not forget how members on the other side of the House called renewable energy a 'fantasy'. It is not a fantasy for the Queensland workers who are right now installing wind farms and working in those industries that are benefiting from our cheap, clean, renewable energy. I am looking forward to addressing the Queensland Media Club tomorrow with Twiggy Forrest to talk more about our plans for Queensland.

(Time expired)

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I am going to warn you now. You have had a pretty good run today. You will cease further interjections.

Wellcamp Quarantine Facility, Medical Services Contract

Mr JANETZKI: My question is to the Premier. Anacta client Aspen Medical was awarded the medical services contract at the Wellcamp quarantine facility without a tender. Does the Premier stand by the decision that only one company had the capability to provide medical services at Wellcamp?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will say this again very clearly: ministers do not get involved in decisions that have been recommended from the department. This decision was at arm's length from ministers.

Mr Janetzki interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, there are no supplemental questions in the Queensland parliament. It is what you are attempting to do. You are warned under the standing orders.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am advised by the Deputy Premier that they were the only company that could do that contract.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will wait for silence, members.

Dr Miles interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier is warned under the standing orders. I had just called the House to order and asked for silence.

Cost of Living

Mr SKELTON: My question is of the Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the Treasurer update the House on Queensland's economic performance when it comes to issues that matter to Queenslanders, like the cost of living, and is the Treasurer aware of any other approaches?

Mr DICK: I join with the Premier in commending and congratulating the member for Nicklin for the very fine work that he is doing representing the Sunshine Coast in government. He is doing a great job with the member for Caloundra, and I want to thank him for his question. I want to talk about something that is important for Queenslanders, something that matters to Queenslanders and something that is relevant to Queenslanders: the cost of living. We know that matters to working Queenslanders—working Queenslanders that I, the member for Nicklin and in fact all members of this House represent, not just those represented by members of the Australian Labor Party.

The cost of living matters, which is why last week the Premier announced an additional \$50 rebate for Queensland householders to help them with electricity prices. That is on top of the \$200 rebate that was provided in 2020. The reason we can do that is that the people of Queensland own power generation companies in this state. The people of Queensland own the power system in this state. This makes us special and unique and gives us the opportunity to return that dividend. The cost of living matters to Queenslanders—how you are going to buy a new set of tyres and how you are going to pay for the groceries. That matters to us as well, which is why we give that dividend.

Every day LNP members come in here and talk about things like lobbyists is another day they demonstrate their irrelevancy. I will tell members who the Leader of the Opposition will not talk about. He will not talk about Santo Santoro, a former Liberal leader in this House and a former senator for Queensland who runs a lobbying business and who donates to political parties. He will not talk about Larry Anthony, a former federal member of the National Party and a former federal president of the National Party who is a lobbyist in this state and donates to his party—and our party for all I know.

He will not talk about Malcolm Cole, who was a lobbyist in this state and was an LNP candidate who donates to political parties. He will not talk about that but he is happy to smear other people. He is happy to stir up innuendo and smear the names of other people for base political purposes. The backbench knows that this leadership is failing. That is exactly why the member for Whitsundays was on the green earlier this week with Des Houghton doing a photo shoot. What the Leader of the Opposition talks about is entirely irrelevant to the needs, the hopes and the aspirations of Queenslanders. We do not apologise for a second for taking the pressure off when comes to the cost of living, delivering better health services on the Sunshine Coast and elsewhere and delivering the jobs, the infrastructure and the opportunities that Queenslanders—

(Time expired)

Wellcamp Quarantine Facility, Medical Services Contract

Mr LANGBROEK: My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier advise which companies on the panel of accredited clinical providers contracted by Queensland Health to assist with the COVID response were approached to provide medical services for Wellcamp?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. I am advised that Aspen Medical is known for delivering world-class health care in Australia and overseas. The decision to outsource medical service delivery—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members to my left, I have said on a number of occasions that when the Premier is being responsive to the question being asked it is good for the House to hear that answer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The decision to outsource medical service delivery was made after consultation with both hospital and health services and other potential providers and revealed that capacity could not be scaled up in time to operationalise the Wellcamp facility. I am advised that Anacta has not made representations on behalf of Aspen Medical regarding Wellcamp. I also advise the House that since 2017 Aspen has made no donations to the ALP but has donated \$35,050 to the LNP.

Kindergarten

Ms LAUGA: My question is of the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing. Can the minister update the House on the response to the Palaszczuk government's new kindergarten funding plan and any alternative approaches?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for the question. Bingo, Premier! I wonder whether they will give it back. I was very proud to stand with the member and assistant education minister yesterday when announcing a significant boost to kindergarten funding in this state—nearly \$1.1 billion over five years—and also proud to stand with members of the early childhood education sector yesterday. They were all thrilled—C&K, Good Start, Lady Gowrie, the ACA—and very keen in relation to this. It means that 40,000 families will be getting a benefit from this and we are working with the sector—

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Apologies, Minister. Pause the clock. Members to my right, I ask you to come to order. I am trying to hear the minister.

Ms GRACE: We are working with the sector where the funding will go to the kindies and savings in reduced fees or no fees will then be passed on to the families. I know that the sector is very much looking forward to working on its systems and providing a calculator online, because the best way that we can provide that information for the families is online. Currently every service receives an annual payment per child of \$3,086. Under the new model, this will increase to \$5,052 for community kindergartens. New annual affordability subsidies of \$414 per child will commence in 2023 for community kindergartens and for the first time long day care centres based on a child's address. An online calculator is being developed that will allow families to put their details in to see how much they are likely to save. This is not easy—this is a complicated issue—but is one that families, depending on where they live—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: You may laugh. It might be rare—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms GRACE: Ha, ha! Bereft of any alternative plans, bereft of any information—

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Minister, it will be helpful for you to direct your comments through the chair and, member for Everton, it would be helpful if you could agree to be on a warning. You are on a warning.

Ms GRACE: This is something that we are very proud to deliver. When we look at those opposite, they are bereft of any ideas at all when it comes to early education or education in this state. A number of people have said good things about this. CEO Louise Jackson said that this was a monumental announcement. Sandra Cheeseman, CEO of C&K, said that it is targeting all of the right things. Terry Burke, Secretary of the Independent Education Union, said that it reaches out to the most vulnerable and is a very impressive announcement and absolutely welcome. Independent Schools Queensland CEO Chris Mountford said that targeted funding towards the attraction and retention of staff in regional and remote areas goes a long way towards addressing key interests of ISQ members and parents.

This is a fantastic announcement. It was wonderful to be there with the assistant minister and those organisations that will be delivering this. We can honestly say that this is going to help many families. We will work with the industry to make it all ready by 2023 and I was very proud to stand with the Premier to deliver this yesterday.

Wanless Recycling Park, Call-In

Mr O'CONNOR: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. In September Anacta had the first of two meetings with the Deputy Premier's chief of staff about Wanless. In the period between this first meeting and the Deputy Premier's November decision to call in the application, Anacta donated over \$44,000 to Labor. This week it was revealed former Labor lord mayor and off-the-books lobbyist Jim Soorley directly called the State Planner. Will the Deputy Premier explain the coincidence between the meetings, the money and the decision?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Bonney for his question. This is the process for the planning minister to call in a planning application or approval: generally the proponent will write and ask for that to be considered; the minister would then receive advice from the department; it would then issue a notice advising of an intention to call in; then there is a process for public submissions; then the department provides advice about whether the matter should be called in and at that point the minister makes a decision. I would emphasise that that does not mean the decision is made to approve the project; it just means that a decision has been made that there is a state interest that should be considered.

For the benefit of the opposition and for the benefit of the House, I table the original request from Wanless to call in the application; the meeting brief from the department for the only meeting that I had with external stakeholders regarding the application to call in; the decision brief, including the preliminary assessment report, for the notice of proposal to call in; the decision brief and assessment report for my decision to call it in; and internal emails within my office discussing the reasons for calling it in.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 1 October 2021, from the Office of the Deputy Premier, to Ms Danielle Cohen, regarding a request to call in a development application from Wanless Recycling Park Ltd and a letter, dated 30 September 2021, from Urbis, to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure, Hon. Dr Steven Miles, titled 'Request to call in development application—Resource recovery and residual landfill operation, Ebenezer Qld' [191].

Tabled paper: Briefing for meeting, dated 13 October 2021, for the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure, Hon. Dr Steven Miles, titled 'Meeting with the Australian Workers Union to discuss Hydrogen and the Wanless Project at Ipswich' [192].

Tabled paper: Briefing note for decision, dated 25 November 2021, for the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure, Hon. Dr Steven Miles, titled 'Request to exercise Ministerial call in powers for a development application for the proposed Wanless Recycling Park at Ebenezer (the application)' [193].

Tabled paper: Briefing note for decision, dated 20 January 2022, for the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure, Hon. Dr Steven Miles, titled 'Exercise of ministerial call in powers for a development application for the proposed Wanless Recycling Park at Ebenezer (the application)' [194].

Tabled paper: Email, dated 24 February 2022, from the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure, Hon. Dr Steven Miles, to Ms Amy Hunter, titled 'Wanless call in' [195].

Tabled paper: Bundle of correspondence to the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure, Hon. Dr Steven Miles, from various LNP members and local government entities, on a range of issues pertaining to his portfolio [196].

That is now all on the record. I also advise that, given the member for Bonney pretends to be the one person over there who cares about the environment and recycling, I have today written to Wanless and asked it to provide him with a briefing about its project so that he can properly understand the economics of what it is proposing and make a better informed decision about that. I also note discussion yesterday about documents that make their way to my VIP correspondence folder. I also note that a lot of documents make their way to my VIP correspondence folder, including everything the member for Maroochydore sends me and everything the member for Scenic Rim sends me.

I say to the member for Bonney: you might not be important over there, but you still make it to my important person folder. Finally, the main opponent of this project that the LNP is doing the bidding for is a major donor to the LNP. In fact, it donated \$77,000 to the LNP last year. The member for Bonney is simply doing its bidding and if those opposite want to keep doing that then they should return that money, which I note is more than twice what they have accused us of receiving from Anacta.

Mental Health Services

Mr HEALY: My question is of the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. Can the minister please update the House on recent mental health investments for Queenslanders and any alternative approaches?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for Cairns for his question. I know not just how passionate he is about investment in mental health but what a strong advocate he is for his community and that he is absolutely delivering for his community as part of the Palaszczuk government. Mental health issues, sadly, affect one in four people throughout our state. Each year Queensland's public mental health system provides care to more than 110,000 people.

The Palaszczuk government continues to invest in better mental health services for Queenslanders and we spend \$1.8 billion each year. It is this government that has opened the \$27 million Jacaranda Place, an adolescent mental health centre to replace the Barrett centre that was very cruelly closed by those opposite. We have increased the mental health workforce to above the per capita national average. We have delivered a \$74.5 million mental health and wellbeing package as part of the Queensland COVID-19 economic recovery plan and we are now building new mental health and alcohol and drug rehabilitation facilities around the state. Earlier this month the member for Cairns and I turned the sod on the \$70 million 53-bed Cairns mental health unit. It is a new purpose-built facility providing a modern and therapeutic environment to help the recovery of mental health patients in the Far North.

There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to the treatment of mental health; it is a complex issue. That is why I announced the new \$8 million pilot program Q-MOST, which is Moderated Online Social Therapy. I was very pleased to do that with Professor Pat McGorry. This is a great initiative to support youth mental health. Queensland Health will partner with the Children's Hospital Foundation and Origin to pilot that tailored digital on-demand mental health service. Of course, we continue to do more in our co-responder model and we have a parliamentary committee operating right now.

I would like to see the Commonwealth step up more in this space with support around eating disorders and Q-MOST. They are not putting a cent into these dedicated programs this year. When we talk about the Commonwealth, I should say that they recognise the importance of working with the private sector and have contracted Aspen Medical to be the aged-care response with the outbreak of COVID in our facilities in Queensland. I welcome the work that is being done there by the Commonwealth.

When it comes to compliance, the then attorney-general Jarrod Bleijie had passionately defended his decision to ignore advice from his department and award a government boot camp contract to a company which later became a LNP donor. I still remember those days.

Integrity Commissioner

Mrs GERBER: My question is to the Premier. With the Premier's publicly stated respect and high regard for the Integrity Commissioner and with Queensland in the midst of an integrity crisis, will the Premier accept the Integrity Commissioner's offer to remain in place for estimates hearings?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I say to the member for Currumbin that the resignation letter was received from the Integrity Commissioner and that is entirely a matter between her and her new employer. That is completely a matter up to her.

Aquaculture Industry

Ms LUI: My question is to the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities. Will the minister outline how the Palaszczuk government's support for the aquaculture industry is supporting jobs growth, including in regional Queensland?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for Cook for her excellent question and her support for the Queensland seafood industry. The Queensland aquaculture industry is growing at great 'scale'. The report that I am releasing today is 'a-peeling' when it comes to aquaculture. Aquaculture businesses in this state are producing more prawns, more barramundi and, most importantly, more jobs than a year ago. The numbers are impressive. Production is up 17.4 per cent to more than \$193 million. Prawn production is up 17.6 per cent and barramundi production is up 23.2 per cent. Oyster production has increased 57 per cent year on year. After visiting our oyster project at Bribie Island Research Centre I can see a bright future. 'Aw shucks', I hear some say, particularly the members for Pumicestone, Bancroft and Kurwongbah, who recently visited the centre and saw the 500,000 baby oysters growing there.

Aquaculture jobs rose by 9.5 per cent in the last year. Almost 800 people are now working in the Queensland aquaculture industry. We have companies moving to this state, a state that now has the lowest unemployment rates since 2008—we have a great Treasurer, a great government, leading the way in this nation and leading the country on jobs growth.

I put on the record my appreciation to Tassal and Ornatas who have brought their operations up here from Tasmania as a result of a proactive Palaszczuk government investing in aquaculture facilities and investing in jobs. What is even better are the aquaculture jobs right across the state, from the Cairns region through to Mackay, the Gold Coast, Townsville, as well as other areas of this great state. We can expect to see hundreds more jobs in those regions because we have the world hooked on Queensland seafood. We support industry and jobs because we want to make Queensland the aquaculture capital of the world.

All the LNP can do is try to swim or sink away from their legacy in this area. We know their record on aquaculture. It was rotten. While in government they decided to gut the Cairns Northern Fisheries Centre. I am happy to table that release. The member for Gregory will know it quite well because his name is on the bottom of it.

Tabled paper: Media release, dated 1 October 2013, by the former minister for agriculture, fisheries and forestry, Hon. John McVeigh, titled 'Fisheries centre secures investor' [197].

The legacy of the LNP stinks, be it at the state or federal level. Sussan Ley is out to get fisheries in this state while at the same time those opposite still cannot support the government's fisheries reform. Those opposite have no 'sole'. The opposition is full of clown fish and there are enough puffer fish to give the toads a run for their money. When it comes to fish, be it wild caught or aquaculture, Labor will always support working people, from the border up to the Torres Strait where the member for Cook represents, especially a sustainable profitable industry that we have implemented. Labor will always support our fisheries sector.

CopperString 2.0

Mr KATTER: My question is to the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement. The Queensland government has thrown its support behind CopperString to remove barriers unlocking resources that will make North Queensland a global power in clean minerals and hydrogen exports. Will the minister please inform the House when the government will approve the CopperString project and how it will work with local industries to benefit those communities?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for the question. I acknowledge his advocacy on behalf of residents and businesses in the north-west. On this side of the House we recognise that reliability and security of supply of electricity are a concern for the member's constituents. In fact, on two occasions in 2021 I updated the public about the experience of two outages in Mount Isa causing significant inconvenience to residents and to business operations there. In both instances those outages were quickly rectified. They were outages to the privately owned gas-fired generator in the region. I assure residents in that region that there are always back-up generators to make sure that emergency services and essential services can continue.

The member is correct: the Palaszczuk government has thrown its support behind the CopperString project and its proposed 1,000-kilometre transmission line from Mount Isa connecting into the national electricity market on the east coast. This will support, importantly, those resources proponents in the region, existing and future, in terms of their commitments to decarbonising their operations. That is a demand for decarbonised electricity that we intend to meet.

We are also committed to doing whatever we possibly can to keep prices on electricity as low as possible. We have mentioned in this House, and it was reiterated again today by the Treasurer, that every single household and small business in the north-west will benefit from the sixth \$50 asset ownership dividend delivered by this government because Queenslanders own their electricity assets. We also ensure that households in that region pay the same electricity prices as here in South-East Queensland. We support those households to the tune of \$24 million a year through the community service obligation.

The member asks specifically when we will make announcements about the CopperString project. I want to provide an update to the House. In December 2021 the Palaszczuk government released a consultation regulatory impact statement. Submissions to that closed on 28 February. I thank the member for his interest. In fact, I recall that earlier this month I wrote to the member and other members in that region inviting them to encourage constituents, stakeholders, householders and the resources businesses and proponents in those communities to contribute to that process by making a submission by 28 February. We intend to make a decision shortly after that.

Climate Change

Ms KING: My question is to the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs. Can the minister update the House on the Palaszczuk government's investment in climate action and is the minister aware of any other approaches?

Ms SCANLON: I thank the member for Pumicestone for her question. I know she is passionate about taking real action on climate change. Here in Queensland we are investing in our \$2 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund, we have our \$5 million Land Restoration Fund and in my department we are working to replace diesel generators in remote communities, replacing them with renewable energy. We are putting solar panels and battery storage in places like Mon Repos, a turtle conservation park, and we are transitioning our fleet to electric and hybrid vehicles. That is real money and real action.

We have been asking for some time now for the federal government to match us or, at the very least, stop blocking projects. Members can imagine my interest when I heard that the federal Morrison government was investing \$31 million. I had a little bit of a look online to see what that \$31 million is for. One might have thought it might have been for solar panels. The answer is it is not. It also was not for battery storage. What we learnt last week in estimates is that the Morrison government is spending \$31 million of taxpayers' money on what they do best—spin: \$31 million for an advertising campaign to spruik their so-called climate action plan that has no new money and no new additional policies.

So ashamed are they of the words 'climate change' that the campaign does not even mention them. We know it freaks out the member for Callide. The campaign even took credit for a whole range of measures and actions delivered by state governments and former Labor governments. We have come to accept this from the Morrison government. Of course, we know they had their \$4.8 billion Emergency Response Fund for bushfire relief—none of which has been spent yet.

Surely that \$31 million could have been spent better. In fact, I did a bit of research online to help the Morrison government. They could have spent \$31 million buying 2,066 home batteries and inverters. They could have spent that money to buy 29,512 15-kilowatt solar panel systems. But, no, they are more interested in photo-ops. We saw the Prime Minister's crash course in how to breach workplace health and safety laws when he was pretending to be a welder. Weirdly we saw him trying to wash a woman's hair instead of focusing on his actual job, which includes focusing on fixing the aged-care crisis and taking real and meaningful action on things like climate.

Let us be clear: we know what this advertising campaign is about. It is to save cosplay progressives like Peter Dutton's former chief of staff Trevor Evans and Warren Entsch so that they can pretend that they are actually doing something on climate change when we know that is just not the case. Time and time again the federal government show they are more about photo-ops than action. Queenslanders expect more.

Manufactured Homes Parks

Dr MacMAHON: My question is for the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts. What are the government's plans to ensure housing fairness for people living in manufactured homes, including a prohibition on the market review of site rent as a basis for increasing rent?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for that really important question. I am happy to provide the member with more information in a briefing outside of the chamber. A large body of work has been happening with regards to reviewing manufactured homes parks. That has been going on for quite some time. I acknowledge, in particular, the panel that was put together to do that review. Some incredibly dedicated people have helped us by putting forward ideas about where we go to next. Certainly there is a body of work happening and there will be some announcements around that very soon.

I have been listening very carefully to a number of members, particularly from this side of the House, who have a large number of manufactured homes parks in their electorates. In fact, I recently met with the member for Waterford, the member for Bancroft and the member for Logan and I have had conversations with the member for Lytton and others about this matter. I have had some long conversations with the member for Pumicestone also.

This is a very important topic. A body of work is happening and certainly some announcements will be happening soon. I am happy to provide a further briefing directly to the member for South Brisbane with regard to this matter.

Transport Technology

Ms BUSH: My question is of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Could the minister update the House on what the Palaszczuk government is doing to embrace technology on Queensland's transport system?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the member for Cooper for her question. She is a very strong supporter of new technology and its benefits to Queenslanders and her constituents. As I have announced today, later this year digital licences will be rolled out in Townsville after very successful earlier trials in the electorates of the members for Maryborough and Hervey Bay. This is part of our commitment to productivity and technology and to being a part of the new economy. As we move towards the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the infrastructure boom that they will guarantee the state because of the leadership of this Premier, the future for our state is looking very rosy.

Smart ticketing is coming to South-East Queensland. Commuters will be able to travel quicker and we will be able to provide more services on the infrastructure drivers that we have. Again, new technology is being used by this government for the benefit of Queenslanders. When it comes to technology, the adopters in other realms of government are not always as adept as this government. We heard the current Prime Minister threaten that the weekend would be all over if we went with electric vehicles. Do members remember that? In fact, yes, an electric vehicle can tow your boat or trailer. He was way behind the times. He totally misunderstands the benefits of new technology to the economy.

Cross River Rail is using the latest tunnelling technology to benefit our economy. Those opposite cut that and they promised to cut it a second time. Today we hear that the Deputy Prime Minister has secured fibre to the premises of a single business at the cost of half a million dollars in his electorate of New England. The Costa Group in Guyra is getting an installation of fibre—something that was roundly criticised and dissed by the conservative parties back in the day. Under the coalition government the average cost of a connection under the NBN is only \$4,300, yet one business in New England gets half a million dollars. What a disgrace. When it comes to partial behaviour, that is a disgrace.

The retiring member for Flynn posted pictures of his road upgrades; the only problem was that they were pictures of roads and highways in the United States. Confused Ken thought he was in Kentucky. Then we have the member for Callide, who is engaging in a desperate bid to go to federal parliament even though he never said a word in the four hours of my estimates committee hearing. He is voiceless here but big on social media. He spent \$33,000 on social media to try to promote himself, yet he is as quiet as a church mouse at the transport committee estimates hearings in this place. We do not want that sort of ineffectiveness in the federal government as well as the state government.

Trad, Ms J

Mr BLEIJIE: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier failed to answer a question about whether Queensland taxpayers are paying for Jackie Trad's legal costs to keep a CCC report secret. Upon reflection, will the Premier now rule out the use of taxpayers' money to pay for Jackie Trad's legal costs to try to keep a CCC report secret?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me say very clearly to the member for Kawana, who was a former attorney-general in this state—we all remember that very well—that legal indemnity guidelines are available. They are available publicly on the website. They are available to both sides of politics.

Whilst I am on my feet I want to clarify a question that was raised earlier. It was a line of attack from those opposite about Aspen Medical. It was made very clear—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The standing orders do not allow the Premier to come back to an opposition question. I asked specifically about legal assistance given to Jackie Trad. I ask the Premier to come back to the question that I asked at this time.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have answered that.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, there is validity to the point of order. You have answered the question as asked by the member for Kawana. If you have a brief piece of information to update the House on then that would be acceptable, but it is not an opportunity to speak to a previous question. If you do not have anything further to add around that particular element, I will ask you to resume your seat.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Speaker, I want to clarify a previous answer that I gave. I can come back and do that in a ministerial statement if you would prefer.

Mr SPEAKER: That would be more appropriate, Premier. Thank you.

Gender Identity and Sexuality, Discrimination

Ms McMILLAN: My question is of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. Can the minister outline the government's commitment to better protecting Queenslanders from discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexuality?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for Mansfield for her question and for her advocacy on behalf of all students in her electorate. Of course, this government believes that all Queenslanders, regardless of their gender identity or sexuality, need to be treated with respect and dignity. In fact, it was the Goss Labor government that decriminalised homosexuality and introduced the Anti-Discrimination Act, ending decades of discrimination.

The Palaszczuk government has built on that legacy, including: reinstating civil unions after those opposite scrapped them; legalising adoption for gay couples; expunging historical gay convictions; and criminalising conversion therapy. Of course, we are currently reviewing the Births, Deaths and Marriages Act to ensure that Queenslanders' gender identity can reflect their legal identity. This is because we on this side of the House believe that all Queenslanders deserve to be accepted and supported.

Mr Power: Every Queenslanders.

Ms FENTIMAN: Absolutely. I take that interjection from the member for Logan. A few weeks ago we saw the Citipointe Christian College introduce an enrolment contract that vilified young people for who they are. We saw an attempt to stifle the education of young students based on their sexuality and their gender identity. I am really proud that on this side of the House we stood strong and stood up for LGBTIQ+ young people and called out Citipointe Christian College. I take this opportunity to particularly thank the member for Mansfield for her advocacy and the Minister for Education for calling out this contract.

What about those opposite? Silence. I wonder why? Is it because, according to an article by the *Guardian* which I table, the former LNP candidate for Mansfield, who is a Citipointe senior pastor, now works for the Leader of the Opposition? Is it because the member for Maroochydore is also a former pastor from an affiliated church? Is it because Citipointe Church figures are significant LNP donors? Is it because the Brisbane mayor is a former Citipointe school captain whose children now attend the school?

Tabled paper: Article from the *Guardian*, dated 5 February 2022, titled "‘Good Godly Leadership’: Citipointe Christian College's extensive links to Queensland's LNP" [\[205\]](#).

I remind the House that last week Queensland LNP federal members failed to cross the floor and stand up for young Queensland students. Members like Trevor Evans, who claims to be a moderate Liberal and a supporter of the LGBTIQ+ community, failed to stand up for young students in Queensland. LNP members of the Brisbane City Council used their majority to stop a motion to condemn this enrolment contract. It is absolutely time that those opposite and the Leader of the Opposition stopped being silent on this discrimination and stood up for all students.

Mr Saunders interjected.

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

Coronavirus, Quarantine Facilities

Mr WEIR: My question is to the Premier. With under 100 people currently in Wellcamp and the 500-bed Pinkenba facility coming online in weeks, will Pinkenba be fully utilised before—

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question will be heard in silence. Please begin your question again, member.

Mr WEIR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is to the Premier. With under 100 people currently in Wellcamp and the 500-bed Pinkenba facility coming online in weeks, will Pinkenba be fully utilised before people who land at the Brisbane Airport requiring quarantine are bussed 162 kilometres to Wellcamp rather than the five kilometres to Pinkenba?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for the question. Let me say to the member for Condamine that Queenslanders wanted a regional quarantine facility built. There was a very clear message that I listened to—and our government listened to—about the need for a quarantine facility in the midst of a global pandemic. We all know that quarantine is a federal government responsibility, but we stepped in and built it and it was built within four months. It is operational and what a great facility it is. I was absolutely delighted to be joined by the Deputy Premier there. We had the tour. Currently, over 90 people are there. From memory, around 85 per cent of local businesses were utilised in its construction and, of course, there is employment for locals as well as local produce that is being served for people in quarantine there.

I was also advised the other day that there we had our first positive case. It shows that unvaccinated travellers are still coming and testing positive in our state. Those rules will remain in place for quite some time.

Secondly, can I say that this is about safeguarding our future. We do not know what is around the corner. I do not know what the next variant will be and neither do those opposite. Back in November, we did not know there was a variant called Omicron. We have seen the impact of Omicron on this state. The federal government said that it would commission Pinkenba. We are yet to see that facility open. We look forward to hearing more details about when it will open, but I understand that the Victorian quarantine facility was also commissioned and just opened. As you see, there is a range of quarantine facilities being built around the nation, which shows that it is about governments' investing in the future. I will say this—and I have said it many times before—they should have been built earlier by the federal government.

Small Business

Mr O'ROURKE: My question is of the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development. Will the minister update the House on how the Palaszczuk government is working with industry peak bodies to support small businesses? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Ms FARMER: I thank the member for the question. I think everyone in this House would know how passionate the member is about supporting his local small businesses, including his chamber of commerce. I very much enjoyed meeting president Phil Henry and deputy Jason Foss with the member when I was in Rockhampton in November.

Everything we have done to support small business since COVID hit—\$2.5 billion in loans and grants, payroll and land tax support and other initiatives for the past two years—has been based on feedback from hardworking local businesses and stakeholders such as these and from the small business peak bodies that represent them such as CCIQ. Recently, it was great to meet Heidi Cooper in her new role as CEO. They have all worked tirelessly over the past two years to walk alongside their

members and support them through the challenges of COVID, particularly Omicron recently, and to frankly and fearlessly represent their views to government in a bipartisan manner. Small businesses have been very lucky to have them.

What small businesses do not need, though, is people using their situation to play politics. In a moment of staggering hypocrisy, yesterday the member for Buderim also said that no-one should be playing politics when it comes to supporting small business. Why was it staggering? Because in a month where there is much talk about integrity, where those opposite astonishingly feel they can claim the high moral ground, what an oxymoron: the LNP and integrity?


In this particular month, we have seen the launch of the business union. Yes, members heard me right. We have the fake nurses union, we have the teachers union and now we have the fake business union. Just like the other fake unions under this banner, one of their mottos is 'Support without the politics'. Who runs this outfit? It is founder, twice failed LNP Senate candidate David Goodwin—and their launch was hosted by none other than Phillip Di Bella, life member of the LNP and well-known LNP donor, who came out publicly when the vaccination mandate was announced to say he would not enforce it. Who were the apolitical stars they got to this union last week? It was Pauline Hanson and Campbell Newman—their mate—both racing to the bottom to go after the same votes for the federal election.

Is it any coincidence that the LNP is chasing One Nation and other far-right conservative preferences for the federal election, exchanging preferences with these two and their cronies who are racing up and down the length and breadth of Queensland inciting anger and hatred in their anti-vax stance? This is so bad for business. What absolute hypocrisy and what an absolute slap in the face to the legitimate small business peak bodies that work so hard for small businesses. The LNP has set up its own fake union so it can get its anti-government lines up. Do not lecture us and do not lecture the Premier, who has more integrity than anyone I know.

Mr SPEAKER: The period for question time has expired. I ask members leaving the chamber to do so quietly as a courtesy to the speakers.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Further Answer to Question, Wellcamp Quarantine Facility, Medical Services Contract

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (11.18 am): Earlier in question time today the opposition was raising issues in relation to Aspen Medical. Let me say very clearly that I am advised that the contract with Aspen Medical was done in accordance with the Queensland Procurement Policy. I reject the assertions of those opposite that anything untoward was done.

I also say to those opposite that I have come across an article that appeared in the *Age* on 5 August 2020. It reads—

A medical firm that employs former Liberal health minister Michael Wooldridge as one of its key lobbyists has won contracts with the Morrison government worth \$1.2 billion since March.

Among the contracts the firm, Aspen Medical, has signed with the federal government is a \$15.6 million deal to provide emergency response teams to aged care facilities with a coronavirus outbreak, including St Basil's Home for the Aged in Fawkner, which by Wednesday had at least 21 COVID-19 related deaths.

It goes on—

Aspen donated \$54,000 to the Liberal Party between 2013 and 2015 and counted Dr Wooldridge among its board members until October last year.

Further, Dr Wooldridge was still, at this time, one of the company's lobbyists. It continues—

There is no law to prohibit former MPs from working as lobbyists in this way.

I am further advised in this article—

More than \$1.1 billion of the contracts Aspen Medical has signed with Canberra since March have been for medical supplies, but it has also won millions of dollars of work in disease prevention control and the supply of emergency staff across Australia.

I think those opposite should do their research before they come in here and start throwing mud. When it comes to integrity matters, I quote this article—

The LNP referred Queensland election fundraising events attended by its leader Deb Frecklington, the member for Nanango, to the watchdog.


Furthermore, in relation to fundraising, the *Gold Coast Bulletin* has reported in an article titled ‘Gold Coast fundraising MPs Stuart Robert and Steve Ciobo our “million-dollar men”’—

Gold Coast MPs Stuart Robert and Steve Ciobo are “the million-dollar men” who use secret fundraising vehicles to deliver an election war chest for the LNP in Queensland.

I think it is very clear that those opposite come in here with assertions that are not factually correct and they try to distort the truth. In the meantime they damage people’s reputations.


There are lobbyists on both sides of the political spectrum. Under our laws we made it absolutely clear that they need to report them to the ECQ and they need to be real-time disclosures. These are laws that those opposite voted against. We will not come in here and trash other people in that manner. I expect a higher standard in this House.

Further Answer to Question, CopperString 2.0

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (11.22 am): Earlier today in response to a question from the member for Traeger, I spoke about both the community service obligation and the asset ownership dividend. I said in my response that every single household and small business in the north-west will benefit from the sixth \$50 asset ownership dividend. I clarify for the House that it is households that will benefit from the asset ownership dividend delivered by this government because Queenslanders own their electricity assets. I clarify that both households and small businesses benefit from the \$24 million in CSO, ensuring all Queenslanders enjoy some of the lowest energy costs in the nation.

RACING INTEGRITY AMENDMENT BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (11.23 am): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): The message from Her Excellency recommends the Racing Integrity Amendment Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

RACING INTEGRITY AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, DR JEANNETTE ROSITA YOUNG PSM, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—


A Bill for an Act to amend the Racing Integrity Act 2016 for particular purposes

GOVERNOR

Date: 23 February 2021

Tabled paper: Message, dated 23 February 2022, from Her Excellency the Governor, recommending the Racing Integrity Amendment Bill 2022 [[198](#)].

Introduction

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (11.23 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Racing Integrity Act 2016 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Education, Employment and Training Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Racing Integrity Amendment Bill 2022 [[199](#)].

Tabled paper: Racing Integrity Amendment Bill 2022, explanatory notes [[200](#)].

Tabled paper: Racing Integrity Amendment Bill 2022, statement of compatibility with human rights [[201](#)].

It is a pleasure to present the Racing Integrity Amendment Bill 2022, which amends the Racing Integrity Act 2016. As I said, I nominate the Education, Employment and Training Committee to consider the bill. I know they will do an excellent job considering this bill under the chairpersonship of the member for Redlands.

The Palaszczuk government is continuing its commitment to improve integrity in the racing industry, and I am pleased to announce that Queensland will have a new independent appeals panel as part of these reforms. The importance of the Queensland racing industry cannot be understated. The racing industry supports more than 12,600 full-time jobs and almost 40,000 participants. This includes more than 7,850 volunteers across all three codes.

It is amazing the growth in this industry and the manner in which we were able to support this industry because of our strong health response during the COVID-19 pandemic. We were in the thrust of that during the last two years and we are still not out of the woods. This industry, with the support of this government, has gone from strength to strength. I am proud as the minister, as is the former minister for racing, Minister Hinchliffe, of the manner in which the industry has been able to conduct itself and grow its business. The fact that the industry has gone from strength to strength is second to none in this country. We are very proud as a government to have provided that support, regardless of what is said by those opposite.

In addition to delivering thousands of jobs, racing also contributes—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: I say to those opposite who are interjecting that they should look at the figures, look at the reports and ask the industry. What was delivered over the last two years was absolutely incredible.

In addition to delivering thousands of jobs, racing also contributes to the social fabric and wellbeing within our communities, especially in the regions. What a wonderful package the country racing package is. I have had people in the country say to me that it is the best package they have seen in the history of racing in this state. Recently one racing legend retired from their role and said—and I was very proud of this—‘You have been the best racing minister we have ever had.’

Anyone who has attended a race meeting from Birdsville to Cooktown can attest to this. This incredible industry brings communities and regions together. That is why the Palaszczuk government continues to back the racing industry.

This government has zero tolerance when it comes to animal cruelty. The 2015 ABC expose on the use of live baiting to train racing greyhounds was absolutely abhorrent. We were all distressed by the images we saw. That is what was delivered to us in 2015 when we won government from the previous Newman government. The Palaszczuk government acted swiftly, announcing the Queensland Greyhound Racing Industry Commission of Inquiry, known as the MacSporran review, and accepted all 15 recommendations made, initiating 75 activities to support their implementation.

One of the most significant recommendations was the establishment of an independent statutory body—the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, known as QRIC. The QRIC model is unique to Queensland, creating a clear separation between the integrity and commercial activities in the racing industry. I would like to officially welcome new Queensland Racing Integrity Commissioner, Shane Gillard, and Deputy Commissioner Natalie Conner. I was very pleased to have visited the QRIC offices last week and hear about the strategic plans they both have for the commission and the industry. They are stakeholder engaging. The commissioner has made comments that he believes our model is a superior model. I know that they will do an excellent job. I welcome them both to their new roles.

The commission does a fantastic job at safeguarding the welfare of racing animals and maintaining public confidence in Queensland Racing. The turnaround in the greyhound industry has been immense. The regulation of that industry will hopefully never see repeated what we saw in 2015. QRIC does this by providing a number of services to the industry including stewards to support race day operations. The member for Everton, Tim Mander, would know that stewards are like referees of the racing industry on the day.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms GRACE: I take the interjection. I am sure they will be very happy to hear that. I know that he said that in jest, that they are not as intelligent as referees of Rugby Union—Rugby League, sorry! That was a Freudian slip.

It also includes the licensing of participants, conducting animal welfare and compliance checks, and testing for prohibited substances through their Racing Science Centre. I commend the work of the Racing Science Centre, which is part of QRIC. Often when comparisons are made about costs in this industry, they ignore the model that we have here in Queensland. It is impossible to compare what happens down south in the manner in which they do it where we have it all together with QRIC—and we are streets ahead! There is no doubt about that.

As part of race day operations, stewards are on track to monitor the rules of racing. Where a steward believes a breach has occurred, they will issue a decision which often includes a penalty. Under the current model, an aggrieved person can then seek an internal review of a steward's decision, followed by external review by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, known widely as QCAT.

Since these arrangements commenced, many in the racing industry have identified concerns with the operation of the review process, including: a perceived lack of independence from the commission—I emphasise the word 'perceived'; the time it takes for matters to be heard—and I share that concern; the lack of industry knowledge in QCAT; and that industry participants were exploiting a loophole by using stays to continue to ride through lucrative race periods while waiting for their matter to be heard.

The Palaszczuk Labor government listened to the industry's concerns and undertook a thorough review of this act and its operations. This resulted in the government signalling its intention to establish a new model. Extensive consultation was undertaken throughout 2021 which highlighted the need for an expert panel that was fully independent of the commission. The industry wanted a system that allowed for a review of a decision to be undertaken in a similar way to other professional sports. For example, in the professional football codes, such as the NRL, disciplinary matters are generally resolved within 72 hours of an original decision.

We have looked at this through the lens of this being the referee of the industry. You do not see someone who has been penalised, say, for a high tackle or a spear tackle or some dangerous type of play on the field, if the penalty has been upheld, running on the field the next day or the next week. The matters are decided quickly by experts and the decision is then either upheld or the penalty reduced—whichever is the outcome.

Other Australian jurisdictions provide this type of system, with rapid and independent reviews of stewards' decisions by a specialist body. These jurisdictions also limit grounds for further review. This is in no way a reflection on QCAT. It is rather an acknowledgement of the need for industry expertise and importance of timeliness when reviewing a steward's—dare I say a referee's—decision.

As a result of this consultation, in December last year I announced our intention to introduce legislation to create a new model for the reviews. This bill will establish a new independent Racing Appeals Panel that will replace all current internal reviews and limit external reviews by QCAT. We have also considered the best structure for the new panel. Based on feedback, the panel chairperson will be required to have at least five years legal standing. This ensures questions of law are considered in every review decision.

Even in simple matters, the panel chairperson will be able to call upon an additional two panel members with industry experience to sit if required. The additional two panel members will be selected from a panel of persons with racing and/or other relevant expertise such as veterinarians, racing scientists, industry representatives and relevant associations. All panel members will be appointed by the Governor in Council on recommendation of the minister—myself.

The outcome of these reforms will be a system which will see most reviews of stewards' decisions finalised in a reduced time. Under the bill, applications for review by the panel must now be lodged within three business days. It is my understanding that the norm is generally that when a penalty is given by stewards it is appealed, if the person wants to, almost immediately. Three business days gets the appeal in and heard quickly. Most decisions must then be reviewed by the panel within seven business days. In more serious cases, the panel must finalise its review within 20 business days. This is a significant improvement in the time frames the industry is currently experiencing.

Another significant change is limiting the matters that can be referred to QCAT after the panel has made a review decision. Appeals relating to stewards' decisions can only be made to QCAT's appeals jurisdiction in respect of the severity of penalty. This will only be available in circumstances where the panel's final penalty is three months or greater. Importantly, these changes apply only to stewards' decisions. All other decisions retain their current appeal rights and processes. In other words, QCAT will not review whether or not an offence has been committed. It will only consider whether the action taken by stewards, such as a suspension or cancellation of a licence or warning someone off a racetrack, was manifestly inadequate or excessive.

Another important integrity reform will be the changes to QCAT's ability to grant stays. Under the new model, stays will not be available if the panel has determined that a breach involved a serious risk to animal health or welfare, human safety or the integrity of racing. This will now be considered and determined at the panel level.

This amendment is critical to directly address industry concerns that repeat offenders were taking advantage of the current system by seeking a stay of a steward's decision, for example, in order to continue riding during lucrative race day periods. I go back to the NRL where if someone is found guilty of a spear tackle they do not go to a tribunal, ask for a stay and then play the following week. Generally, it is heard quickly, it is heard independently and the penalty sticks, and this is the manner in which we believe we should go forward. Directly prohibiting stays in certain circumstances will protect, in our strong view and in that of the stakeholders, the integrity and reputation of the industry.

The bill also makes a number of unrelated minor amendments to the Racing Integrity Act. The publication of stewards' reports is important for transparency within the industry. Accordingly, the bill will expressly authorise the publishing of stewards' race day reports and investigation reports. In addition, the bill authorises the publication of elevated readings of total carbon dioxide and prohibited substances when these are measured for a horse.

The bill also removes redundant provisions relating to collection of a bookmaker's fingerprints and limits the time a bookmaker's clerk can act as an agent due to temporary incapacity to not more than 12 weeks each year. This aligns with the maximum time QRIC may authorise a person to act as an agent on other prescribed grounds.

The bill also clarifies that, whenever a bookmaker is taking bets through a telecommunications system, that system must be approved by the commission. An approved telecommunications system is already required when a racing bookmaker is taking bets from a person who is not present at a licensed venue.

The amendment clarifies that an approved telecommunications system is required when a bookmaker is taking bets and the bookmaker is not at a licensed venue. It just clarifies and streamlines that part of the act. This approval ensures that the telecommunications system is of a standard to protect the integrity of bets made and the money and the privacy of persons placing bets, which is an important part of this industry. The bill also clarifies that the minister can delegate power to the Racing Integrity Commissioner to deal with off-course approval applications and allows for any necessary amendments of these approvals. The bill will make it an offence to influence witnesses or experts who are participating in an audit or investigation. Finally, the bill makes minor amendments to several sections of the Racing Integrity Act to ensure that it is compatible with the Human Rights Act 2019.

As I said at the beginning, the Palaszczuk government is a government that listens and acts. We make no apologies for continuing reforms to improve integrity in the racing industry. We will monitor the performance of the new independent Racing Appeals Panel and, if necessary, make further improvements if required. On that note, I wish the racing industry all the very best in 2022. I know we are not out of the woods yet in relation to COVID-19; however, it is going to be an exciting year for racing in this state. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. G GRACE (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (11.41 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to Education, Employment and Training Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Education, Employment and Training Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Hon. G GRACE (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (11.42 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, under the provisions of standing order 136, the Education, Employment and Training Committee report to the House on the Racing Integrity Amendment Bill by 8 April 2022.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction



Hon. MAJ SCANLON (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (11.42 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Forestry Act 1959, the Marine Parks Act 2004, the Nature Conservation Act 1992, the Nature Conservation (Animals) Regulation 2020, the Nature Conservation (Plants) Regulation 2020, the Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Regulation 2017, the Recreation Areas Management Act 2006, the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2014, and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the State Development and Regional Industries Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 [\[202\]](#).

Tabled paper: Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, explanatory notes [\[203\]](#).

Tabled paper: Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, statement of compatibility with human rights [\[204\]](#).

I am pleased to introduce the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The primary purpose of the bill is to deliver on a commitment this government made to the Queensland beekeeping industry. This bill will provide up to a 20-year extension to existing arrangements that enable beekeeping to occur on certain national parks. The extension applies to areas where beekeeping was an existing use prior to the transfer of the land into the national park estate. The current arrangements are due to expire on 31 December 2024; however, the government is providing industry with greater certainty by extending these arrangements for up to 20 years, to 31 December 2044. In addition to providing certainty regarding future access to beekeeping sites on national parks, this extension will also provide time to examine options for transitioning beekeeping activities to other lands outside of national parks in the future.

This bill will also enhance the Department of Environment and Science's capacity to respond to misconduct on Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service managed areas such as state forests, marine parks, recreation areas and national parks. It will do this by inserting several new offences and amending some existing provisions to support rangers doing their important work and to make it safer for the general community when visiting these areas.

The opportunity has also been taken to correct several minor errors and to relocate certain administrative provisions that are replicated across three regulations into the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and update them to meet contemporary drafting standards and practices. The bill will also address changes to intergovernmental arrangements between the Commonwealth and the state in relation to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage area and correct minor errors identified in two acts.

Commercial beekeeping in national parks is a legacy issue associated with the transfer of state forests to national parks through the state forest transfer processes occurring in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It was intended for beekeeping to be relocated to suitable sites outside of national parks by 31 December 2024; however, finding sufficient and appropriate alternative sites has been challenging, and the government recognises that the loss of access to national park sites in December 2024 would have a detrimental impact on the supply of the products and services provided by beekeepers. Amendments to the Nature Conservation Act are therefore being made to provide an extension of time until 31 December 2044. This will allow beekeepers to continue applying for apiary permits on land where beekeeping was an existing use prior to it being dedicated as national park. The extension will apply to existing national park lands where beekeeping is already accommodated and to any future national parks created where lawful beekeeping activities occurred prior to the land being added to the protected area estate. New efforts will be made with stakeholders during this time to seek alternative sites off national parks, support adoption of industry best practice on protected areas and identify initiatives that will assist the industry to progressively relocate off-park over the next 20 years.

Unrelated to the beekeeping amendments, this bill makes several amendments to address recent instances where people have either falsely represented themselves as a ranger or obstructed an appointed Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service officer in the performance of the officer's functions. Rangers and other officers appointed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service within the Department of Environment and Science work hard to ensure visitors to our state forests, marine parks, protected areas and recreation areas have a safe and enjoyable nature based experience. Unfortunately, some people in the community seek to undermine this work.

The bill will insert new offences for impersonating a forest officer and impersonating a ranger and also amend the existing obstruction offences in the Marine Parks Act 2004, the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and the Recreation Areas Management Act 2006 to clarify that it is an offence to obstruct appointed officers when they are performing functions under these acts. These amendments will enhance the Department of Environment and Science's capacity to take action for misconduct on Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service managed areas, provide staff with increased support by making it an offence for the public to obstruct them when performing their duties and help to continue to make parks and forests enjoyable places to visit.

The bill will also relocate a number of existing provisions from subordinate legislation into the Nature Conservation Act. This is a result of the statutory review of some of the act's regulations in 2020, where the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel identified certain administrative and seizure provisions that, while maintaining current policy intent, are better suited to primary legislation. Relocating the administrative provisions for making approved forms and for internal and external reviews of decisions under the act will streamline the legislation by removing regulatory duplication across three regulations.

The transfer of seizure provisions will ensure conservation officers have clear and appropriate powers and actions that are not distributed across the act and three regulations. The continuation of these provisions allows officers, under certain circumstances, to seize and deal with things to protect the cultural or natural resources in a protected area or prevent injury, suffering or loss of Queensland's native wildlife.

The bill also makes necessary consequential amendments to the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2014 to correct referencing to penalty infringement notice offences for tampering with things seized under the act. The Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel has also taken the opportunity to redraft the administrative provisions to meet current drafting standards and redraft the seizure provisions into a modern form based on a precedent that is acceptable to parliamentary committees.

In unrelated amendments, the bill will update the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 to reflect changed intergovernmental arrangements between the state and Commonwealth in relation to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage area. These changes were agreed by national cabinet following a review of the former COAG ministerial councils by Mr Peter Conran AM. An outdated version of the intergovernmental agreement will also be removed from a schedule of the act and changes will streamline the process for making consequential amendments to the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998 following associated changes to the act.

The bill will also correct several minor errors and omissions in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act and the Nature Conservation Act. These relate to correcting a spelling error and inserting and updating several cross-references to other sections of the legislation that were not identified when previous amendments were made to these acts.

In conclusion, passage of the bill will deliver on the government's commitment to grant a 20-year extension to allow beekeeping on national parks until 31 December 2044 in areas where beekeeping was an existing use prior to the transfer of land to national park. The bill also makes a number of amendments to enhance compliance capacity within Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service managed areas and will update and improve the operation of the legislation by correcting several errors, reflecting changes to intergovernmental arrangements and providing consistency with contemporary drafting practices.

First Reading

Hon. MAJ SCANLON (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (11.51 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to State Development and Regional Industries Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the State Development and Regional Industries Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Hon. MAJ SCANLON (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (11.51 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, under the provisions of standing order 136, the State Development and Regional Industries Committee report to the House on the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill by 8 April 2022.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.


Motion agreed to.

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 23 February (see p. 202), on motion of Mrs D'Ath—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (11.52 am): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I am proud to be part of a government that always values the health of Queenslanders. It was this government, after all, that restored the savage cuts to frontline health made by those opposite, when 4,400 health workers were brutally sacked, including 177 preventative health staff working in our public health units—the same public health units that were vital to our COVID-19 response. Imagine what those opposite would have done if they had had their hands on the tillers of government when steering our community through this unprecedented pandemic.

We did have some insight—like when they called for the borders to be opened 64 times as the virus was peaking interstate and we were yet to have access to the vaccine. We had another insight when the now Leader of the Opposition referred to our now Governor, then CHO, Dr Jeannette Young, as a 'punch-drunk bureaucrat'. Thankfully, it is this government, under the leadership of the Premier who is always listening to the health advice of our Chief Health Officer, which is supporting stronger health care in this state. It is this government that is building new hospitals, hiring more frontline staff and delivering more beds. On this side of the House, we are proud of our track record when it comes to supporting our health system. This is another important, albeit technical, part of this government's enduring commitment to deliver the best health care for all Queenslanders.

At its heart, this bill is all about ensuring that Queenslanders continue to receive the best health care. I take this opportunity to thank all of the people who make up our incredible Queensland health system—those on the front line and those behind the scenes. No matter what your role is, you are valued by this government and we thank you for choosing a career that cares for the health of Queenslanders. Every day in Queensland, thousands of people receive amazing and free care from hardworking clinicians. At no other time has our community's health network been more in the spotlight than in the last few years. We know that COVID-19 has had a huge impact on health care in this state and around the world. We also know that our health system expands beyond just what happens in the four walls of a hospital. I also take a moment to recognise hardworking GPs, pharmacists, aged-care workers and allied health professionals—our speech pathologists, audiologists and social workers. Thank you. You are all such an important part of our health system.

When considering this bill, it is important to recognise that there are so many people and professions who make up our health system in Queensland. It should be a collaborative effort. This is a bill that will see allied health professionals able to access the Viewer. It will lead to better outcomes for Queensland patients, while safeguarding their privacy. It is a sensible amendment—one that will be welcomed by the profession.


I note the contribution made by the OIC with respect to the need to ensure the privacy of individuals who are receiving care. I am heartened by the undertaking of Queensland Health that they will work with Health Consumers Queensland to ensure that consumers are aware of their rights in this regard. Health Consumers Queensland are an invaluable asset to this state. Under the energetic leadership of Melissa Fox, they provide unparalleled insight into issues confronting everyday Queenslanders who engage with our health system. Consumer advocacy and representation is always critical in a modern and responsive healthcare system, but it is needed now more than ever. I want to thank Health Consumers Queensland not just for their engagement on this issue but for all they do, particularly during this pandemic.

The bill also makes some amendments to the Mental Health Act. This government invests \$1.8 billion annually in supporting Queenslanders' mental health. We are also delivering \$74.5 million to support a mental health and wellbeing package in response to the additional mental health demands on the system created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The amendments are particularly focused on the interface between a person who has a mental illness with the criminal justice system. I note the feedback of the Queensland Law Society, which said—

QLS commends Queensland Health and the Government for the manner in which they engaged and consulted with stakeholders in the formation of the Bill. This thoughtful process has led to a workable piece of legislation which, as far as is possible, appears to be free from unintended consequences and addresses the substantive policy intent of the desired reforms.

This is a strong endorsement from Queensland's peak legal body about the consultative and measured approach the government has taken to policy development. It is certainly a far cry from the conduct of those opposite when they were in the Newman-Crisafulli government. Who can forget the war with the lawyers and judges that occurred under the stewardship of the member for Kawana when he was Attorney-General? It is a reminder that the Palaszczuk government backs up its rhetoric with action, rather than with wild claims and innuendo, like those opposite.

This bill is a testament to the approach taken by the Palaszczuk government with respect to policy formation and is an example of the proper functioning of the parliamentary committee system. As a whole, all of the amendments proposed have been the subject of extensive consultation and hard work by the committee, as well as important stakeholder input. The bill will lead to even stronger healthcare services in this great state. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (11.58 am): I rise in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. Like my colleagues, I want to take the opportunity to thank and acknowledge the many members of my community and all the communities across Queensland who have stepped up during COVID-19. We acknowledge the great work that frontline workers have done putting themselves at risk while protecting everyone as we are all confronting COVID-19 together.

I would also like to acknowledge our hotel quarantine workers, the contact tracers, the testers, the people who did the vaccinations and also not to forget the many people in the backrooms doing the coordinating. They made the rosters and did the preparation, planning and background work. That in itself would have been a huge trial and a big job. I really want to acknowledge the great administrative work that went on in the backend of that. I want to thank them on behalf of my community and myself. Their dedication, commitment and professionalism have ensured the safety and health of Queenslanders. We are forever in their debt for everything they have done.

I would also like to acknowledge the great work of the Minister for Health, the former health minister, the Premier and all of the other ministers who have worked together collaboratively to ensure that Queenslanders were given the best opportunity to confront and fight united COVID-19. That includes all of the staff who work for those people as well. They put in untold hours. I know personally that they were always available to answer an urgent call or to offer assistance or advice. I really want to acknowledge all the great staffers who have really stepped up during these difficult times.

Like my colleague, the member for Bulimba, I also want to acknowledge all of the electorate office staff. Electorate offices are often the last place that people go to. I know my staff have done an exceptional job, ringing people, making contact with all of our constituents, to make sure they are well and safe and to inquire if there is anything that we can do to assist them.

My staff have shed many a tear talking to many of the elderly people in my electorate. For their genuine commitment and concern for my constituents, I want to put on record my deep thanks to Jo Jackson, who herself has had a bit of a health scare at the moment, for what she has done and for encouraging and supporting my newest electorate officer, Carly Ogborne, and training her into becoming as good an electorate officer as she.

I would also like to acknowledge the small businesses in my electorate and thank them for the great work that they have done in following the guidelines and making sure that their business and their staff were safe in the face of some very nasty campaigns that were going on in my electorate by anti-vaxxers that caused great grief to some of my local businesses. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Chocolate Elements which was a new business that started in my electorate during COVID. They work with an organisation that takes care of and supports returned service personnel. They were hounded by people and it was shameful. I acknowledge the great work that they have done. I am really proud of their dedication to looking after their staff, and their commitment to providing a really great quality product, I might add. If you need some good chocky, pop down to Wynnum. That is on offer.

This bill is the sort of thing that good governments do. We go through and look at things that need to be fixed and need to be attended to, unlike those opposite. Before I was elected, the Wynnum Manly area was punished by the Newman-Crisafulli government. So many of our public services were removed; so many of our public servants lost their jobs. That ripped the heart and soul out of my community because not only did people lose their jobs but also such important services were removed. It meant that small businesses suffered because people were not working and they did not have money to spend with our local traders.

It was really important to me that I listened to what the community wanted. I stood beside the Premier as we fought for many things. Our health service is an example and one of the many things that I fought for.

With regard to the Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit—and I know I have spoken about this and I will continue to speak about it because it was disgraceful—85 residents lost their homes. These were elderly, vulnerable people who were being taken care of by kind, caring, compassionate, local people. They were hardworking men and women who cared for our elderly and most vulnerable. With a stroke of a pen, the Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit was shut.

Ms Grace: I remember campaigning. It was disgusting.

Ms PEASE: That is right. Thank you, I will take that interjection. As a result, not all of those 85 people survived the move, sadly. Not only was the service closed but also the palliative care services that operated out of there. It was a sensational palliative care service. My parents had stayed at Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit and they benefitted from the love and care of the palliative care team.

In the inquiry that we are conducting at the moment, I get to hear about the palliative care services and how important it is for a holistic approach to our health care in the area. It is not just a one fit that works for everyone.

It was shameful, but we, as a government, have listened, and not just in my electorate; it is across Queensland. It is Queensland-wide. We listen to what our community wants. We listen to what they need. We fulfil those requirements because we listen to the experts.

I want to acknowledge the great work of our GPs and all of our allied health workers, including the pharmacies. To them it is not a job, it is a vocation. Every day I meet beautiful, caring, kind people who give up so much of themselves to caring for our community. Without those beautiful people, our health and our beautiful community would not be what it is today.

To every one of the nurses, the doctors, the physiotherapists, the podiatrists, the speech pathologists, I say thank you from the bottom of my heart for your dedication.

As a government, I am incredibly proud that we listen in order to make changes to ensure the best can be done to look after everyone in Queensland. This bill is doing that. We are addressing a number of areas that will make the job easier, more straightforward and much more practical.

I feel really blessed that we have such a strong workforce in the health service area and I am thankful that we were able to restore that after the Newman era because, as my colleagues have said, without those people back in the system, we would never have been able to conduct a united fight against COVID-19. These people are beautiful people and they deserve every recognition and accolade that I can possibly give.

I will continue to advocate for our health workers, our teachers and public sector workers because a state cannot operate without great public servants. I thank you for everything you have done and I look forward to hearing from the community and working with my Bayside community. Without a shadow of a doubt, I want to thank Baysiders for their contribution, for taking care of each other, getting vaccinated and looking after their neighbours. I commend the bill to the House.



Mr O'ROURKE (Rockhampton—ALP) (12.07 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. Through the committee process, this bill has been informed by working with a cross-section of health professionals, doctors, nursing, pharmaceutical, mental health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sectors, as well as government agencies and statutory offices.

This bill is about improving the health system and will support the health services provided in Queensland. The bill will make a range of amendments to the Mental Health Act. The act regulates the treatment and care provided to people with mental illness, including those who do not have capacity to consent to treatment. It is essential that the Mental Health Act respects and promotes the rights of persons who require involuntary treatment for their mental illness.

The bill will amend the Hospital and Health Boards Act to allow additional categories of allied health professionals who may access the Viewer. The Viewer is Queensland's read-only web based system that displays a central place to view patient health information.

The Palaszczuk government has a proud track record of investing in frontline services and infrastructure so that Queenslanders receive quality care no matter where they live. Having travelled overseas, I know firsthand that we have a world-class health system.

In Central Queensland we have hired more frontline health staff across the region, including 285 nurses, 47 doctors and 47 health professionals over the past few years. As a comparison, over the last 12 months from November 2020 in Central Queensland, we have 354 doctors. By November 2021, we had 363 doctors—that is 11 more.

Last month in Rockhampton, we welcomed 41 new medical interns who are launching the next stage of their medical career. They were part of the 795 new junior doctors who joined the front healthcare line throughout January to strengthen Queensland's public health system.

I return to the nurses. In November 2020 we had 1,511 nurses; now we have 1,638, 127 more. Then we had 300 health professionals; now we have 310, 10 more. These increases were in just one year of a four-year election term. We deliver on health care. There is also \$31 million for the expansion of the Rockhampton Hospital that will enhance health services for Central Queensland and support 90 local construction jobs. We are delivering \$18.2 million for the Rockhampton Hospital cardiac hybrid theatre and \$12.8 million for the Rockhampton Hospital mental health ward expansion.

We also just completed a \$16 million alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation centre. This is a 42-bed residential service in Rockhampton with eight places for withdrawal, 22 for individual rehabilitation and two family units to allow parents to stay with their children while accessing treatment. It was great that local firm Woollam Constructions used local contractors and suppliers wherever possible, creating 48 local construction jobs. Lives Lived Well is a community provider managing the wonderful services. They have already created links across the community to ensure the best outcomes are achieved.

I also want to thank the health and hospital district staff. They have done an absolutely wonderful job during the pandemic. My son Harry is a registered nurse and he has been working at the hub for the last 12 to 18 months. He is a frontline worker, which is really great to see, and there are so many dedicated workers in our health system. I pay respect to them and thank them for the work they do on behalf of our community.

Finally, I would like to thank the committee for their work in pulling this bill together. This bill ensures people are treated with respect and dignity when they receive treatment and receive the best possible health outcomes. I commend the bill to the House.



Mrs GERBER (Currumbin—LNP) (12.12 pm): The Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is largely uncontroversial. It seeks to make a variety of changes to nine pieces of legislation within the health and environment portfolios. I wish to speak to a few of these changes.

The proposed amendment to the Hospital and Health Boards Act will enable additional allied health professionals to access Queensland's health patient information system. It will allow certain designated persons and prescribed health professionals to diagnose confidential information to a person performing functions under the Mental Health Act 2016. As my colleagues have mentioned, we will always support initiatives that improve patient access to health care. I truly hope that the government will keep their word and that this initiative delivers the promised improved patient access to health care. However, given the Labor government's history when it comes to implementing IT projects within the health system, I think there are many in this chamber with grave concerns. Let's look at the state government's track record for a minute.

They bungled the electronic medical rollout, blowing out the project costs by close to \$300 million and the project itself is now on ice; they wasted \$70 million of taxpayer money on an inactive pathology system. What about the \$135 million purchasing system that crashed two hours after being turned on? Then there was the biggest bungle of all, the Queensland Health payroll debacle: \$1.2 billion of taxpayer money gone. That is a history that records failure after failure when it comes to IT projects, and it has cost the taxpayer a total of \$1.755 billion.

It is my sincere hope that the state government's track record does not play out again and that the patient information system initiative will be a success.

Mr Skelton interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Order! Pause the clock. Member for Nicklin, please cease your interjections.

Mrs GERBER: The bill also amends the Mental Health Act to improve, among other things, administrative requirements. If one thing has become abundantly clear throughout the COVID-19 pandemic it is the prevalence of mental health concerns and the need for better government support in providing mental health services. Our superstar health practitioners are doing their very best, but they must have the services and resources available to them so they can provide the best level of care to Queenslanders. This is one of the many reasons I have been so vocal in relation to the current health crisis. The opposition have talked with the community, we have talked with stakeholders and we have proposed solutions. However, the Palaszczuk Labor government continues to turn a blind eye.

Just last month we saw mental health nurses in my electorate become yet another casualty of the state government's inability to manage Queensland's health system during COVID. The Gold Coast University Hospital's mental health ward did not have enough personal protective equipment to be adequately prepared for the reopening of our state borders and staff were left vulnerable when hand sanitiser and alcohol cleaner for workspaces ran out. It was clear that this state government did not properly plan for COVID-positive mental health patients in our hospitals despite having two years to prepare. Instead, the Premier and the health minister left our hardworking nurses in the mental health unit at the Gold Coast University Hospital exposed and unsupported.

While this bill makes administrative clarifications and improvements to the Mental Health Act, too many Queenslanders are currently missing out on the vital services they need. Every day vulnerable Queenslanders desperate to access mental health support are waiting months for an appointment, and presentations to emergency departments are reaching unprecedented levels. We have been putting our solutions on the table. The state government could start by looking at what is being achieved in other states and territories. Other states are prioritising mental health funding because they know the impact it is having on our communities. Sadly, the Queensland Labor government is not doing the same. I will continue to raise it every day in this chamber until something is done by the Palaszczuk Labor government about it. For the sake of all Queenslanders, cultural changes need to be implemented and mental health services need to be better supported, because Queenslanders are falling through the cracks of this hidden pandemic.

This bill also amends the Ambulance Service Act 1991 to align with the requirements for managing confidential information in the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 and to remove a requirement that the Queensland Ambulance Service Commissioner be no older than 65 years of age. Whilst these amendments were no doubt necessary, the state government has an ambulance ramping crisis on its hands that it is not dealing with.

Last financial year paramedics spent 112 hours stuck on a ramp. That is the equivalent of 4,600 days, or more than 12 years. It is a 76 per cent increase on the previous financial year. Now data from September and October alone show paramedics spent almost 20,000 hours stuck on a ramp waiting to off-load patients at hospitals across Queensland. This is data that has only just been revealed, mind you. This comes from a government that is all talk when it comes to integrity and transparency, but when we asked the health minister to release this data she initially claimed it was not a reportable measure. The minister tried to avoid showing Queenslanders this damning data. You cannot fix a problem whilst trying to hide it.


Queenslanders deserve to know the true state of ambulance services in our state. These figures lay bare the extraordinary failings of this government. Our dedicated doctors, nurses and paramedics are heroes holding our hospitals together during this health crisis.

The LNP has spent the past year putting forward positive solutions to fix the Queensland health crisis, especially as it becomes increasingly clear that the health system has been in decline for the past seven years and the state government is not keeping up with population growth and demand. The LNP has been leading the charge for real-time data in our hospitals, improving triaging and investing in more beds. We have been leading the charge for empowering frontline clinicians to make local decisions to ensure hospitals run smoothly. This is on the back of record high waiting lists, with an estimated 245,000 patients on the waiting list for the waiting list. Emergency department wait times are going through the roof and surgery waiting lists have ballooned. All of this was before COVID even became a concern.

Unfortunately, it is yet another example of how the Premier and her government are only interested in controlling how things look and not how things are. The state government is not listening and has not acted, and this bill is a missed opportunity to fix the Queensland health crisis. It is clear

that our dedicated doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals are the ones holding our hospitals together while the state government fails to properly resource them. Instead, the Premier and her government choose to focus on the public perception of the health crisis rather than just getting on with the job of fixing the problems plaguing Queensland Health.

I know we cannot gloss over the administrative processes, but in my view it is not enough to just alter these administrative requirements and conduct information campaigns, as suggested in this bill. All Queenslanders want to see is a better healthcare system in Queensland. Queensland healthcare workers and Queensland patients deserve more than just improved administrative processes. Queenslanders deserve real, tangible actions to fix the Queensland health crisis.

 **Mr WALKER** (Mundingburra—ALP) (12.20 pm): Pinocchio would be very proud of those opposite today. I rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. A lot has been said in support of this bill, which is a very important bill. A lot of high-quality and credible comments have been made from many here in this place who have worked in health or have family who have served in the health sector, just like my daughter. They know the importance of providing a high-quality service.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has invested in health. The Townsville University Hospital now has a new 12-bed paediatric emergency department and is investing in a new paediatric cardiac unit, which is very important for our region as it stops affected families from having to travel to Brisbane. We can never say enough about these true community champions—yes, champions—who line up day in, day out to serve their communities, their state and their country. We cannot underestimate what has been achieved by so many.

Small business has been doing it tough during this global pandemic. Of interest are the amendments to the Public Health (Infection Control for Personal Appearance Services) Act 2003 which seek to improve the licence process for business and local government. Extending the time frame within which a business can apply for a licence renewal from one month to 60 days is the right thing to do. This alone takes a lot of stress off those who must adapt to a new operating environment during a time when the business and working environment has changed dramatically due to COVID-19. This allows a licence holder to apply for the restoration of an expired licence within 30 days of that expiration and allows business to continue operating while the local government decides about an application for the restoration of a licence. This demonstrates common sense and good therapy for those businesses getting back on track after very stressful times.

The amendments will give local governments more time to give due consideration to applications for renewal. The bill will also improve the renewal process for businesses, reduce the likelihood of businesses not renewing their licences in a timely manner and minimise the risk of businesses closing down. Currently if a licence expires, the only option for a business to reinstate a licence is to reapply for a new licence. This can be devastating, costly and highly stressful. As a government, we need to do better. This change clearly demonstrates that we as a government are meeting business expectations.

Licence renewal can be very expensive for a business, as the fee for a new licence is more than likely to be more costly than for a licence restoration. It creates an administrative burden for both the business and the local government which is also highly costly. If a business licence has expired and a business has made application for a new licence, that business cannot operate, because it is currently an offence to operate without a licence. This has financial implications—it may be enough to shut a business down. Furthermore, it results in the loss of valuable employment in the local community. The amendments will reduce local government processing times and cost, assist business continuity and reduce the potential financial burden on businesses from lost revenue. It is the right thing to do.

Recently, I spent time at the Townsville University Hospital assisting with fundraising through the annual Giving Day and spoke with many health professionals. After talking with these sincerely committed professionals, it is great to see this bill help improve their work environment and minimise the stress for so many in the health sector and small business. The health professional community have done us proud during very tough times and continually meet community demands and expectations. These amendments clearly demonstrate a lot of common sense and highlight the importance of addressing the needs of the community and assisting those providing essential services. They also meet community expectations.

A lot has been said in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I personally support this bill. I want to thank all those who have worked in the health sector, who have done their very best to keep us safe in some of the toughest times under extreme pressure. They have my utmost respect.



Ms KING (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.25 pm): I rise to make my contribution on the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This carefully considered and very necessary legislation supports the delivery of health care, supports small businesses and moves to protect human rights. We have seen as never before the enormous value that our community places on the provision of health care. I have no doubt whatsoever that I stand here as the member for Pumicestone based on my community's value for health care and their appreciation of the enormous investments in their health care that have been made by this Palaszczuk Labor government.

I note the contribution from the member for Currumbin and acknowledge the really fantastic Gold Coast University Hospital that serves her electorate. In my own electorate, I know that my constituents are proud to see the doubling in size of Caboolture Hospital and enthusiastic beyond description to know that they are soon to receive not one but two satellite hospitals to provide more health care closer to home. I contrast that with the record of those opposite, who in their three years in government planned exactly zero new hospitals—a shameful and disgraceful omission of duty. Every Queenslander, I am sure, would join me in acknowledging our health workers. So much of this bill is about making their jobs easier and smoother.

The member for Hill and others have complained about the introduction of omnibus bills and stated that they would prefer for every change to be individually debated. I can only put this down to those members preferring not to read long explanatory notes and engage in multiple complex issues at one time. These are good, important and carefully considered and consulted amendments, and I support them.

This bill overall has undergone broad consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including representatives from the medical, nursing, pharmaceutical, mental health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health communities as well as with government agencies and statutory office representatives. Where stakeholders made suggestions during consultation to improve the bill, these were routinely taken on board and incorporated into the legislation. For example, the final bill took on consultation to align the Mental Health Act more closely with the Guardianship and Administration Act to ensure that a mentally ill person's views, wishes and preferences are taken into account, as far as practicable, when decisions are made under the Mental Health Act.

This bill is wideranging. It covers changes to support the treatment and care of forensic patients and it amends the Public Health Act to improve licence processes for businesses and licensing provisions for local government. The parts I want to address more closely are the aspects of the bill that go to donated breastmilk, to the delivery of ECT and to termination of pregnancy services.

Like other members of this House I am a regular blood donor, and I commend the Lifeblood organisation, formerly known as the Red Cross blood bank, for their dedicated care of Queenslanders. Several of my constituents and friends have had reason to access the Lifeblood milk bank in support of their sick and premature babies. We know that access to donated breastmilk for vulnerable babies can make a wonderful difference to their outcomes. Ensuring that breastmilk is not considered tissue under the Transplantation and Anatomy Act guarantees that this important work can continue.

On the matter of electroconvulsive therapy, I want to acknowledge a family who appeared in a recent public hearing before our Mental Health Select Committee, and I believe that the member for Southport made some reference to them in his contribution. That family described their challenges for their son Andy, who lives with severe autism and communication issues. As a young adult, Andy became depressed and ultimately was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Andy's family's ability to access electroconvulsive therapy for him was quite literally a lifesaver. Smooth processes for delivering ECT to people like Andy remain essential, and that is why I was concerned to hear the member for Mirani's poorly informed comments about consent surrounding ECT. This area is extremely complex and it cannot be allowed to be compromised by the member for Mirani's current vaccination hobbyhorse and to therefore potentially harm our most vulnerable Queenslanders in accessing the health care that they so desperately need.

Turning to extending access to the Viewer to include allied health professionals, I note that our government is very proud of the Viewer and it is working exceptionally well. It has already delivered substantial benefits for patient care, and those benefits are not just benefits in terms of good health outcomes; they are cost savings as well. This powerful tool goes a long way to reduce health system fragmentation, ensures continuity of care and helps Queenslanders have their wishes respected, even when they may not be able to express or recount the complexities of their situation themselves in extremis. The consensus is that there are clear healthcare benefits to extending access to the Viewer that outweigh any potential privacy impacts and there are also strong safeguards to protect vulnerable people. With the current aged-care crisis brought on this state by the neglect of the Morrison

government, outlined by the royal commission in its report titled *Neglect*, we see how very important it is in allowing appropriate allied health professionals like social workers and speech pathologists to understand a person's patient journey and know what their care information is at any point in time.

Finally and for me very importantly, I want to look at the amendments around the Termination of Pregnancy Act that enable registered students to assist in a termination of pregnancy. Along with many other members on this side of the House and even a few brave souls in the opposition, I am very proud of the Palaszczuk government's work to modernise Queensland's termination of pregnancy laws and of my own small part in that work prior to my election to this place. This government righted a historic wrong so women in this state can finally make their own decisions about their much needed health care without risking criminal sanction.


Many of the women for whom this essential health care is most important shared absolutely heartbreaking stories through the committee processes—like the women who learned at their 20-week scan that their much wanted babies had fatal health conditions or that they themselves had conditions like pre-eclampsia or severe infections that meant that their pregnancies could not continue. During those inquiries the committees heard over and over that if you live in a regional area and need an urgent termination the stigma for health workers of providing that health care that at that time was illegal was such that you might not be able to access care in the short time frame available.

Workforce shortages in reproductive health care are acute, especially in the regions, and Queensland women across our state will benefit greatly from the amendments in this bill. This parliament must do everything possible to ensure that we continue to grow our regional health workforce and especially in specialties like reproductive health care. By continuing to exclude students from observing and learning about termination of pregnancy, we would put a brake on the development of that much needed regional and rural health workforce and the most severe impacts of that would be on regional communities.

The claims by the member for Hill and others that students might be required to provide abortion care as part of their training or that these provisions constitute any kind of watering down of conscientious objection provisions are reckless, they are untrue and I absolutely condemn them. Their claims were speculative and fact free and once more we saw the KAP going full trump and seeking to promote alternative facts. It is ironic that those same members who claim to stand for freedom in health care seek to interfere in these most intimate and private matters that profoundly impact the lives of women.

Like the member for Keppel, I do have some concerns about the committee's recommendation 5 that the minister outline what measures exist to ensure students feel supported in exercising their conscientious objections. My concern is much more squarely with the woman undergoing a termination of pregnancy procedure for whatever reason and my concern will always be to see that she feels sufficiently supported, and I would be disappointed to see any dilution of that support by a diversion of resources to support conscientiously objecting students. It is women who must always stand front and centre in this process.

I thank the State Development and Regional Industries Committee for its consideration of this bill when our Health and Environment Committee was too busy with other inquiries to examine this bill. In closing, this robust, well-considered and carefully consulted legislation offers great benefits to Queenslanders and I commend it to the House.

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (12.34 pm): I rise to give a short contribution in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to refer to two amendments in this bill, and one relates to the ability for streamlined planning processes which will deliver satellite hospitals, and I refer in particular to my area of Redland City. There is a satellite hospital going into Redland Bay, and I thank the health minister and the previous health minister for their foresight and their commitment to an investment of better health services in my area of Redland City. It is particularly important that Redland Bay in that part of the world has specialised services provided out of that hospital because it is so close to the ever-growing Southern Moreton Bay Islands. Council keeps on allowing approval after approval, household after household. Because of the housing affordability issues across this whole nation, the Southern Moreton Bay Islands are an attractive place for people to move to, particularly because of the investments that we have made for public transport. Be it the buses or the ferries, people can catch two every 15 minutes. It is very accessible and therefore it is very attractive for people to move there.

We have to keep up with that infrastructure and we have invested heavily in that area, and I know that the member for Redlands is continually advocating for the installation of new ferry terminals and we have upgraded the bus interchange. Providing this satellite hospital for that growing population will

feed into that because it will service not just the Southern Moreton Bay Islands but also the greater Redland City area. This is in complete contrast to those opposite. What did we see when they were in government? They took away a hospital that serviced that area. They closed the Wynnum Hospital. They sacked nurses.

A government member interjected.


Mr BROWN: I take that interjection; they do not. A couple of months ago those opposite were banging on about health, but this is like their track record with integrity. One only has to go back a couple of years to see what cuts they made, and the member for Lytton gave a fantastic contribution when she talked about not only the aged-care cuts in her area but also the fact that they took away a whole hospital but did not deliver any extra investment in terms of making upgrades to Redland Hospital or what we are doing in terms of creating a whole new satellite hospital in Redland Bay.

The other issue I want to touch on is making it easier for radiographers not requiring photo ID. Radiographers in this state have been doing a fantastic job, particularly through the pandemic. They are a vital part of our health system. I was proud to work for the union that looked after radiographers. For many years I worked to ensure that they went from the lowest paid in Australia to the highest paid. We undertook a process under previous Labor governments given that allied health workers and health professionals were lumped in together under the operational scheme. We wanted to recognise their licences as a Labor government, so we went through a process in which we recognised their skills and knowledge which resulted in a 40 per cent increase to their pay. They went from the lowest paid in the nation to the highest paid in the nation. Members like the member for Pine Rivers and the member for Springwood worked tirelessly over many years—it initially started under the Beattie government and was completed just before the Newman government came to power—which saw recognition for those workers.

Mr Power: Des Hardman.

Mr BROWN: I take the interjection from the member for Logan about Des Hardman in his local area. There were many radiographers who saw the benefit of being recognised for the first time and their wages went up, some by 40 per cent, making them the highest paid—and I still believe they are the highest paid—radiographers in Australia.

Labor governments support our health workers; we do not sack them. We recognise the hard work that they have put in to get these qualifications and licences and the work that they do every single day in our hospitals carrying out the support and the services that we need to have a first-class health system. I wholeheartedly support this bill.

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (12.39 pm), in reply: I thank members for their contribution to the debate on the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. This bill introduces practical and workable health reforms to improve the efficiency of our health system. The amendments in the bill help to support responsive ambulance services, allied health services, local community services and mental health services. The bill also further promotes the human rights framework we have had in this state for just over two years now. We have before us, as acknowledged by stakeholders, a piece of legislation that is practical, contemporary and implements best practice. When coupled with our record health investments, it enables the Palaszczuk government to deliver responsive, world-class health services to Queenslanders.

I have been pleased to hear many members support the amendments to the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to expand access to the Viewer to a broader range of allied health professionals. Ever since it was first rolled out to GPs in 2016, the Viewer has made positive contributions to health care for Queenslanders. Without the Viewer, health professionals outside of Queensland Health must request Queensland Health information through manual, paper based channels. The wait for records to be supplied often results in delays to patient care. Expanding access as proposed by the bill will allow particular allied health professionals to tailor their care based on the treatment the patient has already received, contributing to better health outcomes for patients.

There has been some discussion about changing the system from opt-out to opt-in and allowing patients greater control of their information. The new cohort of professionals who are intended to access the Viewer can already request public healthcare information through manual processes. The amendments will allow them to get access to the information on the spot. This will benefit both the allied health professional and patient.

The Viewer has relied on an opt-out approach since it was first expanded to practitioners external to Queensland Health in 2016. The Viewer's opt-out system is well established and understood. This is not a new IT system. Queensland Health has experience in making the Viewer accessible to approved

health professionals. Existing privacy safeguards will apply to the new cohort of allied health professionals. These safeguards include a pre-access registration process, terms and conditions of access and an auditing system.

A health professional must also provide unique identifying details for the patient they are treating before being able to access that patient's records. This means they must know the patient in a healthcare context. The professional must enter either a unique Queensland Health number that identifies both the patient and the relevant hospital, or a combination of information such as name, sex, date of birth and Medicare or DVA number.

The allied health professionals who will be given access to the Viewer are university trained and highly skilled who are subject to stringent professional practice, privacy and ethical standards. The existing criminal offence for unauthorised access to the Viewer will also continue. This offence attracts a maximum fine of 600 penalty units, which is currently \$82,710. There are a range of other possible consequences, such as losing access to the Viewer, investigation by the Health Ombudsman and disciplinary action.

In terms of consumer choice, Queensland Health has confirmed that it will deliver a consumer engagement strategy to inform patients about the Viewer. Queensland Health will seek advice from Health Consumers Queensland about the best methods to disseminate information about the Viewer to make sure the public know their rights about their public healthcare information. Queensland Health will also undertake a review of the functionality of the Viewer to consider whether changes could be made to enhance patient choice and control over their information.

Some members opposite raised concerns about the costs associated with making changes to the Viewer. The government response makes clear that Queensland Health will consider the costs and technical feasibility of making changes to enhance the functionality of the Viewer. This will involve a consultation process, including input from clinicians and health consumers, to ensure that any unintended consequences of making such changes are carefully considered.

The member for Burleigh raised concerns about prescribing the expanded list of allied health professionals who may access the Viewer by regulation. Health practitioners with existing access to the Viewer are prescribed by the Hospital and Health Boards Regulation 2012, so this is not a new concept. It is not a way of circumventing parliamentary scrutiny. I have outlined in both my introductory speech and second reading speech the categories of health professionals intended to be prescribed by regulation if the bill is passed. This has also been made clear by my department during the committee's inquiry and in the explanatory notes to the bill. The explanatory notes to the bill explain that qualification requirements for relevant allied health professionals need to be prescribed to ensure access is only granted to qualified health professionals. It is more appropriate that these matters of detail are contained in subordinate legislation, rather than the act.

Moving to the amendments to the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018, some members have raised concerns about students being forced to assist with terminations of pregnancy. These amendments align with the Palaszczuk government's position that termination of pregnancy should be treated as a health issue. I reiterate, one final time, that the bill does not require students to observe nor assist with terminations of pregnancy to complete their qualifications. I remind members that only doctors can carry out termination procedures. The bill does not change this. Another doctor, nurse, midwife, pharmacist or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner may also assist in a termination within their scope of practice. The bill does not change this.

The bill ensures it is lawful for students to observe the procedure. This is to enable students to learn about terminations of pregnancy before they become fully qualified professionals. It also clarifies that clinical students may care for termination of pregnancy patients. Students will only assist if they are on a placement where a termination procedure arises and if they have not raised a conscientious objection. The right for students to conscientiously object has been made clear in the bill, explanatory notes, human rights statement and by my department during the parliamentary committee process. If the bill is passed, the processes and support available for conscientious objection will also be made clear in updates to Queensland Health resources on this issue.

I would also like to address comments made by the member for Mirani regarding the safeguards in place around the use of electroconvulsive therapy—ECT. One in five Australians suffer from mental illness in this country and unfortunately there is still a stigma regarding mental illness in society. The comments made by the member for Mirani were quite outdated or from an unreliable source and bordering on scaremongering. I wish to thank the member for Greenslopes for sharing his firsthand

experience in caring for patients who have undergone ECT. As the member for Greenslopes has explained, ECT can be a highly effective treatment for some types of mental illness, such as severe depressive illness. Its use is supported by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. The use of ECT is regulated by the Mental Health Act and the act provides oversight for the use of ECT for minors and people who do not have capacity to consent. However, the majority of patients who receive ECT do so voluntarily.

The new test for the tribunal appropriately balances respect for the dignity and the right to self-determination of people with mental illness, while ensuring appropriate medical treatment is not withheld from people who lack capacity to consent. The safeguards contained within the bill will ensure that an adult's capacity to consent to ECT is carefully considered by the Mental Health Review Tribunal. The bill provides additional protections for people on treatment authorities, forensic orders or treatment support orders who are consenting to ECT by requiring the tribunal to be satisfied that the person has provided informed consent prior to the person accessing the treatment voluntarily. Where a person does have capacity to make decisions regarding treatment with ECT, their wishes, whether that be to have the treatment or not, will be respected.

The member for Mirani also raised concerns about the use of ECT for children. Under the Mental Health Act, the Mental Health Review Tribunal is the only body that can approve the use of ECT on a minor in each case. This recognises the particular vulnerability of minors in providing informed consent. The bill does not change the test applied by the tribunal. Consistent with international law, the tribunal will continue to apply the best interests test for applications to perform ECT on a minor. The tribunal must be satisfied that ECT is in the minor's best interests, has clinical merit and is appropriate in the circumstances.

In response to the member for Warrego's queries about possible cost shifting onto local governments, I draw the member's attention to the earlier remarks of the Deputy Premier. Environmental nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act is already primarily the responsibility of local governments, either under the default noise standards under that act or under their own local laws. Local governments are also already responsible for investigating and enforcing offences about infrastructure designations. The proposed amendments will not change this, they merely ensure that a designation can include more tailored and fit-for-purpose requirements than the default standards or local laws.

The member for Burleigh queried the timing of the amendments that I will move in consideration in detail to allow for the transfer of involuntary mental health patients between Norfolk Island and Queensland. The Queensland government entered into the Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement on State Service Delivery to Norfolk Island on 22 October 2021. Until 1 January 2022, New South Wales was responsible for health service support on Norfolk Island. Following the signing of the agreement, Queensland Health has undertaken a process to determine which health services will be provided to Norfolk Island and identify any legislative barriers to providing these services.

There is one health service on Norfolk Island. At times, patients who require acute or complex care will need to be transferred to the mainland to obtain specialist inpatient psychiatric care that they cannot access on Norfolk Island. I can advise that we have already had one such incident over Christmas. This amendment is urgently required to ensure that there is no legislative barrier to treatment for involuntary Norfolk Island patients. I make no apologies for prioritising this important amendment that will ensure people in need of specialist inpatient psychiatric care can be transferred and obtain the care they need to get well.

There has also been some discussion about making other changes to Queensland's Mental Health Act as raised by stakeholders during the parliamentary committee inquiry. I note that the Mental Health Select Committee will be provided with suggestions to consider from stakeholders for mental health reform outside the scope of this bill. Queensland Health regularly reviews its legislation to consider how it might be improved and ensures close engagement with stakeholders to do so. As the Assistant Minister for Health and Regional Health Infrastructure and I have already explained, the Queensland government is committed to supporting mental health service delivery and we look forward to receiving the recommendations of the Mental Health Select Committee by 31 May 2022. I assure the House that the government will continue to work on these issues and progress legislative changes at the appropriate time and in a considered way.

I want to address the imputations made by some members opposite that the use of omnibus bills was somehow stifling examination and debate on issues presented in the bill. The use of omnibus bills is not new and is a common convention of the Westminster system. In fact, during the LNP Newman

government many omnibus bills were introduced and passed. I believe during his remarks the member for Greenslopes recounted that some 70 omnibus bills were introduced. This bill has gone through the normal parliamentary process and scrutiny as has any other bill that has come before the House. To suggest nothing less is offensive.

I would again like to thank the members of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee and the staff of the committee for their consideration and report on the bill. I thank those who took the time to provide feedback and make submissions on the bill as well as, of course, officers from Queensland Health, the Department of Environment and Science and the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning who have been involved in developing the bill and supporting the committee process. This is a bill that aligns with the strength and contemporary nature of our public health system in Queensland. It is another example of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to the health needs of all Queenslanders even as we have continued to respond to the COVID-19 emergency. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 9, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clauses—



Mrs D'ATH (12.53 pm): I seek leave to move an amendment outside the long title of the bill.

Leave granted.

Mrs D'ATH: I move the following amendment—

1 After clause 9

Page 14, after line 19—

insert—

Division 3A Amendment of Mental Health Act 2016

9A Act amended

This division amends the *Mental Health Act 2016*.

Note—

See also the amendments in part 3, division 3 and schedule 1, part 2.

9B Insertion of new s 14A

After section 14—

insert—

14A Territory of Norfolk Island taken to be a State

For this Act, the Territory of Norfolk Island is taken to be a State.

I table the explanatory notes to my amendments and a statement of capability with human rights.

Tabled paper: Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, explanatory notes to Hon. Yvette D'Ath's amendments [\[206\]](#).

Tabled paper: Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Yvette D'Ath's amendments [\[207\]](#).

I will speak briefly to this amendment. It inserts new division 3A into part 2 of the bill to amend the Mental Health Act 2016. Amendment No. 1 inserts new section 14A into the Mental Health Act to provide that the territory of Norfolk Island is taken to be a state for the purposes of the act.

The Mental Health Act and the Mental Health Regulation 2017 currently allow for the transfer of involuntary mental health patients within Australia by recognising the mental health legislation of other states and internal territories. As Norfolk Island is an external territory and, therefore, there is a barrier to recognising the Norfolk Island Mental Health Act 2016 as a corresponding law for the purposes of the transfer of patients from Norfolk Island to Queensland when there is a clinical need, this amendment will allow the Norfolk Island Mental Health Act to be prescribed in the Mental Health Regulation as a corresponding law in the same way that the Queensland Mental Health Act prescribes other interstate mental health legislation as corresponding laws. I will not speak to the other amendments because they will all be consequential and go to the explanation I have just given in relation to amendment No. 1.

Amendment agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mrs D'ATH (12.54 pm): I seek leave to move an amendment outside the long title of the bill.

Leave granted.

Mrs D'ATH: I move the following amendment—

2

After clause 9

Page 14, after line 19—

insert—

Division 3B Amendment of Mental Health Regulation 2017

9C Regulation amended

This division amends the *Mental Health Regulation 2017*.

9D Amendment of sch 1, s 1 (Corresponding laws for provisions of Act relating to transfer of patients or transport of persons)

Schedule 1, section 1(1)—

insert—

- *Mental Health Act 1996* (Norfolk Island)

9E Amendment of sch 1, s 2 (Corresponding laws for Act, s 368(1)(b) and (2))

Schedule 1, section 2—

insert—

- *Mental Health Act 1996* (Norfolk Island)

9F Amendment of sch 1, s 3 (Corresponding laws for Act, s 513, definition *interstate forensic order*)

Schedule 1, section 3—

insert—

- *Mental Health Act 1996* (Norfolk Island)

9G Amendment of sch 1, s 4 (Corresponding laws for Act, ss 513 and 521, definition *interstate transfer requirements*)

Schedule 1, section 4—

insert—

- *Mental Health Act 1996* (Norfolk Island)

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 10 to 50, as read, agreed to.

Clause 51—



Mrs D'ATH (12.55 pm): I seek leave to move an amendment outside the long title of the bill.

Leave granted.

Mrs D'ATH: I move the following amendment—

3

Clause 51 (Act amended)

Page 34, line 15, after 'amendments in'—

insert—

part 2, division 3A and

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 51, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 52 to 117, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (12.56 pm): I move—


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

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (12.56 pm): I move the following amendment—

4 Long title

Long title, after 'the *Mental Health Act 2016*,'—
insert—

the *Mental Health Regulation 2017*,

Amendment agreed to.


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

Motion agreed to.

SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

Resumed from 12 October 2021 (see p. 2906).

Second Reading

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (12.57 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to speak to the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, which I introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 12 October 2021. The bill seeks to establish a permanent office of the Small Business Commissioner to both enhance the operating environment for small businesses in Queensland and reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses. I thank the Education, Employment and Training Committee for its thorough consideration of the bill. The committee tabled its report on 26 November 2021 and made one recommendation, that the bill be passed. The committee received 13 public submissions as part of its inquiry. I am pleased to note that all 13 submissions supported the establishment of a permanent commissioner.

Following further review of the bill as part of considering suggestions contained in one of the stakeholder submissions to the committee, an error was identified with clause 21(2) of the bill. The amendment is minor and technical in nature and corrects the process for how small business franchise disputes are transferred from the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman to the commissioner for mediation. I will move that amendment during consideration in detail of the bill.

I will also move an amendment to clause 2 of the bill during consideration in detail. That amendment will provide that the act is to commence on 3 May 2022. The amendment is necessary to ensure there is sufficient time for the bill to receive assent before its commencement date and also to enable the preparation and approval of the supporting regulation that will form part of the legislative framework.


As the House would be aware, a temporary Queensland Small Business Commissioner was established under the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020 as part of the government's response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Importantly, thanks to the Palaszczuk government's \$14.5 billion COVID-19 economic recovery plan and strong health response, Queensland's economy is recovering strongly, with recent data showing that it is growing 6½ times faster than the rest of Australia. This significant investment in economic recovery includes a range of support measures for small business: the \$600 million, jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland governments; \$196 million in small business COVID-19 adaptation grants; \$1 billion in interest-free or low-interest job support loans; and \$1.3 billion in payroll tax relief and land tax relief including refunds, payment holidays and deferrals for eligible businesses.

Debate, on motion of Ms Farmer, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Integrity in Government

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (2.00 pm): We now have seen five to six weeks of integrity crisis engulfing the Palaszczuk Labor government. We have seen today in question time the dodgy deals with Anacta, Evan Moorhead and, already, the transport minister. If there is anyone who should not be

interjecting about dodgy deals and integrity, it ought to be the Minister for Main Roads. Then I hear the Minister for Education interjecting as well. On Channel 9 last night when asked to announce a \$1 billion policy she said, 'Help, Sharon. Sharon? Where are you Sharon?' The minister was trying to get her chief of staff to front the cameras to explain the billion-dollar policy. That is the level of incompetence—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Sorry to interrupt, member for Kawana. I will get you to resume your seat. Member for McConnel, I will ask you to stop interjecting. I was trying to get your attention. You probably could not hear me over the speech. Next time it will be a warning.

Mr BLEIJIE: Over the past six weeks we have seen a huge integrity crisis engulfing the government. Then I see Treasurer Dick get up today and discover that he is out to Dubai. When the note went out, 'Who wants to go to Dubai?' I heard it was a race between the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer. If you were the Deputy Premier or Treasurer under the Palaszczuk government at the moment, you would want to flee the country as well, flee the state and get out of the integrity issues engulfing the Palaszczuk government. I hear that the Treasurer won that 'deal'.

On the matters of integrity, with respect to the Deputy Premier, this is the minister who dodged up a poll asking Queenslanders what they thought about the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital name. They got rid of it based on a dodgy poll. If he is dodgy in that, he will be dodgy in a lot of other things. Talking of dodgy, Jackie Trad, the mentor of the current Deputy Premier, made the papers again. The Deputy Premier still rings her every day to ask, 'Jackie, what should I be doing?'

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. The Attorney-General as well. We have seen a quite bizarre and, I think, unforgiving situation where former deputy premier Jackie Trad—who still controls the Labor movement opposite, the left-wingers in the Labor Party; and the ministers control the Palaszczuk cabinet—was trying to hide a document that should be released to the public. Not only that, the Premier will not disclose how much it is costing Queensland taxpayers. She said, 'Oh, they would go online.' I can assure the people of Queensland that, when a minister wants indemnity and legal assistance, they do not go to Google; they go to the Attorney-General and the Premier to approve it. That is what has happened here: Jackie Trad is getting that.

If the CCC have prepared a report into Jackie Trad and the Frankie Carroll appointment, they should write to the PCCC and ask for their report to be tabled. Under their legislation, the CCC can write to the PCCC. I hope the CCC will do that. Only then will it shine a light on this dodgy, dark government we have in Queensland.

Gender Identity and Sexuality, Discrimination



Hon. G GRACE (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (2.04 pm): It is clear they have nothing—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! I have not called you just yet. I do call the member for McConnel.

Ms GRACE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is clear that those opposite have nothing new. The same old issues are coming out all of the time. Every student of every background is welcome in our schools. We are committed to providing safe, inclusive and supportive environments. That is exactly the kind of message we want LGBTIQ+ students to hear. That is why it was so distressing to hear about contracts sent out by Citipointe Christian College recently. It is completely unacceptable, and these views have no place in modern Australia.

As soon as I became aware, thanks to the member for Mansfield, I referred the matter directly to the non-state school accreditation board. It is still looking into this. I welcome the school's decision to withdraw the contract. Principal Mulherin has stood aside to reflect. They cannot undo the distress that has caused our LGBTIQ+ community and the Citipointe Christian College community.

In terms of the article tabled this morning in the House by the Attorney-General, I question the motive behind this contract. The timing is very suspicious, because the school clearly said in response to the statement of principal Mulherin—

It is central to our faith that being gay or transgender in no way diminishes a person's humanity or dignity in God's eyes ... we will not discriminate against any student because of their sexuality or gender identity.

You have to ask the question: if that is their practice, why did the school do this with these contracts at five o'clock, at the 11th hour, before students were due to start school online the next morning? It is clear that that article tabled this morning gives us the results, because it clearly became

nothing more than a political stunt. We hear, lo and behold—and it has been brought to my attention—that there are clear links between this college and the LNP. The chair of the Citipointe board has been filling the LNP coffers for years—over \$100,000 in the past three years alone. It is interesting that they come in here today insinuating that donations linked to favours are being given. I wonder whether any of those donations were linked to the Prime Minister's inability to deliver to protect students and their gender identity? It is interesting. Were they doing the bidding of this college? If they thought that this stunt was going to deliver the religious discrimination bill, it clearly backfired somewhat.

The pastor who ran against the member for Mansfield, Janet Wishart, is now working in the Leader of the Opposition's office. I believe her fence was strewn with all of her corflutes at the time. We also have the member for Maroochydore who attends a Citipointe affiliated church. They went after the member for Chatsworth. Obviously the executive had to intervene. This smells of using these students for their own political gain. I say in this House that that is unacceptable and clearly disgraceful behaviour.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Coronavirus, Vaccination Mandate



Mr KRAUSE (Scenic Rim—LNP) (2.07 pm): For some time members on this side of the House have called for three things when it comes to COVID-19 health directives: compassion, consistency and common sense. Boy, we need a big dose of common sense right now when it comes to issues relating to these directives, and we need some consistency as well. I table correspondence from the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies which outlines some of the great concerns that it has about COVID-19 health directives in place at the moment.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 24 February 2022, from Mr Trevor Beckingham to various electorate offices, regarding the plight of showgrounds under the current Queensland Health Directive [208].

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 24 February 2022, from the Secretary, Doonah Show Society, Ms Beth Hern OAM, to the member for Scenic Rim, Mr Jon Krause MP, regarding the Boonah Show [209].

The difficulties facing local shows and showgrounds are that these directives will be in place after 5 March when mask restrictions change. This is supported by a letter from the Boonah Show Society, one of the show societies in my electorate, and I have had similar representations from the Beaudesert Show Society as well that outline the difficulties they face under the present rules. In terms of an email sent to many members in this House this morning—and so far there has not been any response from members apart from, I understand, some on the LNP side—I feel it is important to put these concerns on the record. For example, people are prohibited from entering showgrounds as volunteers for a show society if they are unvaccinated but may enter the grounds to participate in another activity such as netball or a gym. That just does not make sense. How can one be prohibited on the one hand from entering altogether as a volunteer but be able to attend to participate in sport?

In addition, local emergency service personnel may not enter the grounds under these rules unless they are vaccinated, even though the service that they work for or volunteer in does not have a vaccine mandate in place. Again, this just does not make sense and creates confusion and inconsistency. People lose faith in the directives and the health advice when these ridiculous situations arise. I call on the government to fix these issues for the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies and show societies across all of Queensland that will be facing these difficulties both in government electorates and non-government electorates. Show some common sense and support our local shows, some of which have not had shows since 2019 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those that have had them have had very difficult conditions placed on their operation.

They do not have unlimited resources. These are all volunteers in the main. They do not have the resources to police these complicated rules set down by the government. They need to be made clearer. Some common sense needs to be enacted when it comes to these rules. The government has some time to act because, in the main, show season has not arrived yet, but they need to be given fair notice of the rules. Eight weeks is what I am told is needed. There is a small window of opportunity for the government to fix this inconsistency and support our local shows.

Surf Lakes; Comments by Member for Keppel, Withdrawal and Apology



Ms LAUGA (Keppel—ALP) (2.10 pm): Set in a picturesque valley between Nurim at Mount Archer, Baga National Park and Gawula—almost exactly between Yeppoon and Rockhampton—is Surf Lakes, the most amazing concentric wave pool people will have ever seen. Surf Lakes is truly mind-blowing.

Last week I had the absolute privilege of charging the beach wave and Occy's peak on my bodyboard at Surf Lakes. My heart was racing so hard, but I really wanted to push the limits. The first wave pumped out and it was time to go. Here it comes. Oh my gosh. I am thinking, paddle, paddle, paddle; kick, kick, kick. I look over my shoulder and this massive wave was coming towards me. I thought, 'Oh my God, I am going to die.' Occy's peak, which has a massive 2.4-metre face, was coming towards me. There was so much power and energy. The wave punted me into the air. It felt like just as high as Mount Archer next door. I thought I was going to die. Then phew, down the pocket I went and rode the ramp down all the way into shore. It was so cool.


The sun was shining, my heart was racing and, oh my God, I want to do it all over again. Sure I was ragdolled a few times, but I was stoked. After three hours in the water catching waves, the sun started to set and a cold beer at the Capricorn Enterprise networking night was just perfect. It was amazing to meet 1999 world surfing champion Mark Occhilupo and see 2005, 2007 and 2013 world bodyboarding champion Ben Player at Surf Lakes. Both these guys are absolute legends. Everyone was so keen to see them get barrelled on the waves.

Founder and CEO Aaron Trevis formed the idea for a concentric wave pool after tossing rocks into a lake with his children over a decade ago. It was back in 2017 that Aaron first met with me to discuss his project, and before long the lake and giant plunger were designed and constructed in my electorate.

Surf Lakes is unique because it sends large concentric waves over separate reef breaks in a controlled lake environment, with up to 2,000 rides per hour. Each wave varies in size, shape and length, allowing surfers of all abilities to surf at once. Like many in my electorate of Keppel, I am so incredibly pumped to see Surf Lakes transform from a pilot site into potentially the first operational surf lake in the world, with council recently approving the development. Congratulations to Aaron and the Surf Lakes team, many of whom I enjoyed meeting in the line-up last week. It is going to be seriously off the hook. Everyone in Keppel is absolutely frothing to see this amazing place open to the public.

While I am on my feet, I want to address a contribution I made on 30 November 2021 during MPIs. I made statements that the current federal coalition government was planning to force every age pensioner in Australia onto the cashless debit card. I wish to withdraw this statement and apologise if, in making the statement, I unintentionally mislead the House. I say that I continue to oppose the cashless debit card system proposed by the federal LNP government and any expansion thereof.

Queensland Building and Construction Commission, Review

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (2.13 pm): Stakeholders in the building industry, both consumers and builders, are frustrated with the so-called review into the QBCC that was commissioned by Minister de Brenni. They are frustrated by the limited terms of reference which do not address things like allegations of ministerial and board intervention. They are frustrated by the vehicle being used—basically a chat room where everybody can see everybody's comments. They are also frustrated by the lack of protection for whistleblowers who might want to speak about some of the systemic issues they have witnessed in the QBCC. There were practical issues with the chat room. The chat room was not available until, I think, five days after it was advertised to start. It ended badly as well. It was supposed to finish at midnight on 18 February but everybody was shut out at 10 am. People were wondering what the heck was happening. Once again it was not working.


While all of this is happening, the service delivery of the QBCC is leaving a lot to be desired. I recently received a letter from a constituent of the Gold Coast who had dealings with the QBCC. This consumer had an issue with his house. He was following up his case as he had not heard back. He received a letter from the QBCC saying, 'You were originally told that it would take around 18 weeks for the QBCC to come and have a look at the issue.' This letter acknowledges that he would be frustrated by the lack of communication and timeliness and apologises for the fact that it is not going to be 18 weeks; it is going to be 30 weeks to check his building on the Gold Coast. This could be dangerous. This officer from the QBCC seems to be very sympathetic and I think very embarrassed by the situation and says, 'We understand that it is causing you concern that there might be structural damage.'

It only takes 16 weeks to build a house if there are no weather delays. We have the situation where it is taking up to 30 weeks to do checks. It is my understanding that there are only four building inspectors in the Gold Coast region and three of them are on leave. They now have one building

inspector. The rumours are that two of those people are on leave because they are suspected of whistleblowing and have been stood down. This is absolutely disgraceful. The minister needs to respond in relation to these unnecessary delays.

(Time expired)

Agriculture Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (2.16 pm): A new parliamentary year gives me the opportunity to update the House on how the Palaszczuk government continues to work with primary producers to deliver Queensland's economic recovery after the Omicron wave. Right from the start of the pandemic, our agriculture coordination group made sure critical issues were presented directly to government and then responded to in a timely fashion. Freight issues, workforce issues and logistical issues were all met head-on by this government and industry together.

What support have Queensland farmers had from Canberra? They are still at the bus stop waiting for the federal LNP government to arrive. Take, for example, the new agriculture visa. This visa has had more announcements than a Johnny Farnham concert. How many times have we heard the Nationals talk this up? In 2018 it was announced with much fanfare and again year after year after year. Then Minister Littleproud proudly told us that the scheme would be up and running before Christmas 2021—not Christmas this year, but last year. Still no country has signed up to this program.


Who is to blame? It is not David Littleproud. He told us that the only thing standing in the way of thousands of these workers coming to work on Australian farms was his cabinet colleague, foreign minister Marise Payne. Minister Littleproud must have been a bus driver in a previous life because he is adept at throwing people under the bus. This week it is the foreign minister and previously it has been the AWU. He never fails to blame the states for a job he is responsible for.

When we had quarantine arrangements based on health advice, Minister Littleproud claimed there were 20,000 Pacific island workers just waiting to be waved through to work on farms. The quarantine restrictions are gone, so where are they? When it comes to backing our farmers, David Littleproud and his LNP colleagues are still at the depot, struggling to get the bus going. In contrast, Queensland has led the nation in bringing in Pacific island workers. More than 5,200 workers have quarantined on farm and in regional industry-led quarantine facilities. While we wait with bated breath for the Commonwealth's Pinkenba quarantine facility, the Wellcamp Regional Accommodation Centre is up and running ready for whatever the future holds in this pandemic.

Our work in tandem with the agriculture industry speaks for itself. The latest AgTrends data shows the gross value of production this financial year is expected to be \$20.6 billion—an increase of nearly \$2 billion since the start of the pandemic. When it comes to Queensland agriculture our farmers are all aboard with the Palaszczuk Labor government. We will continue supporting them as we have done from the outset, whether it be through times of extreme weather conditions or drought conditions or support growing their farms and supporting jobs on their land. The Palaszczuk Labor government is there working with them hand in hand.

(Time expired)

North Queensland, Youth Crime

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.19 pm): 'They drove at people playing soccer including children.' Those are the words of a witness to a chaotic scene in Townsville yesterday afternoon. It is the latest instalment in this rampage across the north by these juvenile offenders which is continuing unabated. It is a miracle that no-one was killed or injured yesterday by stolen vehicles on a soccer field being driven around by young thugs, putting innocent people's lives at risk—children, mums and dads who took their sons and daughters to soccer. Their lives were put in danger by these young offenders.

Members may well ask: what is being done about that? Unfortunately, nothing is being done about that. That is why I am standing up in this place today. Am I angry? I am reflecting the anger in that community. They have said enough is enough. They want some action. If ever we needed evidence that this government has taken its eye off the ball, that it has disregarded the north of the state, then we need look no further than the announcements this week of three new helicopters in the south-east and then today a task force to deal with juvenile crime in the south-east of the state. Wouldn't we love that in the north! That sends a clear message to North Queenslanders: they have been abandoned by this government in their time of need.

I have sat in this place this week and I have waited for the members for Cairns, Thuringowa, Townsville and Mundingburra to stand up and talk about this issue and go into bat for their communities. Where are they? They talk a big game in their communities, but they are mute when they come down here to Brisbane, and that is a disgrace because those communities need a voice.

Mr HARPER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. As usual, I take personal offence and I ask the member to withdraw.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): The member has taken personal offence. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr LAST: I withdraw. According to Phil, who recently contacted me about his experiences at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, he said, 'I am one of the people you mentioned who can't work again after going through the horror of that place. I honestly think management are hiding statistics of staff injuries.' Sarah contacted me on behalf of a family member who works there. She said, 'Lives are literally being ruined and nothing is happening which is as frustrating as it is heartbreaking.'

That community has a right to be upset. They have a right to be absolutely livid because just last week the youth justice minister visited the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre after yet another staff attack. Those staff do not go to work every day to be assaulted. They are not punching bags. They go there to do a difficult job and they deserve to be treated better. They deserve to be supported. They deserve to have the resources and the training that they need. The fact that the minister could only find one miserable, lousy hour at that centre says it all about the attitude of this government. They have abandoned North Queensland and they should hang their heads in shame.

(Time expired)

Brisbane Valley Rail Trail

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (2.22 pm): I recently joined Tanya Smith, President of the Friends of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, to inspect the construction site for the new \$595,000 trail head for the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail. The trail head is being constructed in Grace Street at Wulkuraka in Ipswich by Landscape Solutions. When completed, it will include off-road parking for 36 vehicles, a bus layover for safe loading and unloading of bikes and equipment, toilets, landscaped areas and shade shelters with picnic tables and bench seats.

Project manager Phillip Segade gave us a tour of the construction site, which has great historical significance. The site of the trail head is not only located on the easement for the Brisbane Valley railway line but also nearby is the easement for the first railway line built in Queensland—the Ipswich to Grandchester line.

The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail is a 160-kilometre long trail and follows the easement for the Brisbane Valley railway line, which ran from Wulkuraka in Ipswich to Yarraman in the Toowoomba region. The state government has provided funding to the Ipswich City Council and the Somerset Regional Council for many years to improve the rail trail.

The Ipswich section of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail between Wulkuraka and Blacksoil forms a spine from which the Ipswich City Council and state government funded Brassall Bikeway Network radiates. The 14-kilometre Brassall Bikeway Network is centred on Brassall but also runs through the suburbs of Karrabin, Wulkuraka, North Ipswich, Muirlea, Pine Mountain and Blacksoil.

The rail trail has become a recreational hotspot for walkers, bike riders and horseriders. It has proven to be a boost for the local economy along its route and is a world-class tourist attraction. It passes through scenic and historic towns that include Fernvale, Lowood, Coominya, Esk, Toogoolawah, Moore, Linville, Benarkin, Blackbutt and Yarraman. The Wulkuraka trail head will be a fantastic spot for locals and visitors to start or finish their journey on the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail. The trail head was a priority with the five-year Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Strategic Plan, which aims to boost tourism for towns along its route. The trail head will also allow trail users to discover our great City of Ipswich, which is conveniently close to the Brisbane CBD and has something for everyone.

The \$595,000 Wulkuraka trail head is funded and designed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads, with construction due to be completed by mid-2022. It may be of interest to members to know that 'Wulkuraka' is the Aboriginal word for both red-flowering gum trees and plenty of kookaburras. In closing, I would like to thank the Minister for Transport and Main Roads for giving his full support to this project.

Department of Education



Dr ROWAN (Moggill—LNP) (2.25 pm): Students, teachers and parents have returned to an education system in 2022 which is plagued by a plethora of integrity, accountability and transparency issues. One of the most outrageous integrity scandals which continues to linger over the state Labor government is the recruitment and selection process of a new school principal at the inner-city Brisbane City South State Secondary College.

This saga at the time revealed a shocking attitude by elected members of the Palaszczuk state Labor government towards due process and ethical standards—all of which can be attributed to the disdain that the state Labor government has for integrity, transparency and accountability. To this day, the Labor Minister for Education refuses to identify who the mystery MP was for which a favour was done at the time. Instead she prefers to avoid the very notion of being accountable to Queenslanders.

This is nothing to say of the fact that Queenslanders still do not know the final outcome of the May 2020 suspension of a deputy director-general of the Department of Education pending an investigation and final report being publicly released by the Public Service Commission. This is the same Public Service Commission which the Queensland Integrity Commissioner has raised a number of serious concerns about and which is an entity currently under investigation by the Crime and Corruption Commission, although the Crime and Corruption Commission itself is now currently under investigation and review.

Queenslanders deserve answers and Queenslanders deserve openness and transparency. At the end of last year I detailed serious allegations pertaining to the Department of Education's Integrity and Employee Relations Unit—allegations which were formally raised with me by two public servant whistleblowers connected to the Department of Education. Such allegations included workplace bullying, maladministration, nepotism and cover-ups within the Department of Education, with serious complaints about staff conduct that were effectively dismissed without due process and investigation.

As I told the Queensland parliament in November of last year, these whistleblowers have also documented examples and evidence of departmental procedures not being adhered to, as well as further evidence of computer hacking and material breaches of code of conduct and relevant standards by senior executives within the Department of Education.

Also, perhaps another glaring example of failing to be accountable and transparent with Queenslanders is this Labor government's abandoning of regular updating of the asbestos incident sample testing register. Rather than providing clear monthly updates, Labor secretly decided that parents must delve through 580,000 lines of data in a spreadsheet just to find out if there has been any asbestos testing at their school.

Just yesterday the Minister for Education made a \$1 billion early childhood announcement. As the member for Kawana clearly articulated, the Minister for Education could not even outline the detail and had to turn to her chief of staff or the director-general or others just to answer some simple questions as to how the money is going to be allocated and how it is going to be accessed. Given the extent and plethora of integrity and accountability issues that we are seeing here in Queensland, nothing short of a royal commission needs to be gazetted and commenced by this state Labor government.

Bombing of Darwin Day, 80th Anniversary



Mr MELLISH (Aspley—ALP) (2.28 pm): Last Saturday it was my honour to attend the 80th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin Day commemorative services as Assistant Minister to the Premier for Veterans' Affairs. The bombing of Darwin was the largest single attack ever mounted by a foreign power on Australia. On 19 February 1942, Imperial Japanese fighters and bombers attacked the port and ships in the harbour twice, during the day dropping 188 bombs over Darwin—more than that those used in the attack on Pearl Harbour just 10 weeks earlier. On the Bombing of Darwin Day we reflected on our past, paid tribute to the service men and women who courageously defended our country and remembered all those who were affected by the war fought over Northern Australia.


On this day alone over 250 Allied service personnel and Darwin locals were killed and countless more were injured. Prior to the Bombing of Darwin Day service it was also a pleasure to attend the commemorative service for the 80th anniversary of the sinking of the USS *Peary*. The USS *Peary* was sunk during the first Japanese air raid on Darwin Harbour and now lies in approximately 27 metres of water. The USS *Peary* was based in Manila at the beginning of the war and was amongst the last of the fleet to escape the Japanese blockade of the city. Arriving in Darwin in January, the USS *Peary* began antisubmarine patrols and escort work. On 19 February it was hit by five bombs, and over half the ship's crew lost their lives as a result.

One of those present at the ceremonies in Darwin was 101-year-old Brian Winspear, who was a brave defender of Darwin. He was on the ground when the Japanese air raids began. Brian was still very spritely and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting him. I have never been at a wreath laying service before where the crowd—and it was a very sizeable crowd—broke into a spontaneous standing ovation and several rounds of applause to pay tribute and their respects to Brian while he laid his wreath. It was an amazing sight to behold and one I will always remember.

Anzac Day and Remembrance Day are obviously our most sacred days and of course should remain so, but in my view the anniversary of the bombing of Darwin does deserve a more preeminent position than it does in the consciousness of modern Australians. It was the first attack on modern Australia and it signalled the next stage of our battle to retain our very country itself.

While in Darwin for the Veterans' Wellbeing Taskforce meeting it was great to hear the Queensland government's initiatives and discuss them with veterans' ministers from every other state jurisdiction as well as the federal minister last Friday. There is some great work happening in the veteran space in Queensland and through some fantastic organisations in particular. It was great to discuss how we can coordinate better with other states and the federal government in this regard. It was a productive meeting, and I thank the Northern Territory Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Paul Kirby, for inviting the task force to Darwin to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin. We have some fantastic initiatives in the veteran space: grant programs for infrastructure for memorial services; initiatives in the homelessness space; and good employment initiatives, including free TAFE and transitioning into the Public Service. I would encourage everyone to engage with their local veterans in their local community.

Agricultural Show Societies, Health Directives


 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.31 pm): I rise to advise the House of the inconsistencies, anomalies confusion and impost on volunteers, the additional costs on our not-for-profit show societies and the impact this is having on regional economic community recovery. In December last year for the first time showgrounds were included in the health directive. Showgrounds were never included in health directives prior to this date. In the absence of publicly available health advice, the only reason for including shows in this manner is for political purposes. Of the 50 electorates that have shows, only six of these seats are held by government members. This directive has been a direct impost on the non-government members' communities.

Shows have a direct annual economic contribution of \$141 million to local regional communities. The current onerous burden is costing these communities their path to COVID economic recovery. Of the 20 shows in the first quarter of the season, three have been cancelled and eight have been postponed—all because of how unworkable the health directive is for these volunteer show societies.

All the shows are asking for is to be treated equally like other events, which are able to continue in the same communities on the same facilities at showgrounds, yet shows are singled out in the directive. It is absurd that for one to two days during the show the directive places restrictions on who can enter; however, for other community events on the other 363 days this does not apply. Shows just want to be treated like other community recreation centres and outdoor events. The Dalby pony club has their state titles on the sport and rec land beside the showgrounds with no restriction, but the same people who compete in horse events cannot compete at the forthcoming Dalby show. Showgrounds have been singled out for special treatment by the Labor government without explanation as to why. If there is health advice, then provide it to the societies and assist them to implement it.

I have written to the Chief Health Officer and the Minister for Health. The shadow minister for health has written to the Chief Health Officer about this matter. The Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies has written directly to Queensland Health and made a submission to the Chief Health Officer. To date no-one has received a response. When the Labor government gives up on integrity they give up on governing. This government is so distracted by their own integrity crisis they have given up on helping 15,000 volunteers in our show societies who are caught up in this bureaucratic mess.

Federal Government, Performance

 **Mr WALKER** (Mundingburra—ALP) (2.34 pm): I rise today to speak about the Scott Morrison federal government's failure to invest in more social housing, their failure to address the horrendous cost of fuel and their failure to help some of our most vulnerable in aged care. It is true that the Morrison LNP government has slashed support for the National Rental Assistance Scheme, NRAS. This is an absolute disgrace and nothing was said by those opposite. Nothing. Crickets.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is investing \$2.9 billion in social housing. As I speak, there are more than 40 new units under construction in the seat of Mundingburra and a further 40 units are to be constructed later this year. That is just in the seat of Mundingburra and does not include Townsville or the seat of Thuringowa; however, in my seat there are many more National Rental Assistance Scheme houses being slowly removed from the federally funded scheme. That means there will be people in the seat of Mundingburra and right across Townsville who will either have to pay extremely high rents, find a new place to live or end up homeless thanks to the Morrison LNP government. Nothing was said on that side.

As you may recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, today I spoke about the fantastic work the Palaszczuk Labor government is doing to support small business, improve confidence, encourage investment and create more jobs across this great state of Queensland. Nothing was said on that side of the House. While this side of the House works hard growing the state's economy, business opportunities and improved job security, the Morrison LNP government just sits back and allows fuel prices to escalate out of control, which impacts on everybody's food bill. That is right; the poor farmers' fuel costs are rising to produce the food we eat, freight costs just keep going up to transport the food we need. Small business does not know what the fuel bill will be from week to week and mums and dad cop it in the hip pocket.

While the Morrison Liberal National Party government 'let it rip', the aged-care sector, the responsibility of the Morrison government, is struggling to manage the COVID pandemic—nothing from the other side of the House—impacting on our poor seniors in care. It is very sad to see and hear what is going on in some aged-care facilities. It is a topic that I really wish I did not have to speak about; however, it is very serious and the Morrison government needs to come clean and explain why they have abandoned so many vulnerable people not just by slashing funding from the National Rental Assistance Scheme but the lack of support and help for our seniors in aged care and the outrageous fuel prices impacting those less fortunate. The Morrison Liberal-National government needs to act now and do the right thing and help fund more social housing, step up and care for our seniors and address these crazy fuel prices. Those on the other side of the House just do not care.

(Time expired)

Gunn, Mr WAM AM; Agricultural Show Societies, Health Directives



Mr McDONALD (Lockyer—LNP) (2.37 pm): Many in this House receive presentations or awards from their communities, and last week I received something very special. Many in this House would be familiar with Mr William Angus Manson Gunn AM. Bill Gunn was born and educated in Laidley and he is on the Lockyer Valley Cultural Centre wall of local legends. He did have a military career, but his local government service ran from 1966 through to 1973, where he was the chairman of the Laidley council, before being elected as the state member for Somerset in 1972. He served through to 1992. Bill's parliamentary service included many ministerial portfolios, but he was most famous for his role as Deputy Premier and acting Premier. Bill Gunn showed courage on many occasions, but none more so than when he famously ordered the Fitzgerald inquiry into police and political corruption. The inquiry resulted in the introduction of important accountability reforms, including the birth of the Criminal Justice Commission.

I was honoured to be both a friend and admirer of Bill and Lorna Gunn and regularly sought and received advice. Our interests in common community roles included representing our community in local and state government. Last week Lorna Gunn's daughter, Mrs Karen Harper, nee Gunn, presented me with a blue jewellery case, and I table a photo of the presentation as a record of authenticity.


Tabled paper: Picture depicting the member for Lockyer, Mr Jim McDonald MP with Mrs Karen Harper [\[210\]](#).

Karen said to me and others present, 'Dad was a mentor of Jim's, and I know how highly he thought of you. I also know how much you, Jim, valued his mentorship. I know how much you would appreciate these.' The case contained a set of Bill Gunn's cufflinks—specifically, the set of Queensland police cufflinks I am wearing today. Bill was the police minister of Queensland and he was presented these cufflinks by the Queensland Police Service. Of course, I was a police officer for over 30 years and the officer in charge of police at Laidley. To say that I was honoured is an understatement. Karen, to you and your family: thank you. It is truly gratefully appreciated.

In the time I have left, I want to use some of Bill's courage to call on the state government, the health minister and the Chief Health Officer to ease the restrictions affecting our agricultural shows. Trevor Beckingham, the general manager of the Queensland agricultural shows, put it well when he said that others using their showgrounds to hold events face less restrictions than they do. We need to

see these unrealistic restrictions lifted. Many of these shows will be cancelled and it will have a huge economic impact on our community. I call on the minister and the Chief Health Officer to ease these restrictions.


Heart Health

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (2.40 pm): I recently came across a social media post by the Heart Foundation about high cholesterol. The post highlighted that, if you are 45 and older or 30 and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, you should see a doctor for a cholesterol test as part of your heart health. Research clearly shows that high cholesterol is a precursor to cardiovascular problems. We all need cholesterol but too much cholesterol can cause serious heart problems. Narrowing or blockage in the arteries can prevent blood from reaching your heart, brain or other organs which could lead to a stroke, heart attack or even heart failure.

Although there is no single cause for high cholesterol, factors such as age or family history are taken into consideration. When high cholesterol is combined with other health disorders, such as diabetes or hypertension, the chance of heart problems in the future becomes very high. It is probably timely to raise awareness for heart health, as we could all benefit from the take-home message that preventive measures save lives. According to Queensland Health statistics, cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of disease and injury burden for Queenslanders, contributing to almost one in three deaths and one in 20 hospitalisations.

Cardiovascular disease continues to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at a rate of 2.4 times that of non-Indigenous Queenslanders. This is a story I know all too well, having lost many family members and friends over the years. Talking about preventive health is always a sad topic for me because the word 'preventive' means that we can change our health discourse. In a perfect world, it would be a dream to see all people achieve the best health outcomes. However, for some, this is not so. We know that social, economic, environmental, cultural and political factors surrounding a person's life are always going to have a huge impact on individual health outcomes. So today we should all make a commitment to ourselves to book an appointment to see our doctors and get our health check done. It will not take very much time but the long-term benefits are worth the small sacrifice. Stay heart healthy everyone, and remember that prevention is the key.

Integrity in Government

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.43 pm): I want to speak about the integrity crisis facing the government and how that impacts on rural and regional areas and what it means to me as leader of the KAP. We are not too concerned when some of these issues get raised from time to time because they seem to be associated with political gamesmanship. I think a lot of the public tune out to some of these issues that face the government when they get raised, but it is different when a laptop gets taken and names are deleted. We know that there is a name being thrown around the place now that people know, and I think that is going to hit the airtime soon. When this starts happening, you start to think about the impacts, and I will put some context around that.

We have been saying for years that hospitals are underfunded in the west, particularly in my Traeger electorate. We have been saying, 'It's underfunded. It's underfunded.' The board started to become bold and they said, 'You're not giving us enough money to keep the doors open and to pay the doctors and nurses.' What happened to the board? They were all sacked. Why? Apparently, they were incompetent. That is interesting, because one of them was a financial controller at Mount Isa Mines and the other is the Mother Teresa of rural health, Dr Don Bowley. Apparently they were all incompetent so they were sacked. What for? Because they were telling the government things they did not want to hear.

The next issue is youth crime in Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa. We are trying to fix it. The government may not have an answer for it, but they have to own the problem. That is the start of fixing it—to own the problem. They need to say, 'Okay. It is a problem and we're having trouble.' Do not pretend it is not there. We now have a culture of fear, and then someone like me says that there is a culture of fear. If you are stealing laptops, these people come out and say, 'Yes, there is a culture,' and this is what you get.


It would be easy for the Premier to turn around and own it. For a start, she just has to own it and say, 'Okay. I do have a problem.' She cannot come in here and pretend it is not a problem. That is throwing it back in our faces and pretending there is not a problem. There is a problem out there and it does have consequences. They are not the government's Public Service; they are the people's Public

Service. They are out there to try to help fix youth crime and try to help fix the hospitals. We may not be able to get the money for the hospital, but own it. That is the problem. That is where the rubber hits the road. That is why people should be angry and take an interest when there are concerns about that.

We also want to know about lobbyists. We get bad decisions made around tenders and decision-making. We will be watching very closely with hawk eyes at things like the Flinders River tender allocation. We do not want big corporates coming in and ruining things for communities there. We do not want big corporates getting their way with the transmission line either. We will be watching the lobbyists who surround this like a hawk.

The last point I want to make is that the KAP is still counting the costs of the decisions of the Premier. She is the only Premier ever to be found in contempt of parliament because we did not agree with her point of view. We had four staff but we now have 1½. There are consequences to this and it is very real. The Premier has form on this. As a leader, she needs to demonstrate to the people of Queensland that we can have faith in her government. We do not need to get rid of her; we just need her to change her ways and she needs to own these mistakes.

Ipswich Hospital, Health Workers

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.46 pm): I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to the frontline health workers at Ipswich Hospital who have worked so hard over this summer during the Omicron wave. I know many of them have faced extremely long work hours, staff shortages and crippling fatigue, and I want to let them know that their dedication is appreciated by everyone. Many health workers I know are skilled and compassionate caregivers who are willing to go above and beyond in spite of the challenges they face on a daily basis.


Before Christmas I took the opportunity to drop off gift hampers to Ipswich Hospital workers and ambulance officers to show my appreciation for their service. In a week's time, I and three of my Labor colleagues—Lance McCallum, Charis Mullen and Jim Madden—will be showing our appreciation again by putting on a free coffee tab for the hospital workers. West Moreton Health and Ipswich Hospital are partnering with us to hold this special thank you day, and they should be commended for the outstanding job they have done moving swiftly and effectively to manage the Omicron wave.

For a few weeks, the pressure on that hospital was immense. At the height of the wave in January, the Ipswich Hospital repurposed five existing wards as COVID wards, non-urgent elective surgeries were postponed and admissions to the ED increased substantially. While we are over the worst of the wave now, pressure on our hospital—mostly due to high population growth in Ipswich—is ongoing and something that we recognise. We are taking steps to address this by committing \$166.9 million to expand the Ipswich Hospital—something that has been urgently needed for quite a while.

It took a Labor Palaszczuk government to deliver a funding commitment to expand our hospital. I am very pleased with how fast this expansion is progressing. When I visited the Ipswich Hospital before Christmas, I toured the newly completed 26-bed ward, delivered as part of the hospital expansion. We are now also seeing construction on the new 64-bed acute mental health unit, due to be completed late this year. We have installed a new MRI and we have received funding to expand the hospital's emergency department. To help take some of the pressure off the Ipswich Hospital, we have also committed an extra \$40 million to build a new satellite hospital in Ripley. This government's strong track record of investment in our public hospitals is clear to see—not only in Ipswich but also right across Queensland.

Further to that, the LNP cut \$1.6 billion out of the health budget in their first budget and they sacked 4,800 health workers. I cannot imagine how such a depleted workforce would have coped with the COVID wave should it have occurred during the Newman years. In contrast, this government has gone into this pandemic well prepared because of the 11,248 doctors and nurses we have added to Queensland Health's workforce since 2015. Their hard work and dedication is something we can all be proud of. Next time you are visiting a local hospital, take a moment to thank them.

Integrity in Government

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (2.48 pm): The Premier claims she was unaware Professor Peter Coaldrake had donated to the Labor Party. The Premier might be unaware, but several ministers should have been aware. The agricultural minister was aware. Several Labor backbenchers should have been aware. I have raised it several times in the parliament. Everyone concerned with the outrageous closure of agricultural colleges knows Professor Coaldrake is a Labor donor. He donated \$1,760 in June 2018—

just two weeks before delivering his controversial report recommending closing the Emerald and Longreach agricultural colleges. He was paid \$61,600 for the politically motivated report to justify their closure and the subsequent asset sale of Emerald college's Berrigurra property for \$32.5 million.

I raised concerns about the donation during estimates in July 2019. I specifically asked Minister Furner about it. Labor's committee chair tried to block my question. It was raised again in the committee's report. It was reported in the Brisbane media and across regional Queensland. I asked the director-general about Professor Coaldrake's remuneration. I was told the procurement process was undertaken by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. It appears no-one checks on potential conflicts or seeks the advice of the Integrity Commissioner.

When asked, Minister Furner said he was not aware of the donation, but then said, 'The matter was well ventilated in the media.' Mr Furner knew, but the Premier did not. I asked Mr Furner if he would raise the potential conflict of interest with the Integrity Commissioner. The minister said, 'I have recently consulted the Integrity Commissioner,' but did not say about what. It is an indictment on the lack of concern about integrity that the minister then said, 'I am not certain what the member for Gympie is alluding to.' Perhaps the minister was waiting for instructions.

At the time the government was facing scandals over the private business deals of the Deputy Premier and the Premier's right-hand man, David Barbagallo. On another occasion, the Premier voted in the chamber only a few minutes after I twice raised it. That was only two years ago in February 2020. Several ministers were in the House, yet the Premier heard nothing. No-one saw a problem with the donation and the commissioning of a report to justify the closure of those colleges. They see nothing, hear nothing and know nothing. It does not wash. The shameful decision to close the colleges was rubber stamped by the same Labor donor and supporter who will now conduct just the latest review the Premier has announced.

The Premier said she is confident that he, Professor Coaldrake, 'will do a thorough and effective job now.' After the hit job on the agricultural colleges, they are ominous words. There is a stench around this government. So far integrity, accountability and transparency look dead.

Pumicestone Electorate, GPs



Ms KING (Pumicestone—ALP) (2.51 pm): For over a year now, I have been working hard to get the federal government to fix our GP crisis in Pumicestone. When the federal government stripped away our Distribution Priority Area status in 2019, they also stripped away incentives for doctors to live and work in our community. The Pumicestone community is the oldest state electorate in Queensland, and residents face isolation and poor health. Many struggle to afford petrol for their cars, let alone GP gap payments.

Recently, I was able to share good news that our grassroots campaign had worked and DPA status was being restored to Bribie Island, but I cannot forget that just four months earlier Minister Hunt's Chief of Staff told me that Pumicestone had plenty of GPs and locals did not have a problem. What a slap in the face to vulnerable people waiting up to four weeks for GP appointments or who cannot get on the books of a GP at all. Make no mistake, it was only our community's strong advocacy plus the looming federal election that got this change across the line but, as usual, it is too little, too late for the Morrison government who utterly failed to return DPA status to high-needs areas like Caboolture, Ningi, Beachmere and Elimbah, all of whom have residents who are in poor health and desperately need to get in to see a GP when they are sick, not three weeks from when they are sick.


In a swinging seat like the federal seat of Longman, the Morrison government only helps those they think of as potential LNP voters. Luckily, our Labor federal candidate for Longman, Rebecca Fanning, is on our side when it comes to health care. First of all, Rebecca got federal shadow health minister Mark Butler to Pumicestone to hear about the issue, and then she got Labor leader Anthony Albanese out to Pumicestone to see the GP crisis for himself. Albo did not parade around washing people's hair or welding for photo shoots. He spoke with the exhausted doctors and worried residents that our GP crisis impacts every single day. Dr Steve Kearney of Ningi Doctors said—

If DPA support is not provided, failure is only a matter of time for my practice, leaving a vulnerable population without primary medical care and a wider region without any extended GP service.

Rebecca Fanning and Albo listened and they acted, and if Labor wins the federal election all of Pumicestone will get GP priority status, meaning more GPs, more appointments and shorter waiting times for our community.

To the 1,176 people who signed my petition calling to fix our GP crisis, thank you. I am proud to work hard every day to get the people of Pumicestone more health care closer to home. Now you deserve an MP who does the same. Thank you, Rebecca Fanning. Thank you, federal Labor, for your hard work to fix our GP crisis.

Dockside Marina

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (2.54 pm): I recently became aware of the situation facing commercial tenants at Dockside Marina at Kangaroo Point. The Department of Resources, under the direction of Minister Stewart and Director-General Mike Kaiser, issued these tenants with an eviction notice on 4 February 2022, effective on 4 March. This will affect 20 tenants who operate commercial businesses from the marina, businesses who have been hard-hit by the pandemic. The minister has used the section of the Land Act 1994 which states, 'Leased land may only be used for the purpose for which the lease was originally issued' which in this case excludes commercial operations. This is despite the fact there is nowhere else for them to go.


If the department had been enforcing this section of the act since the agreement was issued, you could understand it. However, this is not the case as some of those tenants have been operating from this site for almost 20 years. In fact, some of these operators were moved there by this government, and I am in possession of an email with these directions from the departments of transport and state development. There are a number of reasons why there is a shortage of marinas in the city, the growth of CityCat service and major developments along the riverfront being amongst them. However, the main reason for this situation is the lack of foresight and the absolute incompetence by this Palaszczuk government.

As these developments were occurring, it would seem nobody in the government anticipated this would lead to the current situation, which is something I find astounding. Brisbane is known as the River City, yet due to the negligence of this government we are now in a situation where there are no marinas in the city centre for commercial operators to base their business.

Brisbane has been named as the host city for the 2032 Olympic Games. Imagine when visitors arrive from cities with flourishing waterways from around the world and look out at the deserted Brisbane River. I understand there have been some complaints lodged with both local and state government about issues which have arisen from these commercial operators by the residents near the marina. These complaints should be addressed under local regulations. However, this minister went straight for the big stick and issued eviction notices. The minister must withdraw those notices and work with the tenants and the Brisbane City Council to establish a workable solution to keep these operators trading.

The iconic *Kookaburra Queen* is suffering a similar fate. With the redevelopment of the Eagle Street Pier, it needs to find another berth by the end of June and now Dockside Marina is no longer an option; it has nowhere to go. The Brisbane River precinct has always been a vibrant and bustling place for locals and tourists. We need these industries to showcase the river, not be driven out of business.

Langlands Park, Sporting Facilities; Coaldrake, Prof. P

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.57 pm): 2022 is truly the Year of the Tiger in the Greenslopes electorate. I was pleased to welcome the Treasurer to Langlands Park last week, the home of the Brisbane Tigers, formerly the East Tigers, for the sod turning on the facility's upgrade, a project which the Palaszczuk government has contributed a million dollars towards.

The project will involve the creation of new grandstands, seating 3,500 people, state-of-the-art training facilities for women and men, corporate entertaining areas and media facilities. We will be preserving the heritage grandstands. There is an education theatre, committee meeting rooms and a gymnasium. The playing field is world-class and is used by many visiting NRL teams.

The project will give the club fantastic facilities both on and off the field. It is a great club and it is great for our local community. Game days bring people to the area which benefits nearby businesses in Stones Corner and Coorparoo and, of course, the construction period will involve many jobs being created. I would like to congratulate Brian Torpy and the entire team on leading this community-changing project.

The last time I spoke in this House about the Easts Tigers Rugby Union Club, it was to acknowledge the fact that they had a complete clean sweep of the Brisbane Rugby competition, winning all six titles. They then went on to win the Australian Club Rugby Championship. No matter what happens on the field this year, this will be a special year for the Tigers because they celebrate 75 years

of Rugby Union in our community. There is a hive of activity at Bottomley Park with the Brisbane City Council completing a major project to upgrade the fields. David Waldie and the team are always looking to the future and they are trying to transform the entirety of the club facilities and getting even more people playing Rugby. I certainly support that. I am always advocating the merits of these projects to Minister Hinchliffe. He has been out to visit the great community of Easts twice in the past year.

This year in our community there will be boys and girls who will experience the thrill of playing Rugby League or Rugby Union for the first time. They will be supported by dedicated and highly skilled coaches and volunteers. They will have access to ever-improving facilities. They will develop skills, fitness, confidence and friendship that will last a lifetime, and some of them, no doubt, will go to play at the highest levels and some will just enjoy supporting and watching Rugby League or Rugby Union right through their lives. I cannot wait for the games to kick off at Bottomley and Langlands. I know in the Greenslopes electorate we are all looking forward to the Year of the Tiger.

In the time that I have remaining I want to respond to some of the statements made by the member for Gympie. I would like to point out that the LNP appointed Peter Coaldrake as the person to conduct a strategic review of the functions of the Integrity Commissioner, the chair of the Open Government Policy Forum and the chair of the Queensland Heritage Council. The federal government has also appointed him as a commissioner to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency and recently the chief commissioner of that body. It therefore seems a little rich to come in here and try to besmirch his good character, as members opposite have done. His reputation is beyond question, he is a Fulbright scholar, he is an expert in the public sector and he was good enough for the LNP to appoint him to conduct two integrity reviews, and I have no doubt he will do a fine job in the role he has been given.

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note



Mr RUSSO (Toohey—ALP) (3.01 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee report No. 18, 57th Parliament, *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner*, tabled on 9 November 2021.

The Legal Affairs and Safety Committee has oversight responsibilities for the Office of the Information Commissioner. The committee has reviewed the Office of the Information Commissioner's annual report 2019-20, which was tabled on 23 September 2020, and held a public hearing with representatives from the Office of the Information Commissioner on 30 August 2021.

The Office of the Information Commissioner is an independent statutory body established under the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Information Privacy Act 2009 with the aim of promoting access to government held information and protecting people's personal information held by the public sector. The Office of the Information Commissioner's functions include giving information and help to agencies and members of the public on matters relevant to the Right to Information Act; conducting reviews into personal information handling practices of certain entities; investigating and reviewing decisions of agencies and ministers; and reviewing and reporting on agencies in relation to the operation of the Right to Information Act and the Information Privacy Act.

The Office of the Information Commissioner's annual report 2019-20 provides information about the Office of the Information Commissioner's financial and non-financial performance and includes a checklist outlining the governance, performance, reporting and procedure obligations contained in legislation. During the 2019-20 period the Office of the Information Commissioner inquiries service responded to a record 5,684 inquiries by way of 3,965 telephone calls, 1,572 emails/letters and 147 website inquiries.

There were 25 new resources published by the Office of the Information Commissioner, which was up from eight the previous year, and existing information resources were reviewed to meet stakeholders' needs. A total of 12,997 participants completed the Office of the Information Commissioner's online training courses with a 98 per cent satisfaction rating of the training sessions provided noted by participants.

The Office of the Information Commissioner actively promoted awareness through separate means including through activities from the Right to Information Day, the Solomon Lecture and Privacy Awareness Week. Awareness was also promoted via its website and engagement with rural and regional agencies.

There were three Office of the Information Commissioner reports tabled in parliament, which were titled: *Compliance audit—Bundaberg Regional Council*, focussing on access to information strategies and risk areas the council identified in the 2018 self-assessment; *Follow-up of Report No. 2 of 2017-18—Audit of Townsville City Council's implementation of recommendations*; and *Follow-up of Report No. 3 of 2017-18; Audit of Ipswich City Council's implementation of recommendations*.

At the public hearing the Information Commissioner highlighted that there has been a clear increase in the demand for the services of the Office of the Information Commissioner over the past five years including in external review applications, inquiries and privacy complaints. The Office of the Information Commissioner is currently examining the key drivers of the increase in demand and how it can address this.

The Information Commissioner noted there was a 'significant' increase in external review applications where the agency had not made a decision on the initial application within the statutory time frame. This increased the Office of the Information Commissioner's workload for these matters and contributed to the applicants' frustration at the extended delay as well as diminished trust in the process.

The Office of the Information Commissioner reported on the implementation of recommendations from local government compliance audits in 2019-20 and tabled an audit in July 2020 about managing the risk of re-identification and public datasets. In regard to the Office of the Information Commissioner's privacy work, there has been substantial growth.

I commend the report to the House.



Mrs GERBER (Currumbin—LNP) (3.06 pm): The Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, as stated by the chair, has oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner. The OIC is a statutory body that oversees the purposes of the Financial Accountability Act 2009 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982 with the aim of promoting access to government held information and protecting people's personal information held by the public sector. Both these acts pertain to accountability and integrity in the financial management of the state's finances, an extremely important responsibility.

When the Financial Accountability Act was introduced in the parliament in 2009 by a Labor government, integrity and accountability were intended to be foundational. The former treasurer told the House that accountability would be 'the cornerstone of financial management in the Queensland public sector'. However, the Labor government we see in this chamber today has strayed far from this ideal.

As outlined on page 3 of the committee's report, one of the Information Commissioner's functions is to investigate and review decisions of agencies and ministers made under the Right to Information Act, including whether agencies and ministers have taken reasonable steps to identify and locate documents applied for by applicants. With regard to the RTI Act, the OIC annual report advised that they had received 787 external review applications. This is 100 more applications for information than the record high of last year. The median number of days the OIC took to finalise a review was 126 days. This is a month longer than the statutory time frame, which is set at 90 days.

During the committee process the Information Commissioner put this down to the significant increase in external review applications where the agency had not made a decision on the initial application within the statutory time frame. The Information Commissioner stated that 'dealing with such applications at external review is not an efficient use of resources for the OIC, the agency or the applicant who has experienced significant delay'.

It is clear the IOC's workload is increasing and its capacity to keep up is under pressure. However, ensuring information transparency does not seem to be very high on this government's agenda. As we have heard in the media in the past few weeks, among the litany of integrity issues, this government has a chequered track record when it comes to the public's right to information.


In Queensland, we have RTI officers working inside ministerial offices—not just involved with ministerial offices but actually working from within the office. This means ministers are filtering information that should be made public to Queenslanders. In fact, former senior Palaszczuk government advisor Neil Doorley told the *Courier-Mail* earlier this month that in one office he was encouraged to purge emails which could come back to damage the minister or government down the track. This is an instruction Mr Doorley later found out was designed to help circumvent the RTI process, because requests for information usually do not include deleted emails.

Mr Doorley recounted another occurrence. I know that we have heard this before, but I am going to say it again. He said that in the weeks leading into the 2017 state election staff were directed to take the extreme measure of hand-delivering documents relating to particularly sensitive issues to ministerial

offices to avoid leaving a digital footprint. There are enough concerns regarding the OIC's privacy work without ministers adding to them. Hand-picking which information can be made public and instructing staff to engage in actions which hide information from the public is nothing short of corrupt. During the committee hearing the Information Commissioner noted a substantial growth in voluntary data breach notifications over the past two years. This is another example of this state Labor government being too slow to act.

The OIC is doing its best to implement the recommendations following Operation Impala, but the state government must play its part. Operation Impala reported on the misuse of confidential information in the Queensland public sector. The Information Commissioner told the committee that there are a number of Operation Impala recommendations that require legislation, such as mandatory data breach notification schemes similar to those being adopted in other jurisdictions. We are taking steps to better manage our voluntary data breach notifications but we need the legislation in order to do it. This is pursuant to recommendation 12 of the Operation Impala report.

We know that a mandatory notification scheme such as this would be beneficial because the OIC's voluntary data breach notification scheme has been a success. However, it raises the question of why the government has not implemented a mandatory notification data breach scheme yet. Why is the government still so slow to act? It has had two years to implement the mandatory notification scheme to help manage the public's expectation that they are notified when their data is at risk, and it is yet to do it. This is a government that is too slow to act when it comes to integrity and accountability.

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (3.11 pm): I rise to speak about report No. 18 of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner*. The Legal Affairs and Safety Committee has oversight responsibilities for the Office of the Information Commissioner. The committee reviewed the Office of the Information Commissioner's annual report 2019-20, tabled on 23 September 2020, and held a public hearing with representatives from the OIC on 30 August 2021.


Like the Ombudsman, the IOC is an independent statutory body established under the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Information Privacy Act 2009, with the aim of promoting access to government-held information and protecting people's personal information held by the public sector. This is, as can be imagined, a complex and challenging task. The OIC's functions include giving information and help to agencies and members of the public on matters relevant to the RTI Act; conducting reviews into personal information handling practices of certain entities; investigating and reviewing decisions of agencies and ministers; and reviewing and reporting on agencies in relation to the operation of the RTI Act and the IP Act.

It is abundantly clear that the demand for the services of the OIC has greatly increased over the last five years. During the 2019-20 period, the OIC's inquiry service responded to a record 5,684 inquiries by way of 3,965 telephone calls, 1,572 emails and letters and 147 email inquiries. While the QPS comprised 24 per cent of all review applications in 2020, it is now at 29 per cent as at 2021. The OIC was also busily engaged in implementing the recommendations from the local government compliance audit. Further, 1,997 participants completed the OIC's online training courses, with participants providing a 98 per cent satisfaction rate with the training sessions. The OIC actively promotes awareness through Right to Information Day, the Solomon Lecture and Privacy Awareness Week. Awareness is also provided via the website and engagement with rural and regional agencies.

The OIC outlined the work that remains to be done around the Operation Impala recommendations. The OIC is taking steps to better manage voluntary data breach notifications that will assist in a transition to a mandatory scheme. This will include the provision of a new school of reporting to the OIC and amending the OIC's online training package to address specific requirements raised during Operation Impala.

The OIC stressed the ongoing importance of Operation Impala inasmuch as it complemented the work of the IOC. Audits were done before and after Impala and the recommendations largely reinforced the recommendations made from the OIC legislative review. The committee heard that human error is still internationally one of the root causes of privacy breaches, accounting for 38 per cent in one of the more recent surveys. A recent incident in New South Wales reached well over 10,000 people. If ransomware is factored in—like the attack on the Uniting Care Hospital Services—the ramifications can be huge. It was encouraging to hear that continuing work is being done in and around the COVID Safe app, which, as it turns out, was not quite as useful as it was expected to be. This was a multimillion dollar initiative of the federal government which, much like the federal government itself, has not delivered any tangible outcomes.

With regard to the OIC's privacy work, there has been substantial growth in voluntary data breach notifications. Over the past two years the OIC has focused on cultural change to minimise harm to the community. In relation to privacy breaches, the Privacy Commissioner advised that the implementation of the OIC's voluntary notification scheme has increased the number of notifications being received as people become more aware. The Privacy Commissioner further stated that the survey work done by counterparts at the national level, the OAIC, has showed that the public expect to be told if their data is compromised to minimise harm and to allow them—if they have not identified the threat—to take steps to protect themselves. The committee expressed continued support of the OIC in promoting accountability, openness and transparency. I commend the report to the House.

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (3.16 pm): The Office of the Information Commissioner, OIC, is an independent statutory body whose primary role, as we have heard, is to promote access to government-held information and also protect Queenslanders' personal information as held by government agencies. The Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's oversight role involves monitoring and reviewing the performance of the office and examining the annual reports as tabled in parliament.

The review of decisions made under the Right to Information Act and the Information Privacy Act showed in 2020-21 a record number of external review applications on top of the previous year's high, with a total of 787—a 26 per cent increase in two years. This ever-increasing workload could be at the heart of the agency not quite meeting its set goals of finalising all reviews and a decrease in satisfaction of applicants, which was under the 70 per cent target. Concerning is the ever-increasing median time to finalise reviews of 126 days, which is well above the 90-day target and an increase by seven days on the previous year.


Whilst the Information Commissioner has advised she is examining the key drivers of the increase in demand, it may be timely for government to consider what funding is provided to the office and whether a substantial increase is required, alongside additional training across departments to ensure that correct interpretation and implementation of RTI and IP across government is occurring. The Privacy Commissioner also commented on needing key legislative review to ensure that notifiable breaches are reported more effectively and to ensure the integrity of the overall system of privacy and security.

An important part of the oversight process was the public hearing held with representatives from the OIC including the Privacy Commissioner, the Information Commissioner and the Acting Right to Information Commissioner. Discussion surrounded the growth in demand for services, finalisation rates, voluntary notification schemes, human error in facilitating ransomware attacks and the importance of continuing reforms to ensure the legislative framework is contemporary and meets the needs of all users.

It was pleasing to hear that there has been an increase in staffing for this financial year to help deal with the high demand and file load. With a strategic review due in May 2022, it would be timely to check on the efficacy of the agency's efforts to proactively work on demand drivers and its work across departments to increase competency and core understandings of the system.

At the time of the hearing the need for legislative clarity on secondary use of the Check In Qld app was raised. We all understand that it has been an important tool previously to stay on top of COVID outbreaks but currently has minimised use. However, with projected future waves and potential variants, if it continues to be utilised in any form, Queenslanders must trust it and see its value or they will not use it. Ultimately, we need to know that Queenslanders' privacy is upheld and will not be on sold either within or outside of government.

As always, I want to thank the commissioner, office and departmental representatives for their ongoing efforts and insights into their work as well as their willingness to provide open and accountable answers to all of our questions. Thank you also to our chair, fellow committee members and the committee secretariat for their work in ensuring our committee fulfils its oversight responsibilities. I commend the report to the House.

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (3.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to report No. 18, *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner*. The Legal Affairs and Safety Committee has oversight responsibility for the Information Commissioner under section 88 of the Parliament of Queensland Act and schedule 6 of the standing orders. This report presents a summary of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's oversight of the OIC for the 2019-20 financial year period. The committee reviewed the annual report of the Office of the Information Commissioner and also held public hearings with representatives from the OIC on 30 August. The OIC is an independent statutory body established

under the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Information Privacy Act 2009 with the aim of promoting access to government-held information and protecting people's personal information held by the public sector.


The Queensland government has made a commitment to provide access to information held by the government unless, on balance, it is contrary to the public interests to provide that information. The values of transparency and accountability of course are paramount. Right to information legislation aims to make more information available, provide equal access to information across all sectors of the community and provide appropriate protection for individuals' privacy. The OIC's functions include giving information and help to agencies and members of the public on matters relevant to the RTI Act, conducting reviews into personal information-handling practices of certain entities, investigating and reviewing decisions of agencies and ministers, and reviewing and reporting on agencies in relation to the operation of the RTI Act and the IP Act. I am not going to unpack all of the committee's functions because I know they have been discussed here. Suffice to say, it is monitoring and reporting et al.

I turn now to the performance and outcomes of the OIC during the annual reporting period and how those themes have developed through 2020-21. During the public hearings we heard how the OIC has experienced a year-on-year increase in demand for its services over the past five years, with a record 787 external review applications in 2019-20. The OIC has also received record inquiries and an increase in privacy complaints and I applaud that it is working internally and with stakeholders to consider how it might find efficiencies in managing those.

The committee heard of the OIC's commitment to privacy by design and the push model of right to information, with the formal access application process as a last resort. The aim of this is to reduce the unnecessary applications coming through so people have better access to information and that resources are freed up to deal with applications and reviews in a more efficient manner. As a former public servant, I am well aware of the push model of right to information and have to say that the process of designing processes to administratively release information leads to greater efficiencies and, most importantly, greater customer service.

The other area of work which continues to evolve is the COVIDSafe app that the OIC undertook along with the OAIC and the federal commissioner. The COVIDSafe app again, as we have heard from others, was not particularly beneficial. However, we did hear that as an app it did help pave the way for some of the check-in apps that have been developed by the states and territories and the public acceptance and trust of those apps. The privacy practices and data security practices around the development of the app have been and will be used to inform further development of the Check In app as it evolves and is extended.

I thank the Information Commissioner, the Right to Information Commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner and other staff of the OIC who assisted the committee with fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. Finally, I want to acknowledge the work of Mr Philip Green who, during this reporting period, finished up as Privacy Commissioner. During the six years that he served he did play a really important role in strengthening Queensland's national and international connections which are so critically important if we want to address the information security and privacy issues of the future, including malware. Thanks to the other committee members, in particular our chair, the member for Toohey, and the secretariat. I commend the report to the House.

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (3.24 pm): If the Office of the Information Commissioner's aim is to promote access to government-held information, I have to ask the question why a simple right-to-information request regarding the toxic culture of the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service has been like pulling teeth. My RTI submission into serious allegations of bullying and intimidation at a senior level has been met with nothing but roadblocks and delay. It is almost like the allegations of cover-ups are being met with further cover-ups. The accountability and transparency of this state government is constantly called into question because of cover-ups like the one at the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service and because of the constraints placed on the Office of the Information Commissioner to access and distribute the information for which it was established to do. The critical information that I sought is of great public interest and of benefit to the public, particularly to anyone living on the Sunshine Coast, and should be easy to secure.

I submitted an RTI application in April last year seeking 'all board papers including attachments, correspondence, consultant reports into the culture or workplace environment of senior employees at the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service for the period 1 July 2019 to 31 July 2020'—a simple enough request if there is nothing to hide. The health service's own Clinical Information Access Unit

eventually, after many delays, changed the scope of my submission without justification and handed over nothing but heavily redacted board minutes. That is not what had been requested. It had changed the scope of the RTI to suit it.


The alarm bells were deafening, so I went to the Office of the Information Commissioner for an external review—an external review that is mentioned so many times in the committee's report. After months of back and forth with the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service, which was still trying to keep relevant documents under lock and key, an additional 281 pages were identified by the Information Commissioner as a part of my RTI request. A further 12 pages of correspondence are still being withheld due to the health service claiming that they are contrary to the public interest—presumably because they contain even more damning issues than the one I raised in this place on Tuesday.

I have since disputed the health service's bid to withhold information about the workplace culture of senior management of a public entity with a budget of \$1.36 billion and 6,430 full-time employees and in particular the actions of senior management of that health service. It is in the public interest and it should be publicly available, but due to the actions of the health service we are forced to wait and see. I will be sure to keep the House updated as to the outcome of that RTI. I know the member for Bancroft is particularly interested.

The results that I did eventually get from my RTI submission are highly concerning and damning to the state government. One document in particular highlighted the extremely toxic culture within the health service and that the hospital board and Queensland Health were aware and failed to act. What is most concerning is that the document revealed that this culture was to blame for the poor performance of both the Sunshine Coast University Hospital and of Nambour Hospital. Both have the worst record for elective surgery wait times in all of Queensland and the impacts for people living in the electorate of Buderim and all over the Sunshine Coast are significant.

The reason I approached the OIC and the reason I have taken the course of action to expose this culture is because health workers deserve better and so do the patients that they care for. Given the serious impacts to the community, the information that I sought through my RTI request should have been easier to access and it should have been handled in a timelier manner. Instead, it has been made very difficult and that raises even more concerns. Some 10 months after my application was submitted I am still waiting on a final result. I do not know when that will be or if the other relevant documents will be released. It is simply not good enough. Issues cannot be addressed, measured and fixed until the truth comes to light.

I am afraid that the Office of the Information Commissioner's aim of promoting access to government-held information is being deliberately thwarted by elements of the state government. It is clear that this state government has lost all integrity and accountability when complaints from senior health workers and 'desperate pleas for direct intervention and help' are at first ignored and then hidden away so they never see the light of day. If the state government cared about being open and transparent, accessing information would not be that difficult. The only conclusion that can be met from the years of cover-ups by this state government is that it is ashamed of what will be found. The Office of the Information Commissioner would be more effective in giving information and help to agencies and members of the public on matters relevant to the RTI Act if the state government allowed the office to do its job without constraints and demonstrated a genuine commitment to open and transparent government in the interests of all Queenslanders.

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.29 pm): I rise as a member of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee to address this report regarding the oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner. The OIC is an independent statutory body established under the Right to Information Act 2009, the RTI Act, and the Information Privacy Act 2000, the IP Act, with the aim of promoting access to government-held information and protecting people's personal information held by the public sector. My colleagues, the members for Currumbin and Buderim, have just canvassed some of the extraordinary failings on the part of the government in abiding by their responsibilities under those two acts.

I want to focus on some of the information that came out of the hearings that we held with the Information Commissioner, but obviously that does not detract from what my colleagues have already raised. Our role as a committee when it relates to the Information Commissioner involves monitoring and reviewing the performance by the Information Commissioner of the Information Commissioner's functions under both those acts and to report to this Assembly on any matters concerning the commissioner, the commissioner's function or the performance of the commissioner's function that the committee considers should be drawn to this Assembly's attention and a range of other aspects.

At the outset I place on record the thanks of the opposition for the work done by Philip Green who finished up as privacy commissioner back in December. We held a public hearing in August to inform this committee report and Philip announced there that December would see the end of his second term as privacy commissioner. I thought it important to note his comments—

I have been honoured to serve. I think we have made some great contributions in the last six years. We have strengthened our national and international connections, which are critically important in this area. As I said, the law is developing rapidly, but with the technological challenges that we all face it is really critical that we network well. We built those relationships as well with the research community in Queensland and internationally.

He concludes—

I have been honoured to serve as Privacy Commissioner. I am hopeful that the foundations we have laid in some of our recommendations will go forward to the future and serve us well.


I echo those words of Mr Green. I do hope this government and subsequent governments look at the work he has done in conjunction with his colleagues around the nation and around the world in ensuring we do have strong privacy laws and the ability to enforce them.

What came out in the hearing, and it possibly feeds partly into our frustrations as an opposition when it comes to RTIs, is that the Information Commissioner found a significant increase in applications where the agency had not made a decision on the initial application within the statutory time frame and that meant a substantial increase in work because they were essentially starting each matter from scratch. Applicants were already frustrated because of the delay, trust was diminished and/or lost. The commissioner found dealing with such applications at external review was not an efficient use of resources for the OIC, the agency or the applicant who has, as she said, experienced significant delay.

We unpacked a bit more what was causing it and clearly COVID was part of it, resourcing was part of it, diversion of resources from some agencies from RTI activities to COVID activities played a role, but also the fact that a number of staff were working from home and did not necessarily have access to the databases they would need to search for the documents. That being said, with the Information Commissioner's oversight of this responsibility, they were able to work through some of that and try to ensure improvements in responding to the opposition, the media and the public who are putting in RTIs.

Some of the other issues identified were the sufficiency of search: where an applicant has applied for documents and what is located by the agency is not what they are after, or the extent is not as broad as what they were after. Another issue is personal information. When people apply for their personal information and information has been redacted within that, they see that as a concern and want the Information Commissioner to assess it.

It was a very interesting and informative public hearing that has led to the publication of this report. As I said at the outset, it does not detract from the frustrations and the concerns and the oversight that we will continue to have as a committee and as an opposition into the operation of the Right to Information Act here in the state of Queensland.

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (3.34 pm): Something is rotten in ministerial offices when they undermine the right to information process by deliberately removing public records, deleting emails, to avoid their discovery, as well as telling untruths when they lose documents and then cover up. Neil Doorley, as a former insider working for the state government, has blown the whistle on the practice of the deliberate deletion of emails by ministerial staff that they do not want discovered under RTI. We are also aware of RTI officers deliberately withholding information on the basis that people will most likely get that information later if they go to an external review, effectively frustrating the applicant with delays and denials by not releasing it without that external review process.

From the Information Commissioner's annual report and the inquiry that has resulted in this report, there has been an increase in the requests for external reviews for a number of reasons. One of the reasons is documents, which are available and should be discoverable, being withheld unless somebody pursues them under an external review. I want to tell members my experience.

Ms BUSH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I am curious about relevance to the report. Perhaps the member could explain how it is relevant to the actual report that we are discussing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): I will get some advice.

Ms SIMPSON: I am reading from page 3 of the annual report.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Resume your seat, member for Maroochydore, I will get some advice. I ask you to ensure that your comments relate back to the report.

Ms SIMPSON: Absolutely, Mr Deputy Speaker. For the benefit of the member who tried to delay me coming forward with this truth that needs to be on the public record, I read from page 3, external review service, and I refer to other members who have noted that there have been more people going to external review, which is the appeal process when they are denied access to information under RTI. It is incredibly relevant. The member should be a little embarrassed by what this government has been doing.


I will give an example of an external review that I had to go to. We have seen an increase in people saying the information exists, but ministerial officers are denying it exists. On 9 March 2020 I wrote to the transport minister, who has a reputation with emails for all the wrong reasons, requesting a briefing on future transport plans for the Sunshine Coast. After nearly 10 months I had not heard back. I went public about the fact that he had not responded. I did not take kindly to the fact that his staff were telling the media they had never received this letter, essentially that it did not exist even though I had a receipt to say the letter had been received by his office. I do not like people not fessing up if they have lost something and then telling the media that they had never received it.

I put a right to information request in because I care about the future of public transport on the Sunshine Coast. I did not get a copy of my letter, which I knew existed because I had a receipt to say that the minister's office had received this email, but I did get back in the RTI a note from one of the staff: 'I think update to say department advises the letter was not received—otherwise looks like we lost it and can't locate.' That is extraordinary. Why not admit it was lost? It should not be lost in the IT systems of a ministerial office, unless there is a practice where they are pretty good at deleting emails.

I went to an external review process because I knew my original letter existed. They could not find it in the ministerial office. I advised the external review process, through the Office of the Information Commissioner, that we knew it existed and could identify the document, and therefore they were able to find it.

I use this as an example of where the cover-up is far worse than the initial mistake. Although, was it a mistake or was it deliberate? Under this government there is a practice where too many emails are deleted and too many mistakes are made. They then pervert the RTI process and force people to go to an external review to try to get the information they want. You are at a great disadvantage if you do not know the documents exist. There are many documents that people have a right to access through right to information, but they cannot access them if they do not know they exist. The process has been perverted. There are many good public servants but some of the ministerial officers, operating under their ministers, are deliberately withholding information and then not telling the truth. Some things might get lost, but we know there are examples where they have had the information and have deliberately withheld it, and in far more serious matters than the letter I have raised. The system is broken. This government has no integrity. The public deserves better.

(Time expired)

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (3.40 pm): I too have feedback on the Information Commissioner's office. I rise to speak to report No. 18, *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner*. I have had to use the Information Commissioner's office a number of times now because I have been denied access to documents under RTI by a number of departments, including the QBCC and TMR—documents that I should have had access to. When the RTI system was put in place the presumption was that information will be released to the public—it will be open and transparent—unless there is a very good reason for it not to be. There is a list of reasons that RTI officers can give for refusing your application.

In one instance, I put an RTI request to the QBCC around the member for Springwood meeting directly with Toni Bowler, for what he said were sporting meetings, but then taking action against the QBCC. I asked for emails that may have been sent between the board, the commissioner and the minister that mentioned Toni Bowler. I received some emails, but there were other emails that I did not receive, although they appeared in the *Courier-Mail*. I got onto the Information Commissioner and said, 'Okay, why is it that I have the response back from the RTI office but these two emails are missing?' The Information Commissioner asked the QBCC why the two emails were missing. Would you believe it: they suddenly found those two emails that had been on the front page of the *Courier-Mail* and were in the public domain but had been denied to me through the right-to-information process. When I received those emails they were redacted quite a lot. They had been printed in full on the front page of the *Courier-Mail* so I wonder why they bothered.

Another thing that I have been chasing quite heavily is information around best-practice industrial conditions, for which I have gone to TMR. Their RTI officers have come back to me with all sorts of reasons for why they will not release any of that information. They found about 10,000 documents. I

had asked for any communication between the minister, the department and the relevant unions, that is, the CFMMEU and the ETU. Surprisingly enough, they completely blocked me from accessing that information. They said that it was because of cabinet in confidence. Basically, their explanation means that they will not release any information that resulted from a cabinet decision. Maybe some members on the other side can educate me about what isn't a decision of cabinet having been discussed by ministers. Basically, if that excuse is allowed we can be blocked from every RTI request that we make.

I said to the Information Commission, 'I don't think this is right.' To his credit he agreed with me. He went back to TMR and said, 'No, that is not right. Please review this. Have a look and give the member some of the emails because we are quite sure that cabinet in confidence will not apply.' I had even asked for any response back to the unions from the implementation of BPICs, because we all know that it costs an extra 50 per cent for implementing BPICs on government jobs. For light rail stage 3 on the Gold Coast, an extra 50 per cent means \$300 million. TMR came back to me and said, 'Okay, we will release 84 pages from those documents, but it is going to cost you \$2,000.' They had found 10,000 documents so I thought, 'Fair enough, I'll pay the \$2,000 to get those 84 pages because I'm sure there'll be something there.' Do you know what? I got 84 pages of redactions. There was nothing there. There was a word here and a word there, but otherwise absolutely nothing.

You have to ask the question: what is the government hiding around BPICs? They have made a shonky deal with the unions and they are completely hiding it. Unfortunately, the Information Commissioner seems to be muted because, even though he agrees with me, the departments are not releasing the information.

(Time expired)

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Report, Motion to Take Note



Mr RUSSO (Toohey—ALP) (3.45 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee report No. 19, 57th Parliament, *Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission*, tabled on 24 November 2021.

The Legal Affairs and Safety Committee has oversight responsibilities for the Queensland Family and Child Commission and this report provides information regarding the QFCC's performance of its functions under the Family and Child Commission Act 2014. The committee reviewed the QFCC's annual report for 2019-20, which was tabled on 22 September 2020. The committee held a public hearing with commission representatives on 14 June 2021. The Family and Child Commission Act 2014 established the QFCC to promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people and improve the child protection system. The committee's responsibilities regarding the QFCC are defined under schedule 6 of the standing orders. The QFCC's annual report provided information about the QFCC's performance in relation to its strategic objectives, its financial position and its compliance with legislative requirements.


At the public hearing, the Principal Commissioner explained that, despite COVID-19, the QFCC continued to 'produce very meaningful and influential work to protect the rights of children and young people in Queensland'. The annual report reported on the QFCC's performance in relation to the following functions: reviewing systems and building evidence; connecting with children and young people; influencing the sector; and engaging communities. During this annual reporting period, the QFCC concluded two major oversight reviews being the post-implementation reviews of *When a child is missing: Remembering Tiahleigh—A report into Queensland's children missing from out-of-home care* and *Seeing they are safe: Responsiveness to notifications of child harm in Queensland*.

In addition to those major oversight reviews, the QFCC undertook or participated in several other oversight initiatives including: the oversight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection; three whole-of-system reviews following the deaths of children known to Child Safety; and quarterly meetings of the Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group. The QFCC's evaluation activities in 2019-2020 included: publishing the *Queensland Child Protection Reform Program (2014-2024) Implementation Evaluation report*; evaluating the outcomes of the first five years of the Supporting Families Changing Futures reform program; publishing the *Workforce survey 2019—Final research report*; publishing the *Community perceptions survey 2019—Research report*, which measured the community's confidence in and awareness of the Queensland child protection system; and undertaking

two place-based studies (1) at Caboolture, examining the capability of the workforce in responding to the complex needs of clients, and (2) on the Sunshine Coast, exploring services for young people transitioning from out-of-home care into independent living.

One of the more solemn requirements of the QFCC is to maintain the Queensland Child Death Register and analyse information from it to produce an annual report on the deaths of all children in Queensland. This report, *Annual report: deaths of children and young people Queensland*, was tabled in this House on 15 January 2020.

With regard to child death prevention, in 2019-20 the QFCC participated and contributed to a range of measures, including producing and publishing the following publications on the QFCC website: children known to child protection system 2018-19 fact sheet; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality 2018-19 fact sheet; and reducing drowning deaths among children 0-17 years research summary. The act further requires the QFCC to engage with and take account of the views of children, young people and their families. I commend the report to the House.

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (3.51 pm): Our committee has statutory oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission, the QFCC. The QFCC has one of the most important roles. It is tasked with protecting and representing the rights, safety and wellbeing of children in Queensland. The QFCC has an obligation to build awareness of and accountability for the rights, safety and wellbeing of all children in Queensland within the child and family support system across the Queensland community. My colleagues and I support transparency in all government actions, but this is even more important when it comes to our children's safety. However, it appears the state government is delaying releasing reports from the QFCC, and this just simply is not good enough to me.


As part of the annual reporting process, the QFCC provides an assessment of its performance in achieving state and national goals relating to the child protection system. The committee report notes that the measures on which Queensland received a 'needs improvement' assessment pertained to: finalised child protection investigations; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in a home based placement; and children in care who are the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. It also notes that Queensland only received a 'satisfactory' assessment for: children's early development across five domains; and the proportionate state government real recurrent expenditure on all child protection services. In fact, the only area Queensland received a 'strong' assessment for was children aged 0-17 years commencing with intensive family support services.

It is really not good enough that Queensland needs improvement in these areas and that Queensland only received a 'satisfactory' assessment for some. We cannot have our most precious and vulnerable children living away from home in potentially dangerous circumstances. We cannot have a situation where these children are dying. The continued over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system is very concerning and it is an issue that needs to be urgently addressed. It is this government's responsibility to ensure budget money is being spent in the best possible way. This is undoubtedly a big responsibility on both the minister and the government, but they must do it better.

Throughout the committee process we further delved into other areas that need improvement. Of specific discussion was the Child Death Review Board. The principal commissioner advised the committee that the QFCC has considered the deaths of 55 children and young people known by the child protection system: 10 by fatal assault and neglect; six by suicide; two by drowning; two by non-intentional injuries; 10 by natural causes; nine by transport accidents; seven which are currently unknown and pending further investigation; and nine sudden unexplained deaths. I was deeply saddened to hear of the number of children who have tragically died in the past year who were known to Child Safety, and I share the concerns of the QFCC regarding the nine sudden unexplained deaths. Any death, especially that of a child, is one too many. The child protection system must be there to protect the children who need it. It is of the highest importance that any system failings or gaps be transparently addressed to ensure future tragedies are prevented.

During the committee hearing my colleague the member for Glass House asked the principal commissioner for an update on the 'red flag' project. This is a project referring to the idea of using red flags to help identify where children may be at risk. I note that this research was due to be completed in August last year, but we are yet to receive it. I look forward to receiving that research and that update. It remains clear, however, that the system needs urgent review. This is imperative to keeping kids safe and out of high-risk situations. The government and our community must never forget the interests,

rights and voices of our children. Every child deserves to grow up happy and healthy. Every child deserves to feel safe and to have a home in which they feel safe. It is this government's responsibility—and it holds a very serious responsibility—to ensure that this occurs for our most vulnerable and precious children in our child protection system.

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (3.56 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate of the *Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission* report. Despite COVID and despite the statutory review of the commission, it has continued in its very important work, even though the pandemic has disrupted its operations—as, indeed, it has every aspect of the public and private sectors. One can only imagine the impacts of this had the government not got the health response and the economic response so correct. Despite this, Commissioner Ms Cheryl Vardon was able to note a number of highlights and I would like to acknowledge them now.

First and foremost, I suspect, will be the Growing Up in Queensland project, which is a marvellous way of connecting with children right across Queensland. More than 8,000 children engaged with the project, which is a triumph in itself, and these children went to great lengths to talk about their community, the pandemic and the things important to them. These children came from across a spread of ages from four to 18. The younger children were even able to draw pictures in a book and write a little story under each picture as part of their submissions. Interesting to note is the fact that 64 per cent of the children were female. It is pleasing but not surprising to learn that these children are optimistic about the future and excited about possibilities around further education and what their jobs might look like in the future. Their concerns included mental health and the environment.

Tragically but importantly, the commissioner is now the chair of the Child Death Review Board, which reviews the death of any child known to the child protection system. The role of the board is not to investigate the actual deaths but to discover if there were any systemic failures. In May last year the QFCC tabled the report *Counting lives, changing patterns: findings from the Queensland Child Death Register*. Mercifully, there has been a steady decrease in child deaths since 2004, at around three per cent per year, although it is worth noting that, maddeningly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be over-represented.

As far as oversight is concerned, the QFCC indicated that there is good work going on and that where there is room for improvement it is acting—measuring what matters and ensuring that children are safe. I join the commissioner in highlighting the excellent work of the Youth Advisory Council, which launched targeted events and helped shape the policy. There is also the Out of the Dark initiative, which is a partnership with police and other agencies to alert parents, teachers and carers to predatory behaviour online. The QPS and the Australian Centre to Counter Exploitation indicated that during lockdowns and time away from school predatory behaviour had increased greatly. This is something we need to be mindful of right here in Queensland. The Out of the Dark campaign will teach parents and carers the real-life conversations these predatory creatures use to engage with our children. These animals are skilled groomers and are both skilled and insidious. I encourage all members to view the Out of the Dark video, although be advised that it is disturbing.

The commission has also engaged with the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce which, as we now know, will make a significant difference to reform in Queensland in our response to domestic and family violence. Children are very often seen as collateral damage in this area, if not the actual victims.

To close, I would like to go directly to the contribution of Commissioner Natalie Lewis. She stated—

A key priority has been consolidating and extending the critical oversight role of the QFCC, identifying systemic issues and advocating for improvements. Then being able to monitor the impacts of those changes is key to an effective children's commission.

Queensland remains the first and only jurisdiction to commit to a generational whole-of-government strategy to eliminate the over-representation of First Nations children in out-of-home care. There have been significant reforms and investment but until now there has been no clear mechanism for accountability or capacity to examine the impacts of those reforms at a local level. The principal focus of work seeks to deconstruct that formula of over-representation, accepting that to comprehensively address the issue means that we not only have to reduce the rates of entry but also have to be mindful of the duration of time in care and move towards reunification as a form of exit from the care system. With that worthy goal and on that positive note, I commend the report to the House.


Debate, on motion of Mr Hunt, adjourned.

SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 252, on motion of Ms Farmer—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (4.01 pm), continuing: As part of the government's COVID-19 response, the temporary commissioner and supporting office have become a key resource for small businesses across the state and have helped many small businesses to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 and get back to doing business—a key priority for the Palaszczuk government. Since May 2020, the temporary commissioner and supporting office have carried out more than 7,200 activities for small business, including inquiries, disputes, outreach and advocacy activities, playing a critical role in supporting Queensland businesses to avoid lengthy and costly leasing disputes during the pandemic with early information, advice and access to mediation services.

One of those small businesses that was supported by the temporary commissioner's office was Nic and Katie's small business in the border zone area on the Gold Coast. Through one-to-one support from the temporary commissioner's assistance team they were able to access a \$10,000 COVID-19 support payment; additional hardship support for the border zone affected businesses, including mental health support; and strengthened their connections to their local community.

The temporary commissioner has provided a central point of contact for small business, providing invaluable information and support to Queensland small businesses. The temporary commissioner and supporting office have also achieved an incredible milestone—signing up 25 local councils to the Small Business Friendly Councils charter. With the Small Business Commissioner I will sign another three in the coming weeks. By signing the Small Business Friendly Councils charter, councils commit to support small businesses in their respective areas and help to reduce red tape. The charter has been developed by the Palaszczuk government in conjunction with local councils and aims to recognise and encourage local councils to actively support Queensland small businesses to recover and build resilience following disaster and economic challenges. The temporary commissioner has also been leading the Summertime Taskforce, which will help councils to support small businesses to make the most of the trading opportunities presented by the glorious Queensland sunshine.

These are examples of the success and positive impact the temporary commissioner role and supporting office have had for thousands of Queensland businesses across the state. They also underline the importance of making this a permanent role in Queensland so we can continue to deliver for small business as we focus on economic recovery.

Last year the temporary Small Business Commissioner, Maree Adshead, and I toured the state to exchange ideas and insights with small business owners about how to drive economic recovery across the state. I met with over 2,500 small business owners through the Small Business Roadshow—17 locations in total—held both face-to-face and virtually. The message we received was clear: small businesses want one-on-one support that is easy to access. That is exactly what the commissioner's office will provide for our small business sector.

This feedback is why the establishment of a permanent small business commissioner was a central part of the government's Big Plans for Small Business Strategy released in June last year. This strategy aims to help the over 452,000 small businesses in this state—97 per cent of all Queensland businesses—thrive and grow. The strategy committed \$140 million over two years to be spent to achieve this objective. Some \$100 million of this is being spent on the Business Investment Fund to support private investment and create Queensland based jobs and a further \$30 million is being spent to increase skills and capability.

The strategy committed \$10 million in funding to establish a permanent office of the Small Business Commissioner. The Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 delivers on that promise set out in the strategy and will establish a permanent commissioner role and supporting office in this state. This bill brings Queensland into line with all other mainland states, which already have their own small business commissioner.

Strong support for a permanent commissioner role was received during the consultation undertaken in developing the detail of the commissioner model. This consultation included engagement with other small business commissioners, including those in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, as well as the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman,

on their experience and approach. I personally met with those commissioners and greatly appreciated the discussion. Additional consultation was also undertaken with a range of peak industry bodies to consider their perspectives on the best approach.

The commissioner will have an expanded remit from the temporary arrangements and will have eight main functions, which is an increase on the three functions of the temporary commissioner. The first two functions include: to provide a central point of contact in relation to matters affecting small businesses; and to provide information and advisory services to the public about matters relating to small businesses. These functions will provide small business with an easy to access and central point of contact in government, making it easier for small business to access support, information and advice. They will also provide Queensland small businesses with an initial point of contact for all businesses with a dispute. This is an important step as many small businesses are unsure where to start when they have a dispute arise. This adds to stress and discourages them from seeking help early on. The commissioner's office can provide advice and guidance and refer the small business on to another entity if more appropriate to assist with a dispute.

Two further important functions of the commissioner are to assist parties in reaching an informal resolution for small business disputes, including by facilitating the exchange of information between the parties and to provide alternative dispute resolution services and administer a mediation process for small business disputes. There are three types of small business disputes that the commissioner will administer a mediation process for, including retail shop lease disputes under the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994, other small business lease disputes and small business franchise disputes. For these types of disputes, the commissioner will be able to offer both advice and informal dispute resolution. If the matter is not resolved in the first two stages, the commissioner can offer low-cost mediation services to parties to help resolve a dispute.

I am pleased to inform the House that the temporary commissioner's office has been able to resolve two-thirds of disputes either through informal dispute resolution or through its mediation services. These alternative dispute resolution measures offered by the commissioner take the pressure off the courts and, importantly, save small businesses time, stress and money in resolving disputes. These measures also help to preserve relationships between businesses.

Another function of the commissioner will be to advocate on behalf of small businesses to the state, the Commonwealth, another state or a local government or any other entity involved in administering a matter relevant to small business. In addition, a further function of the commissioner will be to work collaboratively with the equivalent of the commissioner in other states or the Commonwealth to enhance conditions for small businesses. This will provide an avenue for raising issues for small business at an interjurisdictional and national level, ensuring Queensland is represented when matters relating to small businesses are dealt with collectively across the country.

Lastly, under the expanded functions the commissioner will be able to perform functions that are conferred from another act and can carry out other activities which further the objects of this act, as directed.

In supporting the main objective of the act, which is to enhance the operating environment for small businesses in Queensland, the commissioner will work closely with the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction to continue to deliver small business regulatory reform and to assist in their recovery.

Under clause 18 of the bill, the minister can give the commissioner a written statement of expectations about the minister's expectations for the performance of the commissioner's role, including the nature and scope of the commissioner's activities. It is anticipated that the statement of expectations will be issued on a regular basis for a set period of time—for example, annually—and will set out the key activities for the commissioner over that period.

Under clause 17 of the bill, the minister is also able to give the commissioner a written direction about a matter relevant to the commissioner's functions. The ability to issue a direction provides flexibility to enable urgent or emerging issues impacting small business to be considered by the QSBC—for example, if there is a natural disaster that impacts a specific region or in pandemic situations such as COVID-19.

The bill requires the commissioner to prepare an annual report on the functions performed and activities carried out including any directions given by the minister and action taken by the commissioner during that period. The annual report must be tabled in the Legislative Assembly within three months after the end of each financial year. This requirement provides for transparency and public accountability.

The activities and functions under clauses 17 and 18 reflect that, while the commissioner operates independently from government, the government needs to maintain an appropriate level of oversight of the functioning of the commissioner and office. The approach taken in the bill provides a suitable balance between the commissioner's independence and public accountability and transparency.

I will take a short moment to address the opposition's statement of reservation, which deals primarily with the matter of independence of the commissioner—an issue which I am surprised to learn the LNP suddenly cares about. The independence or lack thereof of the Small Business Commissioner did not appear to be a factor when the Newman-Crisafulli government chose to abolish the position. It also has not seemed to be a concern for the Morrison government when appointing the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, given the two people they have appointed to that role have been a former Liberal chief minister of the Australian Capital Territory and the current ombudsman, a former federal minister for small business.

The statement of reservation recommends the Small Business Commissioner should report to the parliament—an arrangement which has traditionally been reserved for key integrity and oversight functions such as the Ombudsman, the Information Commissioner, the Queensland Integrity Commissioner, the Information Commissioner and the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Commissioner. It is also not a feature of the small business commissioners in other states. Allow me to quote from the New South Wales act, which states, 'The Commissioner is subject to the control and direction of the Minister in the exercise of the Commissioner's functions.' The South Australian act has a similar provision which states, 'The Minister may give directions to the Commissioner.'

The LNP's view that this should be a position reporting to the Queensland parliament was not raised in the submissions to the committee inquiry from organisations such as the CCIQ, Restaurant and Catering Australia and the Queensland Law Society. I may return to this matter in my closing speech after reflecting on the contributions made during this debate. However, I think it is fair to say that the suggestion in the statement of reservation is inconsistent with the role of small business commissioners in other states and is not supported by stakeholders.

The bill contains transitional provisions to ensure there is a seamless transition from the temporary commissioner as established under the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020 to the permanent arrangements under this bill. Clause 44 of the bill provides transitional arrangements to ensure the continuation of mediations or other dispute resolution proceedings that have commenced under the temporary legislative arrangements but are unresolved at the commencement of the legislative framework on 3 May 2022.

The bill also amends parts 8 and 9 of the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 to provide that, from commencement, the commissioner will administer the dispute resolution process for retail tenancy disputes, which is currently administered by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Before I finish, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to Maree Adshead and her team for the work they have done since May 2020. Maree is indefatigable in representing the interests of Queensland small business and always does her utmost to help any small business owner who requires it. In this time of uncertainty I know there are thousands of small business owners who feel more confident because they have Maree and her team in their corner.

The Palaszczuk government understands that small businesses are the backbone of the Queensland economy, working across every industry sector and employing almost one million Queenslanders. We know that supporting Queensland small business means helping local families and communities to prosper. Small businesses are our families, they are our friends and they are our neighbours.

While Queensland's small businesses are resilient, we recognise how challenging the past two years have been for small businesses in this state, and we want to do more. This government wants Queensland to be the very best place to do business. That is why I am so proud to speak to this bill, which backs our small businesses and supports them to drive economic growth across the state. I commend the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 to the House.



Mr MICKELBERG (Buderim—LNP) (4.16 pm): I rise to address the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, a bill, as we have heard, that seeks to establish a permanent Small Business Commissioner and provide a statutory basis for dispute resolution functions to be performed by the commissioner. At the outset let me state that the LNP will not be opposing the bill; however, we do have some reservations in relation to the bill. To that end, it is my intention to move two amendments during consideration in detail. I will address the substance of those amendments later in my contribution.

Small and family businesses are the backbone of the Queensland economy. The more than 450,000 Queensland small and family businesses are located in every corner of our state, and they employ around 43 per cent of the private sector workforce. Small and family businesses are the incubator of new ideas and innovation. They are the embodiment of the Australian ideal of having a go and they deserve our support.

Perhaps even more important is the fact that small and family businesses are the threads that bind together the fabric of our local communities. They are the newsagencies, the butchers, the bakeries and the local cafes. They are the businesses who sponsor our junior sporting teams. They are the businesses who donate the sausages for Bunnings barbecues in support of the local RSL. They are the businesses that are first to pitch in when members of our community need support.

Obviously big business is important too but, more often than not, it is small and family businesses that do the heavy lifting in supporting our local communities. That is why it is so important that governments at all levels support small business and the hundreds of thousands of jobs they create. Over the last two years small and family businesses, as we have heard, along with their employees, have been forced to carry a large portion of the burden from COVID-19.

Over the last two years many small business owners have spent every waking hour struggling to keep their business open, their dream alive and their employees in a job. I acknowledge that not every Queensland small and family business is struggling, but many are and they have been for a long, long time. In fact, increasingly, many small and family businesses have made the tough decision to close their doors for good—to walk away from their dream because the months of uncertainty, of supply chain issues, of mixed messaging or reduced trade have just got too much.

The temporary Small Business Commissioner was created to help resolve some of the challenges facing Queensland small businesses. Since stepping into that role, Maree Adshead and her small team have done a mountain of work helping businesses with issues like tenancy disputes and helping them navigate a confusing and rapidly changing regulatory environment. I would like to publicly thank Maree for the way that she has gone about her work in incredibly difficult circumstances. In meeting many of the small business owners who had the misfortune of being COVID exposure venues throughout last year, most told me of the proactive communication they had received from the Small Business Commissioner and her office.

I know that Maree has also spent a considerable amount of time building relationships, as we have heard from the minister, with the small business commissioners in other states and with Bruce Billson, the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, so Queensland can learn from the experience of other states about what is working in their jurisdictions. That is why it was disappointing that Maree did not appear in the committee hearings in relation to this bill. I would have thought that the experiences of someone who has been performing the very role that this bill seeks to make permanent would be invaluable context to inform the parliament and the committee's consideration of the bill. The question needs to be asked if the Small Business Commissioner was directed by anyone in the government not to provide testimony to the committee. It is clear that the Small Business Commissioner was present in the room during committee hearings in relation to the bill, and there was sufficient time remaining for her to provide testimony or answer any questions. Disappointingly, she was unable to do so.

I note that the 13 submissions to the bill were broadly supportive of the establishment of a permanent Small Business Commissioner; however, a number of issues were raised by submitters to the bill. Some of the issues raised by submitters included: issues with the independence of the commissioner; the definition of small business; the functions of the commissioner; the scope of disputes for which the Small Business Commissioner could provide mediation; and the interaction between the mediation process proposed, the franchising code and the responsibility of the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman in small business franchise dispute resolution. I acknowledge the minister intends to amend clause 21 to rectify a drafting issue. They also raised issues regarding: the right to legal representation for parties involved in a mediation process; the exclusion of other jurisdictions to hear a dispute publication; the publication of a dispute register; and information about parties who refuse to enter a dispute resolution process. Concerns were raised in relation to the notice period for a mediation conference and the provisions regarding the confidentiality of sensitive information provided by parties during a dispute resolution process. Concerns were also raised in relation to the scheduled review of this legislation.

Many of the submissions identified the need for the Small Business Commissioner to be independent of the government, despite what we have heard. Given what we have seen in recent weeks with the independent Integrity Commissioner and the not-so-independent State Archivist position, the

reasons why this is important are self-evident. Small businesses need to know that the Small Business Commissioner is working for them, not the government. Independence must be a priority so that small businesses can be confident the commissioner is acting in their best interests. While I have no concerns with the character or capacity of the current Small Business Commissioner, whatever legislative framework we put in place must be able to withstand the test of time and the various personalities that may occupy the role.

A particular issue with the bill is the fact that the bill details the Small Business Commissioner will receive both a ministerial direction and a statement of expectation. It should be one or the other. Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, Bruce Billson, identified in his submission that, in the bill as drafted, clause 17, ministerial direction, conveys a potential 'for the role to be highly dependent on government and subject to operational instruction' and should be omitted. As Mr Billson submitted, the bill should retain only clause 18, a statement of expectations, 'which provides a mechanism for establishing clear objectives, conveying strategic priorities and ensuring a broad contribution to and alignment with the whole-of-government goals and ambitions.'

That is what the first amendment I will move in consideration in detail seeks to achieve. My first amendment seeks to achieve that by omitting clause 17 and removing the requirement for the Small Business Commissioner to receive a ministerial direction. It is important to note that my amendment does not remove clause 18, and the minister will still issue a statement of expectations to set objectives and strategic priorities.

As the minister stated in her first reading speech, one of the main objectives of this bill is 'to enhance the operating environment for small business in Queensland and to reduce the time and cost associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses.' Given this, ensuring that the Small Business Commissioner is able to act independently of the government will better ensure businesses are treated fairly and without interference from the state government. Too often the issues afflicting small businesses are caused by the actions of government. I cannot count the number of times small businesses have raised the fact that their invoices have not been paid by Queensland Health in the required timeframe. It is because of examples like this that the Small Business Commissioner needs to be independent of improper ministerial influence and control, which has been so often on display in the media in recent weeks.

Examples like the one I have just provided also give rise to the need for the Small Business Commissioner to have a power to obtain information from government entities. Such a power could be used to influence government departments to provide information, enabling the more timely resolution of disputes. That is why I will be moving an amendment in consideration in detail to provide the Small Business Commissioner with exactly that power.

Stakeholders made it clear they want clarification on the definition of 'small business' included in the bill. The current definition of what constitutes small business is too vague. I ask the minister to provide the clarity needed to prevent any unnecessary interference in processes surrounding dispute resolutions.

Submitters raised the fact that this bill misses an opportunity to bring in further protections for small and family businesses, including a mechanism to deal with business-to-business disputes over payments, for example. This is particularly important when the dispute is between a small business and a larger business, which is frequently an issue when small business have a concentration of trade with one larger entity that has a disproportionate amount of market power compared to the small business. I ask the government to consider what measures can be implemented to help empower the Small Business Commissioner deal with such issues in the future.

Another area of concern is the fact that the bill does not allow for the Small Business Commissioner to initiate inquiries and investigations into relevant areas of concern. It also does not contain an obligation to act in good faith, which is in the current framework and is regularly used by mediators for constructive outcomes.

In 2012 the LNP abolished the role of Small Business Commissioner because the role was poorly structured and held no power. It was costing Queensland taxpayers and small businesses money without any real benefit. Red tape was not being cut. The role was just another layer of administration between the minister and Queensland businesses. The amendments we have put forward to the Small Business Commissioner Bill seek to ensure that this new permanent Small Business Commissioner is able to achieve the main objective of the bill which, as I mentioned earlier, was described by the minister as being 'to enhance the operating environment for small business in Queensland and to reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses.'

Small and family businesses are collectively the biggest employer in Queensland. This is not something the LNP takes lightly. We understand the importance of small and family businesses and the need to support them to in turn boost the Queensland economy and enhance our local communities. We are committed to supporting small and family businesses right across the state. The LNP has been fighting tooth and nail for the state government to give more support to small and family businesses across Queensland. In the 12 months since I became the shadow minister for small and family business I have travelled the state. I have been heartened by the passion of business owners, but I have also been heartbroken by some of their stories of despair.

Countless businesses have closed due to the impact of public health restrictions on their businesses. The dreams of many owners have been crushed. Their staff have been left jobless, with no way to pay the bills. There are more than 450,000 small businesses across the state that employ approximately 43 per cent of all private sector workers. They are the lifeblood of many communities. The LNP fought for them during the worst of the pandemic, and we will continue listen to small and family businesses and be their strong voice in this place.


When a business support package was left out of the state budget in June my colleagues and I saturated Queensland in a small business blitz, listening to small businesses owners and highlighting their plight in the media. We relentlessly called for a sliding scale approach to lock down support payments as well as deep cleaning cover for exposure sites, event cancellation rebates and the extension of payroll tax deferrals. The state government was dragged kicking and screaming to deliver a financial support package but failed to help small businesses when they needed it most.

What all small and family businesses need is clarity. The chopping and changing of restrictions has caused confusion and uncertainty, hurting the sector as a whole. More than anything, businesses need a clear outline of what is expected of them to continue to invest, trade and grow in Queensland. The LNP has been advocating for this, and we will continue.

Last week the CCIQ released the results of their pulse survey, which clearly demonstrated the sad state of Queensland's small and family business sector, with business confidence down nearly 17 per cent on the previous quarter. Revenue has been slashed and employment is down, and we have a government with no plan for the future. Sixty-three per cent of businesses and their staff said they have been impacted by mental health challenges. This number is extremely distressing and a cause of great concern for business owners, who have given everything to their business, their staff and their community. It is just another clear example of the government continuing to ignore the needs of small and family business and letting them down in their crucial hour. The lack of action has left small and family businesses with nothing but more uncertainty. Having an empowered, independent and permanent Small Business Commissioner to act on behalf of all small businesses is the first step towards restoring confidence throughout the small business community.

We want a Small Business Commissioner who has the power and independence necessary to ensure the Queensland government treats small businesses fairly. We want to ensure the position of the Small Business Commissioner is supported, and we want a genuine commitment to small and family businesses from this state government. I call on the government to support the LNP's measured amendments that seek to address the shortfalls in the bill. We will not be opposing the bill, but I ask the government to give genuine consideration to supporting our amendments, which have been developed after listening to submitters to the bill and to the small business community more broadly.

With the indulgence of the House, I would also like to acknowledge my friend Ryan Shaw, veteran and former LNP candidate for Lilley, who yesterday made the brave decision to tackle his mental health challenges and has withdrawn as the LNP candidate for Lilley to do so. He is a hardworking and community minded man. I spent a fair few hours with him doorknocking during his last campaign in Nudgee. He is a good man and it takes courage to admit you are struggling and to ask for help. I would like to wish Ryan well. He is an example to all of those suffering from mental health challenges like PTSD to reach out and ask for help. I would like to wish Ryan and his family all the best in the weeks to come.

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (4.30 pm): I rise to support the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. As chair of the committee, I can report that the committee made one recommendation and that was that the bill be passed. Everybody in this chamber knows that small business is at the heart of our economy. They have played a major role in our economic recovery and collectively are major employers that see us today with a lower unemployment rate than before the pandemic started. I know the introduction of a permanent Small Business Commissioner in Queensland will support our state's over 450,000 small businesses.

I thank our secretariat and all those who participated in the inquiry process. We received 13 submissions to the inquiry. We had a briefing from the department and we held a public hearing that included the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, the Queensland Law Society, Master Electricians and the Queensland Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

I want to briefly turn to the comments within the LNP's statement of reservation. The LNP want to talk about failures. The member for Buderim showed hypocrisy in his contribution in relation to the LNP's track record. He acknowledged in his contribution the sacking of the former Queensland small business commissioner, who had held that position for eight months. If they were genuinely listening to the business community of Queensland, they would have heard loud and clear from them at the time how important the role of that small business commissioner was to businesses. They are here lecturing us today about the independence of the role, but their track record speaks volumes. I spoke about this last night in the 'scream' and it is the same scenario again—do as I say but not as I do. It is absolutely incredible.

The member for Buderim spoke about the reason for scrapping the former Queensland small business commissioner and said in his contribution that it was because the structure and the framework were not good. Well, it is the government's job to set the framework and to make sure they deliver for small businesses. That is disappointing. He spoke about that test of time. As I said, the tenure of the former Queensland small business commissioner was eight months before they scrapped him. That is their track record.

I also want to be very clear about the inquiry process. The committee's program for the public hearing and the public departmental briefing on the Small Business Commissioner Bill on 15 November 2021 was agreed to by me, as the chair, and the deputy chair as had been resolved by the committee. Commissioner Adshead did not make a submission to the committee on the bill and was not included in the hearing program to be a witness. The commissioner did, however, sit in the audience throughout the hearing and the briefing.

The deputy chair only suggested that Commissioner Adshead be invited to make a contribution at the very end of DESBT's public briefing. I know all members on this side of the House absolutely respect all who participate in our inquiry processes. We all have a very deep respect of the process of participation and the courtesy that should be allowed in that sense. The briefing was provided by officers that DESBT had nominated. The department had not nominated Commissioner Adshead. As the chair, and after conferring with the committee secretariat, I ruled it to be out of order for the commissioner to be asked to make a contribution to the department's briefing. There is a respect for the process. We usually have a very strong bipartisan committee approach. We work well together. We follow process. We all need to comply with that.

I thank Ms Maree Adshead, our temporary Queensland Small Business Commissioner, and her supporting office that was established as part of the Queensland government's response to the impacts of COVID-19. I take this opportunity also to thank all Queensland small businesses which have shown remarkable resilience throughout the pandemic and have come through due to their ability to adapt to very changing circumstances.

The Palaszczuk government has supported small business throughout the pandemic, with the COVID-19 economic recovery plan putting small business at its heart. The plan is underpinned by more than \$14.5 billion in recovery initiatives to support our COVID-19 response and is continuing to deliver jobs for our communities across the state. I also want to acknowledge that the ANZ-Roy Morgan consumer confidence report that was released earlier this week showed that consumer confidence in Queensland has soared by a nation leading 6.5 per cent.

The commissioner and her team have helped many small businesses get back to doing business and have carried out over 4,500 activities for small businesses, including inquiries, disputes, outreach and advocacy activities, and they have played a critical role in supporting Queensland businesses. This bill locks in the permanency of the Queensland Small Business Commissioner and the important work that her office will do. It acknowledges the success of the temporary office and the gap that existed in this important support to small business after the scrapping of it by the LNP.

The key objectives of the proposed bill are to enhance the operating environment for small business in Queensland and to advocate for them, to listen to them and to reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses. The permanent establishment of a Small Business Commissioner and a supporting office is also part of our Big Plans for Small Business Strategy.

The bill provides a legislative basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions relating to retail shop leasing disputes under the Retail Shop Leases Act and to other small business leasing and franchising disputes on an opt-in basis. We know that there is nothing worse for a small business than to be in dispute or legal battle. Dispute resolution can be costly and stressful for small business owners. Prior to the temporary commissioner, small businesses had to navigate a myriad of pathways in that process. It was clear from the inquiry process that the department and government had consulted widely with Queensland small businesses, with jurisdictions that have existing small business commissioners and with key industry stakeholders in determining the permanent commissioner model, framework and structure.

I want to talk about the Small Business Roadshow—that saturating roadshow in terms of its engagement with small business—that Minister Farmer conducted. I had the good fortune to participate in one, and it was one of the most outstanding processes I have ever seen in terms of consultation. They engaged with those stakeholders, they took that information away and they translated it into an actual plan that addressed their key concerns. I have had the opportunity to thank the director-general for the process in that roadshow out in the Redlands. It was a full house, a packed room, of diverse businesses that were able to have a frank and fearless conversation with many key stakeholders from the department and those officers. I know that all regions would have benefitted similarly from that process. Members may talk about a blitz, and that is exactly what it was. I commend Minister Farmer and the department on that work. What we are seeing today with our Big Plans for Small Business Strategy is a direct result of that feedback from stakeholders.

Small businesses want one-on-one support that is easy to access. Through the permanent commissioner's office, Queensland small businesses will have a clearly identifiable, single point of contact in Queensland to provide advice and assistance to help them understand their options in a dispute. The commissioner's office will also be able to provide initial advice and information to small businesses about any type of dispute and connect them to the relevant assistance and support. They will help them navigate what can sometimes be very complex pathways. The bill will allow the Queensland government to permanently establish the Small Business Commissioner role, delivering small business engagement and support, including advocacy and dispute resolution.

I want to talk about the work that the temporary Small Business Commissioner is doing in the Small Business Friendly program, which is an outstanding program. If anybody has looked at the website, they would have seen that the 25 councils that are participating have already nominated some of those works and it shows what it looks like to genuinely reduce red tape. When you talk about action on the ground, this program is absolutely delivering and it is engaging with whole organisations to streamline the process. I commend the commissioner on her work in that space.

As I said, you only need to go and have a look at the Small Business Commissioner's website to see the incredible work that her team is doing. We should all be very proud that it is only a Palaszczuk Labor government that will strongly support our small businesses by the permanent appointment of the Small Business Commissioner here in Queensland after its dreadful scrapping by the LNP. We will continue to listen to the 450,000 small businesses that make Queensland the place to do business. I commend this bill to the House.



Mr LISTER (Southern Downs—LNP) (4.40 pm): I, too, rise to make a contribution on the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. I will say at the outset that I have great regard for the minister and for the chair of the committee, but I will not allow that to prevent me from disagreeing with them on some of the matters that they raised in the course of their contributions.

As members heard in the excellent contribution by the shadow minister, we have concerns about whether this Small Business Commissioner really has the tools and the independence necessary to be able to do a great job. I think extraneous noise about what previous governments did three terms ago, or whether a certain process which is supposed to serve the public interest was followed or not in terms of the opportunity to speak with the Small Business Commissioner in person at the time, indicates that the government is seeking refuge in process and seeking to conceal from the public potentially unwelcome advice from somebody who knows all about the role—and that, of course, is the current temporary commissioner, Maree Adshead.

The opposition members of the committee were particularly concerned that the Small Business Commissioner would not have the power to compel state government departments to cooperate with inquiries or to initiate investigations in its own right. When we add to that doubts about the independence the commissioner will be able to exercise because of their command chain to the government, I think that is a real missed opportunity in terms of being able to give the small businesses of this state excellent representation in an avenue with which to redress grievances not only with franchise heads and so

forth but also with the state government, which has a lot of interaction with small business. Some of the small businesses around the place, when asked about the relevance of a small business commissioner, really wanted to know, 'Is that where I can go to have a grievance with the state government recognised or dealt with?' In my experience, there is a desire for that in the small business community.

When we talk about independence, I note that the minister used examples from the federal government and other state governments and even said that the submitters did not indicate that they wished to see more independence on the part of the Small Business Commissioner. However, that was before we had this integrity scandal over the last few months. I think it is very noteworthy that the system for other officers with the title of commissioner with that kind of role, who are supposed to have independence and freedom of action to say things which may be distasteful to the government of the day, has failed.

In my view—and I think the view of a growing number of Queenslanders—the arrangements of employment for some of these officers do not give them the certainty that they can be truly independent. It is quite obvious that the state archivist was forced out because he was doing his job too well. What is to stop that example extending to other government employees, like the commissioner? Will they be prevented from doing their job well, from bringing unpalatable truths to the state government?

I think it is all about information. We have seen other examples where officers are reporting to ministers rather than to the parliament. There are opportunities for the executive of the day, for political reasons, to alter the reports that are passed through and released. That is the kind of interference, which is quite topical at the moment, that I think makes an excellent case for ensuring the Small Business Commissioner does have freedom of action and can operate unfettered by fears that they will be terminated because the advice they have offered or the activities they have undertaken in the service of small business has irritated the government.

One of the things I have noticed, particularly in the COVID period, is that small business, as the shadow minister has said, has borne the brunt of the COVID disaster that has befallen the world. My electorate and the electorate of Currumbin are perhaps the most exposed to the difficulties of crossing borders, and that has impacted families, communities and small businesses particularly. Many of the impacts on small business in my electorate were imposed as a result of government decisions—government decisions on which I as the local member and, I believe, the member for Currumbin were not consulted. On occasions that could be because there was not enough time and an urgent decision was required, but that was not always the case.

It seems to me that the government does have the ability to impact heavily on small business in terms of decisions it makes and its everyday administration. Small businesses and primary producers complain to me about heavy-handed red tape and about decisions that are absurd or do not appear to be intended by the regulations they are working under, particularly environmental things. An example is the Department of Transport and Main Roads taking too long to approve an overmass or an overwidth permit for someone who needs to move a bulldozer. These things cost business; they cost jobs. I would like to see that the Small Business Commissioner was empowered to hold the blowtorch to the feet of the government to make sure that when small business is disadvantaged by government there is a 'cop on the beat' to do something about that. When we talk about integrity and—

Mr Kelly: How much integrity do you have when you stand up here and make accusations that you have no proof of? How does that—

Mr LISTER: I take that interjection.

Mr Kelly interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Order, members! There will be no quarrelling across the chamber. You will put your comments through the chair, member for Greenslopes.

Mr LISTER: I take that interjection from the member for Greenslopes. I think it is just common knowledge, common sense. I think anybody with a degree of curiosity would look at the behaviour of the government in recent times and say it is disgraceful.

Mr Kelly interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Member for Greenslopes, cease your interjections.

Mr LISTER: Whether I am interjected upon or not has no bearing upon that.

Mr Kelly interjected.

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

Mr LISTER: The behaviour of the state government has been appalling in relation to the recent revelations about integrity. I go back to the minister's point—

Ms RICHARDS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I say that the member is straying from the title of the bill and I ask that he be brought back to relevance.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, the long title of the bill is quite broad. It is talking about the Small Business Commissioner. I will give the member for Southern Downs the latitude to explain his train of thought and come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr LISTER: The minister raised the examples of other states and the Commonwealth and how they have a mechanism which does not necessarily report straight into the parliament. I have not seen them recently involved in scandalous revelations about the interference in these statutory—

Ms FARMER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is impugning my integrity with his comments and I ask him to withdraw. I take personal offence.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, the minister has taken personal offence. I ask that you withdraw.

Mr LISTER: I withdraw. In respect of the example the minister talked about in other states and jurisdictions, they are not facing integrity scandals where officers of this kind have been bullied by the government and have had their role impeded by direction from their superiors.

Ms FARMER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member with his continuing comments is impugning my integrity.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Ms FARMER: I ask him to withdraw. I take personal offence.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me! Member for Pine Rivers, you can leave the chamber for passing judgement on the Speaker. I am making a ruling. The office of the Speaker is the office that is being held. Do not impugn the comments of the office of the Speaker. You can leave the chamber for an hour, member for Pine Rivers.

Whereupon the honourable member for Pine Rivers withdrew from the chamber at 4.49 pm.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I will now hear your point of order.

Ms FARMER: I take personal offence and I ask the member to withdraw his comments.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Southern Downs, the minister has taken personal offence. Do you withdraw?

Mr LISTER: I withdraw, and I ask the minister to listen very carefully to what I say. I find it very difficult to conceive how she could possibly be taking personal offence at—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Southern Downs, I will stop you there. Your withdrawal needs to be unconditional.

Mr LISTER: It was unconditional. I withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you would like to continue your contribution, you have one minute and 55 seconds on the clock.

Mr LISTER: Thank you. I would like to continue. I ask the minister to listen very carefully because I certainly will not be impugning her character. The minister has referred to other states and jurisdictions that have a mechanism which may be similar to this for the reporting of the Small Business Commissioner. However, they have not been involved in integrity scandals where officers of this kind have been bullied by the government, had their freedom of action removed from them and been impeded generally in their work.

Ms FARMER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and I ask the member to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Southern Downs, this is essentially the same personal offence that was taken previously. I would ask that you withdraw your statements. If you have a further contribution to make to the long title of the bill, you have one minute and 29 seconds left on the clock.

Mr LISTER: I withdraw. Where there are examples of interference in offices such as the proposed Small Business Commissioner, the State Archivist, the Integrity Commissioner or others we may not yet know about, it says particularly in an instance where there is a suspicion of that occurring—and I think it is more than a suspicion in the case of this government—

Ms FARMER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and I ask the member to withdraw.

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

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I will rule on this point of order and then I will hear your point of order, member for Buderim. I, in listening very carefully to the member for Southern Downs then, did not hear a reference to you, Minister. Do you take personal offence?

Ms FARMER: I do.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Southern Downs, the minister has taken personal offence. Do you withdraw?

Mr LISTER: I withdraw, and I might—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Southern Downs, there is another point of order. Member for Buderim, what is your point of order?

Mr MICKELBERG: Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister was not mentioned in the member for Southern Downs' contribution.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I will listen to points of order in silence, members. I have just asked the member for Pine Rivers to leave the chamber for interjecting whilst I am listening to a point of order, and I will do the same for all other members.

Mr MICKELBERG: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I note that last time it was also the Attorney-General interjecting. My point of order—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Buderim, just state your point of order without preamble.

Mr MICKELBERG: My point of order is that these points of order from the minister are repetitious. The member for Southern Downs has not mentioned the minister in his contribution. In fact, he referred specifically to the government, not to the minister, and to other jurisdictions. I ask that you rule that point of order is repetitious.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take some advice from the Clerk.

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

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Greenslopes, I will hear your point of order after I take some advice from the Clerk. Member for Buderim, I have made the ruling and the member for Southern Downs has withdrawn his comment. Member for Greenslopes, what is your point of order?

Mr KELLY: Madam Deputy Speaker, you just made a ruling in relation to that matter and immediately the member for Buderim questioned your ruling. I would suggest the member for Buderim is reflecting on the chair.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Greenslopes, I respectfully take your point of order, but I disagree. Member for Southern Downs, you have the call. You have one minute and eight seconds left on the clock.

Mr LISTER: I say that this government is embroiled in an integrity scandal. There have been odious revelations about the behaviour in respect of—

Ms RICHARDS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Again it is about relevance. He is straying from the long title of the bill and I ask that he be brought back to relevance.

Mr LISTER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order before you rule if I may seek your guidance.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, I will give you an opportunity to do that.

Mr LISTER: Regarding what is relevant or not to the bill, I believe I am providing rebuttal to elements of the minister's second reading speech, if you might consider that, please.


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

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will rule on that point of order first, member for Greenslopes. Member for Southern Downs, I will ask that you come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr LISTER: In coming back to the long title of the Small Business Commissioner Bill, I say that the Small Business Commissioner needs to be independent of the government. The reason I say that is because this government, this executive, has been embroiled in odious revelations of what I would

call misconduct in terms of bullying, interfering with and obstructing officers such as the State Archivist. We have seen revelations which do not go to the credit of the government in relation to their handling of the Integrity Commissioner.

I think my point is a very good one. If those topical and very recent instances demonstrate that having a reporting chain for those officers through the government provides an opportunity for the government to obscure things, to conceal from the parliament and from the people important information and denies freedom of action to those officers, then this Small Business Commissioner needs to report to the parliament.

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (4.55 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. First, I would like to go to the member for Southern Downs' comments surrounding integrity. I was working in the Queensland Public Service when the Newman LNP government came to power.

Mr Lister: When was that? Three terms ago! We are talking about now.

Mr O'ROURKE: Look, it is unbelievable for a member of that LNP government to be talking today about integrity. I saw some absolutely disgusting things happening in that government all the way through; it did not matter which department people were working with. They sacked the Small Business Commissioner. That is unbelievable; it is absolutely hypocritical of members opposite to make those comments around integrity. The Labor government under Annastacia Palaszczuk—

Mr Lister: Have you had your eyes shut for the last three months?

Mr O'ROURKE: The things that members have been raising are years and years old. I am not taking those interjections.

Ms KING: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I put to you that the member for Southern Downs is attempting to interrupt the speaker on his feet and I ask that you give him some guidance.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Member for Pumicestone, I was engaged with the Clerk at the time taking advice. I will keep an eye on it.

Mr O'ROURKE: Members of the Education, Employment and Training Committee were tasked to examine the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. In the minister's introductory speech and explanatory notes the listed objectives of the bill are to enhance the operating environment for small business in Queensland; reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses; establish a permanent Queensland Small Business Commissioner and supporting office; provide a statutory basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions relating to retail tenancy disputes; enable mediation for commercial leasing and small business franchise disputes on an opt-in basis only; and enable a transition from the role of the temporary commissioner, which focused primarily on managing and responding to the impact of COVID-19, to a permanent role with wider application to support small businesses.

On 14 October 2021 the committee invited stakeholders to make written submissions on the bill. We received 13 submissions and a written brief about the bill from the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training on 22 October. Further written advice from the department regarding concerns raised in the submission was also received. All submitters supported the bill's objectives to permanently establish a Small Business Commissioner.


On 15 November the committee held a public hearing and a public briefing. The witnesses at the public hearing were representatives from the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, Queensland Law Society Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee, Master Electricians Australia and the Queensland Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Queensland is home to more than 452,000 small businesses—and I am classing small businesses as those that employ fewer than 20 people—that are the core of every industry sector. They are in every community and every region and represent over 90 per cent of businesses statewide.

Small business employment accounts for approximately 42 per cent of all private sector employees. Small businesses are the backbone of Queensland's economy and the establishment of a permanent Small Business Commissioner role will help to support these businesses now and into the future. The office of the Small Business Commissioner provides assistance through information and empowerment and advocacy through promoting and enabling small businesses. I put on the record my thanks to the current Small Business Commissioner, Maree Adshead, for all of her great work in supporting small businesses throughout COVID-19.

Over the past couple of years I have been meeting with many small business owners in Rockhampton and I know that they have appreciated the assistance that the Palaszczuk government has provided, particularly through COVID grants, and I know that a few have had contact with the Small Business Commissioner and they commented on the great assistance that they received. I also support the comments made by the member for Redlands with regard to the minister's roadshows that she undertook across the state. In Rockhampton the whole place was full and it was about having that open and honest discussion, which is really great to see. It is not often that we see a minister who wants to get out there at the grassroots in order to understand issues on the ground, so I congratulate her on that initiative. It was absolutely wonderful that she was able to do that.

The Queensland government's COVID adaptation grants made a huge difference for our small businesses on the ground and lots of businesses in my area received those grants and really appreciated them. I cannot thank the department and its staff enough for the great work that they have done in rolling out programs like that to support our small businesses. In Rockhampton it is absolutely essential for me to support our small businesses. I always talk about buy local, support local. They are the businesses that employ our children and our grandchildren. They absolutely do a wonderful job and they are involved in so much more than just the business space; they are in our communities supporting our footy clubs and soccer clubs. Sometimes people underestimate just how great they are. Having a permanent Small Business Commissioner who is there to provide assistance is essential. Some of these people are mum-and-dad businesses that need help to negotiate their way through the system to get the outcomes that they need in dispute resolution.

I want to thank my fellow committee members and the secretariat staff who were involved in this inquiry. It was a really good bill to work on in that it was really interesting and it was well supported. I know that it makes a difference on the ground, and that is the important part to me. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (5.02 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. At the outset I want to add the KAP's support to the 450,000 small businesses across Queensland and acknowledge the important part that they have played over the last two years as we have navigated our way through the COVID pandemic and also acknowledge that they are the ones that have suffered the most. Some businesses are doing quite well at the moment. The building industry is booming in Queensland and agriculture is doing well, so there are some small businesses that have had great results throughout the COVID pandemic, but other businesses such as the tourism businesses, the cafes, the bars and the restaurants have really suffered.

The Small Business Commissioner was put in place by a national cabinet and state decision to help small businesses navigate their way through not only the COVID pandemic but also the dispute resolution process. Many small businesses have shouldered the brunt of the COVID pandemic and also the restrictions put in place by government. It is good to see that the commission has been able to hold 4,500 activities, but what have those activities resulted in? We need to ensure that this role is not a toothless tiger.

During the committee process one issue raised was whether the commissioner will be able to make any legal decisions, but this bill is more about mediation and so they absolutely will not be able to make legal decisions. Anyone in small business who has had dealings with someone who has not paid or someone imposing things on them that they do not like knows that it always ends up in the small claims court or as a civil matter, so it is great to see that there is a mediation process and the Small Business Commissioner will be able to go through that process to help people find that resolution. However, we need to ensure that the commissioner can do the function and job. Hopefully the commissioner can help negate some of these issues for businesses before they end up in that very expensive legal process.

I also reflect on the committee process for this bill. Usually we are a pretty tight-knit committee that goes through issues with a fine toothcomb and we usually land in a similar spot. The committee has recommended that this bill pass, but I acknowledge the comments of the member for Southern Downs. I have been on previous committee inquiry hearings where people have turned up at the last minute to view the committee process and they have been able to put their hand up at the end and be invited to make some comments to the committee. However, in this case that was voted down.

I want to go through some of the intentions of the bill. The new Small Business Commissioner will have the opportunity to enhance the operating environment for small business in Queensland and resolve dispute resolution. The bill will also establish a permanent Small Business Commissioner. It is great to see that there will be someone in this role full-time, and as we navigate our exit from the COVID pandemic we need to ensure that small businesses are supported. When talking to small business


owners, especially when I asked them about this bill in particular, many of them did not even know that we had a Small Business Commissioner. I understand that it is on the government website and there are plenty of places to find this information, but it is important to acknowledge that not every small business owner has their head buried in a government website on a nightly basis. Rather, most of them are just trying to keep their doors open.

Whilst talking about small business, I will take some degree of latitude with regard to the COVID pandemic vaccine mandates. Many businesses have struggled and have called for the mandates to be dropped so they can get some of their most important staff back to work. I understand that there are sectors that may require vaccine mandates into the future, but cafes, bars and restaurants would love to bring back some of their most important staff and we should really consider that. I know that that is not a function of the Small Business Commissioner, but I take a little bit of latitude, like everyone else has this afternoon, to acknowledge that fact.

As we have gone through this turmoil over these last two years I want to acknowledge people who have advocated on the part of small business in the Hinchinbrook electorate. Michele Falconieri and Ross McLennan from the Townsville Chamber of Commerce are two very good business advocates and have been integral in advocating not only at the federal level but also at the state level. I also mention Rachael Coco, the past president of the Hinchinbrook Chamber of Commerce.

Whilst discussing the problems of small business, another issue that owners have told me is that they are finding it so hard to get staff. I hope that the Small Business Commissioner is able to acknowledge that and work with some of these small businesses to plug into training opportunities and point them in the right direction for not only federal but also state government funding opportunities to train people and entice them to work in small business. Cafes, bars and restaurants are closing at the moment not because of a lack of people wanting to walk through the doors but a lack of staff. Small businesses have gone through burnout and there needs to be more support for that.

Previous speakers have brought up the small business adaptation grants. Firstly, I do not think it was enough. Secondly, many small business owners missed out. They did not have their finger on the trigger. I acknowledge that there were two rounds, but many were not as ready as other businesses who may have been poised, ready to apply for these grants. As I said, owners of cafes, bars and restaurants are usually trying to make sure stock is being ordered and food is on the table for that night and do not have someone sitting waiting to apply for a grant. If other grants are available in the future it could be a function of the Small Business Commissioner to help people work through that process. I acknowledge that the committee has recommended that this bill pass. The KAP will not be opposing it.

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (5.10 pm): I rise to support the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. As a member of the Education, Employment and Training Committee, it is a joy to contribute to this debate. Can I start by thanking Minister Farmer, the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, for her passion in this portfolio area. I know the minister has travelled the length and breadth of the state engaging with businesses, with industry, with peak bodies, with employees, training providers and, of course, with Queenslanders themselves who are engaged in training. Personally, the minister has been very generous in the time that she has engaged locally in my own patch on Brisbane's northside. I will come back to activities in the Stafford area if I have time a bit later. I thank the minister for her laser-like focus, in particular during the heights of the pandemic. Businesses knew the Premier, the minister and the government more broadly across portfolios had their back. This bill seeks to cement the structure and purposes in this policy area as we now try to deliver a more permanent set-up post the heights of the pandemic.

The Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 was introduced in October last year and referred to our Education, Employment and Training Committee. It may feel like a lifetime ago—to me it does—but I looked at my diary notes and it tells me we reported on 26 November 2021. This bill is yet another example of the government's determination to support employment and small businesses across Queensland and reflects our commitment to providing the skills, training and opportunities for Queenslanders to get into the workforce, gain secure work and build careers. The bill enhances the operating environment for businesses, trying to make it easier and simpler to resolve disputes. As I mentioned above, it seeks to create a permanent structure going forward, which, of course, includes a permanent Small Business Commissioner and the associated office.

The bill also provides the statutory foundations for the commissioner's role and functions. This, of course, includes in the areas of retail tenancy disputes, mediation for commercial leasing and small franchise disputes on an opt-in basis. As I have said, this bill seeks to move from a COVID-19 focus to a more permanent basis, looking more broadly across the economy. That, logically, includes transitional arrangements for the role of the Small Business Commissioner.

I would like to thank the chair and other members of the Education, Employment and Training Committee. Can I extend that thanks to the secretariat staff who do such a great job supporting our work. The committee's hearings were assisted by a wide range of stakeholders who made detailed submissions. This included peak industry bodies from the restaurant and catering industry, property industry advocates and representatives, the Queensland Law Society, CCIQ, retailers and many others. Thank you also to those stakeholders who, in addition, participated in our hearing, which was a very comprehensive hearing. The range of associations and industries involved provided a good insight into the benefits of this important industry reform.

As is reflected in this bill, the minister's approach in this area is to provide real-life solutions to encourage small business growth and increase the delivery of skills and training and employment growth. Let it be said that the minister walks the walk, and that includes out on Brisbane's northside. I know sometimes it must be a stretch for the member for Bulimba to cross the river, but thank you for joining me in supporting many local businesses who have appreciated the support of and cooperation with the state government. This was particularly significant during the heights of the pandemic. The minister has joined me at local organisations to celebrate the success of the brilliant Skilling Queenslanders for Work program—a program that was cut by the Newman government. I am very proud to have been part of the Palaszczuk government's efforts to reinstate this program, one that creates so many opportunities for Queenslanders to increase their skills, skills desperately required to attract businesses, to grow small businesses and to help contribute to the extraordinary economic recovery that Queensland has delivered.

One such organisation the minister visited was the wonderful Multicultural Community Centre, the MCC, based in Newmarket in my electorate. Amongst many other activities, the MCC partners with the state government through Skilling Queenslanders for Work to deliver important training, often to the most vulnerable Queenslanders, many of whom are recent refugees or immigrant community members. The success rate of their Skilling Queenslanders for Work program is often above 90 per cent of participants gaining employment, many employed in small business and, indeed, some working for small businesses that got their start right there at the MCC.

Other local examples of the benefits of this government's investment in skills and training to support Queenslanders to fill the skills gap that many small businesses are screaming out for is the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program that partners the state government with community sporting clubs and construction industry small businesses and training providers. It means upgrades for clubhouses or change rooms, it means skills development for young Queenslanders and at the end, very often, it means new jobs and new careers for those new workers. Talk about a win-win.

I was very honoured to represent the minister at Kedron Lions AFL, as one example where Skilling Queenslanders for Work has seen great club upgrades while young Queenslanders get the skills and experience to embark on new careers. To see the pride on their faces when they look at what they have delivered for our community is just priceless. Many of them have since gone on to full-time work.

The minister has also come out to meet with small businesses, including a couple of weeks ago, which the minister mentioned last night, where a family-owned business in the Stafford industrial estate, Office National, has seen the dynamic duo of Dana and Caleb being ahead of the game in delivering for Queensland, including for frontline service workers, providing the protection against COVID-19 that those workers needed. This included, over the last couple of years, sanitiser Queensland departments required and innovative PPE—ahead of the game and well ahead of the Federal government, not that that is the standard one would aim for.

I also could not let the minister come to Stafford without having a coffee and a chat at Maple Cafe. It was great to talk to Randeep about how his suburban small business is going. Many other speakers have mentioned the roadshow that the minister embarked on. I was lucky to participate in the formal northside business forum last year and it benefited greatly from the insight and contribution of the Small Business Commissioner.


As I flagged earlier, the government's commitment to support business crosses over many portfolios. Thank you to the Treasurer who presented the government's budget update to many northside small businesses and gave a lot of time to chat to local small businesses and community organisations. I should say we also appreciated the support of the assistant minister, the member for Jordan, who is also committed to supporting small businesses.

The minister for sport, in the industry development and innovation part of his portfolio, also visited local small businesses in Kedron and Newmarket who worked in partnership with the Palaszczuk government and used grants from this government to increase their market growth and provide new and innovative products and services.

I thank the government from the Premier down who are so dedicated to growing small businesses, to getting people into jobs and growing the economy that comes with it. In conclusion, I again thank the minister for progressing this bill, along with her office team and her departmental officers who made themselves available throughout the process, both in the preparation of the bill, in hearings and in subsequent written materials. It was of great assistance.

Again thank you to the chair, the member for Redlands, committee members and all the stakeholders who worked so closely with us throughout this process. I look forward to continuing the work with the minister, the department and industry stakeholders as we establish a more permanent framework in this important area of reform in business, employment, skills and training.

I had intended to conclude my contribution there, but after the contribution of the member for Southern Downs I need to put on the record that I think his repeated comments were unbecoming of this place, unbecoming of our committee work and not reflective at all of the minister's track record in this space. The minister's integrity does not deserve to be questioned by that ill-thought-out, pretty lame attempt at an attack from the member for Southern Downs. While the minister does not need my protection I thought I would lend my voice to it.

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (5.19 pm): Before I start, I want to put on the record a thought and a prayer for the people of Eastern Europe, given what is happening there at the moment. Certainly many individuals are going to be put in harm's way.

I rise to contribute to the debate on the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. We all have small businesses in our electorates. They are the collective powerhouse of the Queensland economy and the largest employer. Many small businesses are family businesses. They are run by mums and dads who risk their own wealth and their own assets, such as the family home, to create employment for themselves and for others. Many of us in this chamber would have got our first job at a local small business. Small businesses employ our local families, they employ our children and, most importantly, they support our local community groups far more than any big business ever could. They pay their taxes, greatly assisting governments to deliver services, pay government wages and provide infrastructure.

Many small businesspeople will say that theirs is a thankless job. They work long hours, are subjected to continuously changing regulation and bureaucratic red tape by all layers of government and those who own storefronts are impacted by the ugly face of crime. In my electorate, one convenience store in Oxenford has been broken into on numerous occasions in the past 12 months. That highlights the issue we have on the Gold Coast and in other parts of Queensland with individuals who have no respect for law and order or for other people. The damage done to that business has been quite extensive.

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

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Member for Theodore, I will give you some latitude to relate what you are specifically talking about back to the long title of the bill and the purposes of the commissioner.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Thank you for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. My point is that those are issues that the Small Business Commissioner could take to government. The commissioner could represent the interests of business owners by ensuring that the individuals who break into businesses are dealt with a lot more harshly than they are at the moment.

The COVID pandemic has certainly had a huge impact on local businesses in my area. While many businesses have been desperately holding on, some have had to close. Mandated vaccinations have forced businesses to restrict their hours of operation because of a lack of staff as workers were unable to work during that period.


Many businesses struggle to interpret or adhere to legal requirements that are a part of the day-to-day running of their businesses. Many people work late into the evening to complete the paperwork to meet those requirements, which places stress on families and takes up personal time. For example, when it comes to town planning, SSPs and the Vegetation Management Act can conflict with each other in certain situations. For a builder building a granny flat at Guanaba, adhering to the rules and requirements can be quite onerous. Ken Wilkie is a former resident of my electorate who was

very passionate about road transport. There have been many times when he expressed his concerns about the permit process. Those are the sorts of things that the Small Business Commissioner could get involved in and make recommendations to government to streamline those processes.

Small businesses welcome the idea of a small business commission if it has the appropriate powers but, as the legislation stands, the commissioner's powers are far too limited. While it would be helpful to have a commissioner to render assistance with dispute resolutions and tenancy dispute mediations, small businesses need a commissioner who has the resources and powers to properly serve their interests. They need a commissioner who can initiate inquiries and investigations that best represent their interests. The commissioner needs to be able to compel the state government departments to assist in investigations and create meaningful outcomes.

The commissioner must act independently of government to be a true advocate for the needs and interests of small businesses, especially when state government policies could be at the centre of their concerns. Current legislation requires the commission to seek direction from government, limiting its ability to act with freedom and, therefore, constraining its advocacy. The laws and regulations passed by this chamber can have serious ramifications for the day-to-day running of our local small businesses. Some changes may have unintended implications. It would be prudent to give stronger powers to the commissioner to champion those issues and give recommendations to government about reducing the unintended impacts of regulations or legislation. I have given the examples of town planning and the issues that can arise with SSPs and the Vegetation Management Act, as well as truck driver permits.

Unfortunately, this bill falls short of what is required. A strong voice for small business is needed to give hope to those who feel that government is not listening.

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (5.26 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Small Business Commissioner Bill. As we have heard from almost all members, we absolutely love the small businesses in our local communities. They really are the heart of our local communities and the engine room of our economy. They employ close to one million Queenslanders. They have worked incredibly hard during the past two years and I say a huge thank you to all of them for that and for working with us. We use these words all the time, but I do thank them for being agile and flexible and for making sure that the people they employ continue to be employed. They have done an amazing job.

The pandemic has changed all aspects of our lives and we know our small businesses have been hit hard. However, some businesses have been able to pivot to a new model of business that has seen them grow. There are a few such businesses in my local electorate that I want to talk about. Nick and Milly Christensen and the team at Flowerhub, Slacks Creek, have turned tough times before COVID into a fantastic business opportunity that saw them grow during COVID. With huge demand for online shopping, which is not going anywhere any time soon, and even more demand for beautiful local flowers, Flowerhub was able to step up production and grow their business during COVID.

We know that the impacts of restrictions and lockdowns saw many businesses reduce their hours of operation. I give a shout-out to Dean Forte, from Monkey Tree Brewing, who was impacted by restrictions. He came to me to advocate for a new artisan producer liquor licence, which has seen a huge growth in small businesses. When we announced the licence, Dean said that it would provide a framework for all microbrewers and microdistillers to work together and would help to see the sector flourish as COVID restrictions now begin to ease. I give a shout-out to those wonderful Logan businesses. They were both impacted in different ways but both have been incredibly successful.

During the early days of the pandemic, of course, as the then small business minister I met with a lot of small businesses. Even though their doors may have had to shut for some time, the bills, rent, wages and utilities did not stop. They experienced really challenging times. The government stepped up in that time of uncertainty with a suite of COVID support measures. One of those was the temporary Small Business Commissioner, established in 2020. The temporary commissioner and supporting office have become a huge resource for small business right across Queensland. They have helped so many, particularly mum-and-dad businesses, get back to what they do best.


Since May 2020, the temporary commissioner and supporting office have carried out more than 7,000 activities for small business including inquiries, disputes, outreach and advocacy activities. I particularly acknowledge Commissioner Maree Adshead and her team for their incredible work. Maree is one of the most professional, energetic, passionate women I have ever had the pleasure of working with. She is a powerhouse. She has never met a problem she does not want to solve. The success of the office is testament to her, her leadership and the wonderful team that really do go above and beyond for our small businesses.

Making the commissioner now permanent is really an important first step in supporting our small businesses to really thrive coming out of COVID. This bill will make it easier for them to grow here in Queensland. It creates that single point of contact for business owners. Let us be honest: it reduces the time that small businesses have to spend navigating the bureaucracy, and that is a really good thing. The commissioner will work alongside the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction and continue to deliver small business regulatory reform, a huge issue for our small businesses. Having a permanent Small Business Commissioner brings Queensland into line with every other jurisdiction.

The bill provides a legislative basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions relating to retail shop leasing disputes under the Retail Shop Leases Act and to other small business leasing and franchising disputes on an opt-in basis. I remember being with the member for Aspley visiting one of his small businesses. We met with a franchise and that was one of the issues raised with me—franchising disputes and having somewhere to go. I thank the member for Aspley. Those conversations really did help and are addressed in this bill.

We know that dispute resolution can be costly and stressful for small businesses. Prior to the temporary commissioner being appointed, our small businesses had to navigate multiple pathways. It takes the pressure off our courts and streamlines the current pathways. Currently, both QCAT and the commissioner can undertake retail shop lease dispute mediations. This can be confusing. The bill created a requirement for retail shop lease disputes to undertake mediation with the Small Business Commissioner prior to progressing to QCAT for resolution under the Retail Shop Leases Act in the event that the dispute remains unresolved after mediation. This single pathway reduces confusion amongst applicants and also, importantly, reduces QCAT's heavy workload. As Attorney-General, I am very happy about that.

In terms of retail shop leasing disputes, the work of the commissioner and her office has been wonderful. Even my hairdresser accessed the service for some support during COVID. I know just how well they were able to work with small businesses and assist them during that time. I congratulate the Minister for Small Business. I know that she is so passionate about small businesses and making sure we have the supports for them. Really, this bill is a win for our small businesses. The Small Business Commissioner will play an integral role in ensuring small businesses are protected and will reduce the cost of doing business here in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (5.33 pm): I rise to address the Small Business Commissioner Bill. As other speakers said, I declare at the outset that small businesses rock. If it were not for small business, the electorate of Glass House really would not exist. Aside from two—and literally it is that—large supermarket chain establishments, every single business operation in the electorate of Glass House is either a small or a family business. It is why we established the 'Glassies', our small business awards, a number of years ago. We try to get the gala to coincide with Small Business Week. We really love talking about our local heroes, our mum-and-dad small business owners who employ local, shop local and get our economy going.

I have had the privilege of interacting with the office of the Small Business Commissioner. I also thank Maree and her team for their work. Early in the piece, when COVID restrictions were in force, many of the businesses in my community, particularly the hospitality businesses, were struggling with the check-in app requirements, particularly when it came to things such as availability of mobile coverage; the demographic that was often frequenting cafes and restaurants around places like Maleny, many of which did not have the technology required; and reduced awareness of the public health requirements. Luke Forster from the team spoke to me and my office and was able to take on board the feedback. He said in his response back to me—

This feedback is consistent with some other segments of the small business community...

He escalated the concerns to the response lead engagement team within Queensland Health. As a result, we were able to quickly see some changes and improvements not to the way small businesses were required to operate but to how the public gained greater knowledge of and accessibility to that check-in app.

As the shadow minister has said, we will not oppose the Small Business Commissioner Bill but we will propose a couple of amendments. The first of those will be to make the office independent of the minister. It is important that the community trusts the commissioner. As I have said, they do a good job. I think they would do a better job if they were independent of the minister.

Secondly, there is no power to obtain information provision that the Small Business Commissioner could use to influence government departments to provide information that would enable resolution of issues. We want to add a clause that gives the commissioner the power to obtain information from government agencies and entities.

One other concern we have is along those lines. That is, the bill does not allow the Small Business Commission to initiate inquiries and investigations into areas of concern for small business. I want to raise a couple of areas of concern that have come up recently where I think the Small Business Commissioner and her team could really have weighed in and assisted local businesses. I refer to last week's copy of the *Glass House Country & Maleny News* and the article titled 'Check-in mandates cause misery for cafes'. Whilst we were able to resolve some of those check-in app issues, editor Mitch Gaynor wrote—

A hinterland hospitality veteran has revealed the daily verbal and physical abuse she has endured because her small business is forced to comply with state government-mandated check-in rules.

Shotgun Espresso owner Kelly Robson who has lost staff and significant revenue in the past two years said the situation was now 'untenable'.

The hospitality sector is one of only a few industries where check-in and vaccination verification rules still apply.

But Kelly said the messaging was confusing and raised stress levels for people who thought that check-ins were behind us.

'Since the 17th December this has been a nightmare. It can only be described as abuse from our Government. We have been utterly neglected,' ...

Can I stress—and it is reported here—

Kelly is not anti-vaccination, but is urging an even playing field for all business.

Shotgun Espresso offer one of the best coffees in Maleny. I think we have something like 30 coffee shops, but Shotgun is certainly up there as one of the best. I regularly head down and have chat to Kelly. I have to admit that one day she was in tears. A gentleman had literally thrown a punch at her because of what she is having to enforce. The editor of the paper went to the government for a response. The article states—

A spokesperson for the Premier ... said no abuse is acceptable and 'staff should call police as the commissioner has advised'.

The only problem with that is that in Maleny we have at any given time at best two police officers on. They cover an area from Kenilworth and Mapleton all the way to Peachester. They are not able to respond to every single request from shop owners like Kelly. It is just not acceptable. I know that this is not an isolated example. That same story could be repeated by many cafe owners from across the electorate of Glass House. That is potentially an area where the Small Business Commissioner, with the changes that the shadow minister is proposing, could conduct an inquiry and then give advice to the government on how it could be resolved.

Another industry that seems to have been targeted is the wedding industry. Again, the shadow minister and the Leader of the Opposition joined me with Kelly Tilse of Tiffany's. This is an industry that has weathered COVID remarkably well, given what they have had to deal with. It was one of those small and family business sectors that had been forgotten by the state government.

Staff were isolating because they could not get tested and operators were being left with no choice but to either close their doors or, in Kelly's case, pay two lots of salaries—once for the staff members who were on leave and then to bring in casual cooks, chefs and wait staff to cover the weddings they were doing. They experienced similar trading conditions through lockdowns, but they were saying that right now they are getting no support. That is the big difference. What we in the LNP—the leader, the shadow minister and I—were calling for was a support package for those businesses.

There is good news for the wedding industry. On Tuesday all of them received from the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation the following—

Following the Premier's announcement ... the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation can confirm that from 6 pm on Friday, 4 March 2022:

- masks will no longer be required to be worn by staff and patrons at licensed venues
- density limits will be removed for parts of venues that are privately hired regardless of vaccination status of people entering.

That is great news for the wedding industry. I just hope it is not too late for some.

We had the crazy situation where people were cancelling their bookings and then going and holding backyard weddings because they could have 100 people in their home but only 30 at a wedding venue. Other brides and grooms were making double bookings—one in Queensland, often in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast or the Moreton Bay area, and another in northern New South Wales—waiting to see what happened with the restrictions and making a decision at the last minute as to which one they went to. Hopefully now with the news that we have had that will change, but boy it would have been nice to have had a support package in the meantime.

The final sector of the small and family business industry that I will mention is the school camp sector. I have worked very closely over many years with Andrew Grant from QCCC. He operates from Mapleton but has responsibility across all their camp sites. I thank the shadow minister for education for coming up and meeting with Andrew and hearing their concerns.

They were given assurances that, despite the delayed start to the school year, camps were still going to operate. It came as a surprise when, in the Premier's press conference, all of a sudden school camps were lumped in with the delayed start to the school year. It was contrary to the advice they had received from the department. Even now there is no guarantee that with school back camps can operate. Andrew and his team and all school camps have been exemplary in their operation under the COVID requirements. Andrew can attest to the fact that they had not one community outbreak of COVID amongst any of their camps.

When similar restrictions were placed on outdoor education programs and camp sites in New South Wales and Western Australian, what did their states do? They provided a support package.

Ms Grace interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): The member for McConnel will cease her interjections.

Mr POWELL: Western Australia actually sat down with the industry and developed the support package. What Andrew and his team and everyone in the outdoor education sector is asking for—as the cafes, pubs, clubs and wedding venues were asking for—is financial support. They know they have had to abide by the COVID restrictions.


Ms Grace interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for McConnel will cease her interjections.

Mr POWELL: This is the only state that does not provide assistance. I am pleased to hear the minister interjecting because I put a question on notice to her yesterday asking her to ensure that she sits down with the industry and compensates them for the loss of business they have had. I hope she takes it a little more seriously than she has this evening.

Ms Grace interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for McConnel, I have twice asked you to cease interjection. You are warned under the standing orders.

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (5.43 pm): I rise in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill which will provide improved support and advice for small business owners across our great state. Queensland is home to over 452,000 small businesses that employ fewer than 20 people. They represent over 90 per cent of businesses across our state. They are the lifeblood of our local communities. They are the very heart of every industry. They are our favourite cafes, takeaways, butchers, bakers, hairdressers, beauty salons, fruit shops, clothing boutiques, dog groomers or independent music store.

In our local community of Bundamba they are businesses like our iconic diner at Ebbw Vale; butchers Jace and Lee at Redbank Plains; Just Cuts at Redbank Plaza; Forty West at South Ripley; Goodna Place Fruit Market; Olive and Bean at Collingwood Park; Kruger Bakehouse; and Barkley and Pips dog cafe and groomers at Bundamba—along with so many more. This bill supports these very businesses as they continue to drive our nation leading economic and employment recovery from a local level that extends right across our community. We back our small businesses because they back our local community. They are our local community.

That stands in strong contrast to how the LNP treated small businesses when they were last in government. As we have heard, they abolished the Queensland Small Business Commissioner so that there was no dedicated advocacy role for small businesses. If that was not bad enough, red tape went up under the LNP. In its April 2015 Red Tape Survey, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry said—

The burden of red tape has intensified over the past two years and continues to adversely impact the performance of Queensland businesses.

They found one in four businesses felt growth was hindered by red tape and were disappointed the LNP government had let them down.

Government members interjected.

Mr McCALLUM: Indeed. The LNP failed to release a dedicated small business policy at the last election—little wonder when we consider the abysmal performance they put in with regard to small businesses when they were last in government. Their last small business policy was from May 2019,

well before COVID-19 and the global pandemic. It would seem that the best they were able to muster was a small promise to prioritise procurement. In contrast, we have implemented an actual target which means real money in the hands of actual small businesses, and we are transparently reporting against our target.

I will turn to the LNP amendments to the bill that have been circulated. As the minister raised, not only are they inconsistent with federal arrangements for similar positions, they are extremely ill-considered and underdeveloped even for the goal that they are trying to achieve. If they take away the check and balance of being reported to government, then what oversight is there? There is certainly nothing in the amendments that would provide any oversight whatsoever. There is no mention of the commissioner's position reporting to a parliamentary committee—not that it would matter because even if it did they would probably sack the parliamentary committee in the middle of the night like they did to the PCCC.

The arrangements in this bill strike an excellent balance and provide an appropriate level of oversight. There is a balance between the commissioner carrying out the roles and functions impartially and appropriate public accountability and transparency, especially when we consider the broader context of the openness and transparency framework that has been implemented by the Palaszczuk Labor government which is nation leading.

The bill will make permanent our Queensland Small Business Commissioner and its supporting office, transitioning the temporary commissioner role from its previous arrangements focused mainly on managing and responding to COVID impacts to a role with wider applications to providing ongoing support for businesses. It will ensure timely and affordable access to justice through the dispute resolution functions and provide a statutory basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions relating to retail tenancy disputes and enable mediation for commercial leasing and small business franchise disputes on an opt-in basis.

One of the primary roles of the commissioner is to mediate leasing disputes around things like retail shops and franchising to help prevent costly legal fees and to save that most vital resource for small businesses—time. It has been a huge success to date. Since May 2020 the temporary commissioner has carried out more than 6,000 activities for small businesses, commercial tenants and landlords. It is fantastic that so far more than two-thirds of leasing disputes have been successfully resolved by either informal resolution or mediation thanks to the Small Business Commissioner and her office.


The establishment of a permanent commissioner's office means small businesses will have a clearly identifiable, single point of contact for advice and assistance to help them understand their options in a dispute, as well as guidance on how to solve it informally. It delivers on one of our election commitments and it will also respond to the very unique needs of our local small businesses—providing easily accessible advice and support, and reducing the time and costs associated with resolving disputes.

Importantly, it has the backing of our frontline workers—the small business sector that welcomed the appointment of the temporary commissioner in May 2020 as part of our Big Plans for Small Business Strategy. With an ever-evolving operating environment, it means that a permanent commissioner and the office can continue to offer one-on-one support and an essential point of contact.

Backing small business has been at the heart of our \$14.5 billion COVID-19 economic recovery plan. The Palaszczuk government has committed more than \$2.5 billion in business support since March 2020, including \$1 billion in job support loans for over 7,000 businesses; \$950 million in payroll and land tax relief and electricity bill relief, because we still own our electricity assets; \$320 million in business grant supports, jointly funded, to over 35,000 businesses; \$182 million in adaptation grants to 20,000 businesses; and \$20 million on a COVID-19 cleaning rebate. More than 30,000 businesses have already received grants of up to \$30,000 under the Business Support Grants program. As a result, that means more than \$283 million is already in the bank accounts of businesses across the state that were impacted by the August 2021 lockdown.

We are backing businesses with tailor-made programs like our Mentoring for Growth service, small business financial counsellors and, of course, the Queensland Small Business Commissioner. In our local community of Bundamba, we have also provided support to businesses including World Gym Ipswich, MJO Bookkeeping, Support with a Purpose and MVP Cutz, which is across the road from my office in Goodna.

Small businesses are at the heart and hubs of our local communities. They are our families, our friends, our neighbours. Supporting small business through initiatives like the Small Business Commissioner is not only key to strengthening Queensland's economy but also crucial to helping families and communities prosper. That is exactly what will help be achieved by the measures in this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (5.52 pm): I would like to contribute to the Small Business Commissioner Bill and also acknowledge the work of the temporary Small Business Commissioner. On both sides of the House we agree that it has been a very important role in response to the COVID-19 pandemic but more importantly for small and family business to feel that they do have someone they can connect with, who can help facilitate them through challenging circumstances and save them time.

Many in this House have already contributed, as I will, about their local small businesses. In the seat of Whitsunday, one in three jobs is heavily reliant on the tourism industry. Nearly all of those businesses would be categorised as small and family businesses. Most of those businesses are also associated with the hospitality industry, which has been the hardest hit by the impacts of COVID-19. We talk about agility and pivoting, which was so critical for small business to do, but at times I heard from my small businesses about the challenges they faced and that they had no pivot left. There was nowhere else for them to pivot to. For my businesses in the charter boat industry, there is no market—it has disappeared.

I would like to highlight the LNP's position and the amendments that have been outlined by our shadow minister for small and family business, particularly the amendments around the office being independent of the minister. Amending the clause to ensure that the small business community can trust that there is a level of independence is critical. That is because the government regulates small and family business. There is significant red tape and challenges that small and family business face. In particular across North Queensland, we certainly see things that are different to our southern counterparts. That is why independence and advocacy by the Small Business Commissioner is so critical.

We pay almost 20 per cent to 30 per cent more in insurance costs in North Queensland if you are a small and family business. We also pay about 20 per cent to 30 per cent more in electricity costs. While it is wonderful to have heard the government announce a \$50 rebate, it does not go very far when you have no competition in North Queensland. The cost of electricity consistently affects the operating costs of small and family business. It prohibits small and family business from being able to employ an extra staff member or a casual teenager. They are real impacts that the state government could look at on the back of the Productivity Commission report that was released. They could look at changes to stamp duty and insurance for North Queensland and how that could directly benefit small and family business.

The other point I would like to highlight which I think is critical in the advocacy that this role could potentially have if amendments were accepted by the government is the way in which a commissioner could interact with our local chambers of commerce that represent small and family business across our community. It is not just limited to my tourism businesses. We have engineering businesses that help support the supply chain of mining across our region. We have small and family businesses that operate childcare services and family support services in our community. We have small and family businesses that offer professional services in our community.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of my local councils who have stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic to support small business. While we hear about the government's response to grant funding for small business, it took many of us on this side of the House to go to the media to demand support for small and family business. My tourism operators in the Whitsundays had to wait months and months before they even received a visit from the tourism minister to understand the pain and challenges they were going through on the back of COVID-19. We have had some amazing businesses who have been established and have been successful, but we have also had those who have had to make the hard decision to lay off people they employ. People have had to work 24/7. In my community many have had to shut their doors.

I note that the minister did meet with representatives of the Mackay Region Chamber of Commerce, and I welcomed that visit to the region. I note that their COVID-19 impact survey that has just been released showed that 61 per cent of all those surveyed experienced moderate to very severe impacts since 17 September. Their greatest hits were in mental health—their own mental health as business owners and that of their staff—sourcing goods through the supply chain, cash flow and business finances, and the challenges that they faced.

In particular, I would like to thank and acknowledge the tireless work of Gus Walscott for the small business financial counselling service that has been provided to small businesses across the Whitsunday community. I also thank the auspicing agent for that. Gus has worked tirelessly. I have received inquiries through my office and my office could refer people to him. He has been able to support them with financial counselling services. Gus is a chartered accountant, a small business owner and an adviser himself. He has expertise and skills that my small businesses could rely on in their time of need. Part of that was referral pathways to mental health services as well because small businesses were doing it so tough with the ever-changing environment of government regulation and the impacts of mandates—which we all know had a role to play at different times because, with very little notice, businesses were very challenged.

Debate, on motion of Ms Camm, adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Portfolio Committees, Referral of Auditor-General's Reports



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (5.59 pm): I seek to advise the House of the determinations made by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly at its meeting today. The committee has resolved, pursuant to standing order 194B, that: Auditor-General's Report 8 of 2021-22 titled *Improving access to specialist outpatient services* and Auditor-General's Report 12 of 2021-22 titled *Health 2021* be referred to the Health and Environment Committee; Auditor-General's Report 9 of 2021-22 titled *Regulating dam safety* be referred to the State Development and Regional Industries Committee; Auditor-General's Report 10 of 2021-22 titled *Transport 2021* be referred to the Transport and Resources Committee; and Auditor-General's Report 11 of 2021-22 titled *Establishing the Queensland Future Fund* be referred to the Economics and Governance Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3




Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (6.00 pm): As I reported to this House previously, Light Rail stage 3 on the Gold Coast is 85 per cent through my electorate from Pacific Fair to North Burleigh. This much heralded infrastructure was lauded by the Palaszczuk government as proceeding with John Holland construction as the preferred contractor in 2020—two years ago. According to the government's own latest time line, this project will not be completed until 2025—after the 2024 state election. What is the holdup? A glacier melting through climate change looks like speed dating on Tinder compared to the snail-like progress of this much vaunted project. Imagine the frustration and consternation of local business and commuters waiting for Light Rail Stage 3 to finally appear and businesses just getting over suffering from COVID at now having to deal with this major construction impediment to their operations.

I am told from reliable sources that the contract with Holland has not even been signed yet, and this is two years since the Premier's announcement. I believe that a major blowout in labour costs through the Jackie Trad inspired best practice union wage loading to the tune of some \$300 million on the project is the sticking point for the John Holland signature on the contract documents. I know the federal government, in their unbounded enthusiasm in an election year, has committed \$300 million to get the show on the road—stupidly, in my opinion—but John Holland will be locked in forever on future infrastructure projects if they cop this over-the-top ambit claim. My understanding is that they are not prepared to do it. What a quandary the Premier will find herself in if she has to find another contractor who will succumb to this extraordinary union blackmail. Or will she just sit on her hands over Light Rail Stage 3 and keep finding more excuses as to why the project has not even started two years after it was announced?

Businesses are waiting on final designs to see what effect it will have on their patron parking, and residents are already concerned about increased height limits and living densities being approved by the council in anticipation of light rail arriving. The council says it is not their fault that densities are increased; it is at the direction of the state government. The state government says it is up to the council to decide on densities in their location when they know it is not possible to put more densities into greenfield areas the state government is blocking. Both bodies know there will be increased densities along the light rail route, and my residents and businesses are piggy in the middle, which is a shameful

way to deliver on openness and transparency. If this is the disaster that is the implementation of the Light Rail stage 3 to Burleigh, what hope in Hades does Light Rail stage 4 to the airport have in the future?

Federal Government, Residential Aged Care

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (6.03 pm): It is great to be back in the parliament dealing with important issues this week, but we are also able to look back over the last few months as we have dealt with the Omicron variant of COVID-19. It has affected many. Most of all, I feel for all of those families who have lost loved ones over recent months. It is really highlighted in the aged-care space. Sadly and tragically, it is back in the national spotlight.

In Queensland there have been 506 deaths since 13 December, 267—over 50 per cent—in aged care. I have had worried constituents ringing my office to speak to me about their elderly parents who had contracted COVID-19, as did the staff, and they did not get boosted even though they met all the criteria. Tragically, another wrote to me about the absolutely disturbing state of care her mother was left in in her dying days—too graphic to detail—all, it seems, due to the lack of availability of staff. These shocking images will remain with the family forever. No-one should ever see their parents suffer like that at end of life.

As a state MP I found it very difficult to get details from the primary healthcare network about how many residents in my area of Thuringowa and Townsville in residential aged-care facilities had received their COVID vaccine booster. Just imagine for a moment that your elderly, frail, frightened parent, who is unable to see family, locked in their room—add a dose of early onset dementia—staff coming in with full PPE when they could get staff. Those days must be awful for our most vulnerable. The reality is that is someone's mum or dad. These are people who have worked hard all their lives and they deserve a decent level of care.


We all know, and it is very clear, that aged care is the responsibility of the federal government, so I looked to our federal member. I wrote to the member for Herbert and asked him what was happening in our communities with regard to the vaccine. I table my letter and his response.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 18 January 2022, from the member for Thuringowa, Mr Aaron Harper MP, to the federal member for Herbert, Mr Phillip Thompson OAM MP, titled 'Covid booster shots in residential aged care facilities' [\[211\]](#).

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 24 January 2022, from the federal member for Herbert, Mr Phillip Thompson OAM MP, to the member for Thuringowa, Mr Aaron Harper MP, titled 'COVID-19 vaccination boosters in residential aged care facilities' [\[212\]](#).

His response is misleading. He said he can advise that the booster program for residents in residential aged-care facilities is expected to be completed by 29 January 2022. What a load of rubbish! People have still not got it. I say to the member for Herbert, 'This is not worth the paper it is written on!' Do not leave our most vulnerable in those states! In North Queensland we have seen the Army respond in times of disasters like cyclones and floods. Today we have Army personnel, the ADF, going into residential aged-care facilities because the federal Minister for Aged Care is an absolute disgrace. He would rather go to cricket than deal with the crisis in aged care. It is time to get it fixed. It is time for the federal government to step up and look after the hardworking people in our residential aged-care facilities and get the boosters done. The member for Herbert should hang his head in shame. He has misled the people of Townsville by saying they all got their COVID vaccine when clearly that is not the case.

Water Infrastructure


 **Mr BOYCE** (Callide—LNP) (6.07 pm): I rise to speak about water infrastructure and the lack of commitment by the Labor Party, both state and federal. Yesterday we heard in this House glowing reports of how the government is going to restore Paradise Dam in the electorate of Callide back to its original capacity of some 33,000 megalitres of water to secure the future security and viability of the greater Bundaberg agricultural area. On behalf of the agricultural community and the general public of the Wide Bay area, we welcome this \$600 million commitment from the state government. We also recognise the federal Morrison Liberal National Party's commitment of a further \$600 million to ensure the rebuilding of Paradise Dam. This highlights the fact that it is the federal government that is prepared to clean up the Labor Party's mess—the greatest engineering failure in Australia's history—all managed by successive Labor Party governments right back to its original construction.

With regard to the Constitution and water infrastructure, planning, delivery and management is the domain of the state government. The federal government helps fund water infrastructure all over Australia, but in the end it is the responsibility of the state government to build this water infrastructure. The fact is that Labor governments have very little foresight or commitment to build or prepare for the

future water needs of Queenslanders. As I speak the town of Mount Morgan, near Rockhampton, relies on water trucked up the range from the Fitzroy River near Rockhampton at a cost in excess of \$70,000 a week. What is the Labor Party government doing to address this problem? Furthermore, the Coordinator-General's report in respect of the Nathan Gorge dam has now lapsed. Why? The Nathan Gorge Dam is one of Australia's largest shovel-ready infrastructure projects, with all approvals in place.

If we are to have this industrial-scale hydrogen industry at Gladstone, where is the water coming from? Where is the planning and foresight you need for this industry? You need 10 litres of water to create a kilo of hydrogen. For the production of industrial quantities of hydrogen we will require industrial quantities of freshwater. With a federal election looming why has Mr Albanese, leader of the federal Labor Party, not made a commitment to match the \$600 million pledge of Barnaby Joyce, Deputy Prime Minister, to fix Paradise Dam? Because the Labor Party is not interested in water or agriculture. The state water minister, the member for Gladstone, Mr Butcher, needs to tell Queenslanders what his plans for water are. Water is critical to our growing needs. The Rookwood Weir on the Fitzroy River was the first to be announced in 2016 and now, six years later, we are still building it. It is too slow—too slow.

Redlands Electorate, Achievements

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (6.10 pm): I rise in the House tonight to talk about all of the fantastic work that is being delivered by our government in the Redlands. I have done it as a reflection to see what a track record looks like. I am not sure if anyone in the House has had a chance to listen to the valedictory speech of the federal LNP member for Bowman after 18 years in the Redlands. There was not one mention of a proud project delivery moment after 18 years.

After being in parliament for 1½ terms, I can list the following achievements. We have \$110 million for the Cleveland-Redland Bay Road duplication works. We have brand new ferry terminals on the way for our Southern Moreton Bay Islands. The \$44 million worth of ferry terminals will transform our region, particularly in terms of that arrival experience. It was great to be out with Minister Bailey to look at the works happening at Russell Island. The pontoon is done. It is down in Thornlands and it is creating local jobs. It is a fantastic project for our region.


Then I go to the schools. I have said in this place many times that education should be at the centre of everything that we think about. We have air conditioning and solar already up and running for all of our Redlands schools. I thank Minister Grace for that because that is an outstanding achievement being delivered well before time.

We will have a new southern Redland Bay state school, with \$60 million for that new school. An \$11 million new learning precinct for Victoria Point State High School is on the drawing boards at the moment. We have just completed an \$11 million learning precinct at the Redland District Special School, which I had the chance to visit with Don Brown. What a difference that is going to make to those very special students in terms of the education they get. There is a beautiful new music room, a beautiful new arts room and new classrooms. It is absolutely state-of-the-art. I am so proud of that project. We have delivered a new YMCA vocational school. Across all of our state schools, there have been upgrades—whether it is multipurpose courts, hall expansions, library upgrades and transformations or manual arts buildings. The list goes on in education. I have a list here as long as my arm. I could talk more about it but I only have 40 seconds left.

In health, we are delivering a \$50 million new hospital car park for Redland Hospital and a \$62 million new intensive care unit and additional beds for the wards. They are on their way and are being planned at the moment. We are delivering a \$40 million new satellite hospital for Redland Bay that will service my growing area. It will service the islands. It will provide an incredible opportunity for Redlanders to get the care they need closer to home. It is fantastic.

I look at the other things, and we are delivering a new fire station in Mount Cotton and we have an IndigiScapes upgrade. We have delivered so much.

Coomera Electorate, Achievements


 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (6.13 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise tonight to talk about 12 of our local sporting clubs on the northern Gold Coast. We are a fast-growing community, as I have often reported in the House. There are more than 20,000 young people going to school in the electorate, with another couple of thousand who live in the electorate and go to school just outside the electorate.

We had the opportunity to put out a call to some of our sporting groups late last year to see who wanted some self-branded marquees. I am pleased to inform the House that 12 of the northern Gold Coast sporting groups put their hands up: the Ormeau Shearers Rugby League Football Club; the

Crusaders Football Club; the Gold Coast Clay Target Club; the North Gold Coast Seahawks Basketball, where my grandson is now a member of the Pimpama Pelicans, which is the under-13 boys team; the Pimpama City Football Club; the Ormeau Football Club; the North Albert Field Archers, which have been there for a long time but I have only just had the opportunity to meet them; the Ormeau Little Athletics; the Northern Elements Netball Club; the Woongoolba Tennis Club; the Ormeau Bulldogs Australian Football Club; and the Alberton Ormeau Cricket Club. All of them now have their own branding on those marquees. We gave them two marquees each, so we delivered 24 marquees to those community groups and they are absolutely rapt in them. The feedback we have received is amazing.

Another good news story for the electorate is the long-awaited Coomera TAFE. We call it the 'Marine Centric TAFE'. I ran a petition for this back in September 2019. Sadly, the minister at the time, the member for Waterford, indicated that that was not going to happen. She actually pooh-poohed the idea on Twitter, along with a couple of other things. All of that has gone by the wayside now because the good news is that the Morrison federal government committed 50 per cent funding just before the last election in September 2020. Here we are 16 months later and the sod turning finally occurred just the other day so that is under construction. If I heard him right, I think the federal member for Fadden, Stuart Robert, has indicated that it will be opened by May this year. I joined the member for Fadden, Stuart Robert, and the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, Di Farmer, on site to do the sod turning, which was a great experience. We had a cast of thousands there on the day. I am looking forward to that precinct opening for the northern Gold Coast community.

Toohey Electorate, Achievements


 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (6.16 pm): I would like to share with the House a couple of the fantastic achievements we realised in the Toohey electorate last week. In 2020 the Palaszczuk government announced their progressive plan to build seven new satellite hospitals in Queensland. Last week I was very pleased to be with the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer, the health minister and my colleagues from the neighbouring electorates of Stretton and Mansfield. We all met at a large vacant block of land in Eight Mile Plains to announce the location of the last satellite hospital. It may have been the last of the satellite hospital locations to be announced, but I would like to think they saved the best announcement until last.

While it is still to be worked out what healthcare services will be available at the facility, I know this healthcare facility will ease the pressure off the nearby hospitals. Residents will be able to receive the care they need closer to home. Not only will there be an improvement in health care for locals, but there will also be healthcare jobs at the satellite hospital and more than 100 construction jobs while the satellite hospital is being built, so this will help local small businesses benefit as well.

While the news about the new satellite hospital would have been enough on its own, the very next day the Premier brought out the Minister for Tourism, Innovation and Sport for another visit to Toohey. On that day we met up at the Queensland Academy of Sport at Nathan where the Premier announced a new gym and sports centre lab. The QAS venue was the perfect location to launch the You For 2032 campaign. The race is on to find our best athletes in Queensland as we prepare for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The new gym is state-of-the-art and double the size of the old one. I can definitely see that the QAS will be the place where dreams are made into reality for the next generation of athletes who are still out there running around school ovals, jumping over hurdles or even swimming extra laps in the pool at schools across this great state. These young people will be the future athletes we will be cheering on in 2032. For many of them, they will get to test their dreams and undertake their training in my electorate of Toohey. To them I say welcome. What a week it was. Before I finish, I would like to extend an invitation to each of the ministers to come out to Toohey. I can assure them we have plenty going on.

Townsville, Youth Crime

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (6.19 pm): We just had the member for Thuringowa talk about the last couple of months in Townsville, but he failed to mention what has actually been going on up there with youth crime. Instead of being embroiled in an argument with the member for Herbert, he should be worried about what is on the front pages of the *Townsville Bulletin* where crime is front and centre. The first front page I have here says 'Waste of Time'. I table that.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 20 January 2022, titled 'Victim of youth crime declares restorative justice is a ... Waste of Time' [\[213\]](#).

The next one I have says 'Here we go again' and that it is a 'city under siege', and I table that one.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 21 January 2022, titled 'City under siege as police launch 10-day crime crackdown' [214].

This next front page says 'Drug pedaler', and this is a great one. They sold their bike after leaving the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre—

Ms PEASE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member knows better than to use props, and he has done it three times now. He cannot continue to do that.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Member for Hinchinbrook, I will confirm you are tabling those documents?

Mr DAMETTO: I have a short amount of time to speak in the House so I will table them.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 1 February 2022, titled 'Drug Pedaler' [215].

Tabled paper: Article from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 22 February 2022, titled 'Instacrim: Youth thugs take to social media for notoriety' [216].

Tabled paper: Article from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 10 February 2022, titled 'Magistrate's scathing assessment of detention centre in crisis' [217].

There is an article headed 'Drug Pedaler'. That is a great one. I will read from it; I will not hold it up. 'Blast from the bench'—people that are part of the magistrates system—a scathing assessment of the detention centre crisis'. My favourite from a couple of days ago was an article headed 'Instacrim'. Kids are posting their crimes on Instagram to gain notoriety. The member for Thuringowa cannot even mention crime in this House. We wonder why.

Just yesterday was the pinnacle. I will read from a letter from one of the parents who was stuck at one of the soccer grounds while kids in stolen cars did skids on the soccer fields while other kids trained. These are good kids, trying to do the right thing, getting involved in sport, and there are other kids running around in stolen cars for five hours before they attacked the fields. The parent asks, 'What are we doing?' Today's failed youth justice laws allow these kids to ride around in stolen cars for five hours. What are we doing? These youth justice laws have failed. We need to acknowledge that.

I acknowledge that the Minister for Youth Justice came up to Townsville last week. We have had whistleblowers come forward to say what is going on at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. The kids are running the asylum out there! What did the minister do? It has been reported that she went straight up to middle and upper management and sat there in an office for an hour. We have been told by staff who work on the floor, these youth workers who deal with these kids every day, that the minister did not end up going down and talking to them. They are the ones who are blowing the whistle about the problems of the place. There are kids who know the system and are working the system to get what they want every day—chucking tantrums over the toast not being the right colour in the morning, all the way through using threats of suicide to get their way so they do not get separated from their mates.

All we are asking is for the minister and the committee to back an inquiry into what is going on at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre and other detention centres across Queensland. Youth justice is failing. We want the government to put aside party politics and look at the KAP's relocation sentencing policy. It is not the boot camps of the LNP. This is bigger and better. This is about sending recidivist offenders out of the city for six to 12 months—on country, where they cannot commit crimes anymore.

Coronavirus, Education



Mr WHITING (Bancroft—ALP) (6.22 pm): I rise to commend our schools, teachers, parents and students for a relatively seamless transition back to the school year after what we know were the longest school holidays in living memory.

Ms Grace: No, New South Wales and Victoria had those.

Mr WHITING: Absolutely! I said 'relatively seamless' because we have had less disruption to our teaching years here than in other eastern seaboard states. During this pandemic our schools have been opened nearly all the time, and that is unique on the eastern seaboard. That reflects well on our policies as a government.


Firstly, I want to say thank you to the parents I have seen at local schools. They have done very well at wearing masks at school and encouraging their kids to do so as well. Thank you to the parents who have had their kids vaccinated. We need to have more kids vaccinated. I encourage my local parents to keep getting their kids vaccinated, but I thank everyone who has done that so far. I thank the parents for their understanding while we have limited access to schools for four weeks. They have

coped with that very well. I thank them for accepting why sometimes we have had to cancel school excursions and school camps. I think the parents have been very understanding as to why we had to do that and I thank them for that.

I want to thank all the staff at my local schools. They have done a tremendous job. To hear that across the state we have a staff absentee rate of just 3.5 per cent, in spite of the doom and gloom we have been hearing everywhere about what would happen, I think reflects really well on our staff. The vaccination rate of over 98 per cent is really good. I commend our staff and teachers—and I commend the minister as well—for what they have done. They have shown the right thing to do—the right thing to do by the students, by the parents, by their colleagues and also by their own families at home. I thank them for getting vaccinated.

Certainly in some of my schools it has been an exciting return for staff and students because some really great infrastructure has been delivered or is being delivered in the area. For example, the Deception Bay State School hall is in the early planning stages. Some \$5 million is coming to this school for the hall. We have the footprint now. We have gone out to consultation. I am really looking forward to that school getting that infrastructure. The performing arts block at Deception Bay High School has been rejuvenated. The STEM block at Moreton Downs State School has been upgraded. I am really proud of the work that we have done at North Lakes State College: the student support centre has been upgraded to a flexi learning centre. There is a \$500,000 project to deliver a rejuvenation of the outside-school-hours care centre. I will talk more at the next chance about the wonderful upgrade of the oval and amenities which has happened.

Glass House Electorate, Infrastructure Projects

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (6.25 pm): Tonight I rise to express my concern and that of my constituents around the way the government has handled the community consultation on the Bruce Highway Western Alternative. Let me be clear: we desperately need the Bruce Highway Western Alternative. I support it. It needs to go ahead. It will be a vital link between the Sunshine Coast and communities around the rail corridor, ultimately at Beerburum, through the new city—it will be a city—of Caboolture West and down into northern Brisbane.

Given that stages 1, 2 and 4 of that project are entirely contained within the Glass House electorate, you would think that the local member would have been briefed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads. Sadly, that has not been the case. In exasperation, I wrote to TMR on 18 January. I followed it up on 2 February, requesting an urgent briefing so that I could explain what is going on to my many concerned residents. I have heard nothing, which has led me this week to submit a question on notice to the minister on Tuesday, imploring him to direct the department to provide me with that briefing. The frustrations only start there.

Stage 1 was between Moodlu and Moorina, through that important new development at Caboolture West. In isolation of the full length of the project, it seemed a kind of pointless exercise. They gave three options and, as former councillor Lynette Devereaux pointed out, it really did not make much sense unless you looked at the project as a whole. Also, engineers would have told you that there is really only one place you can cross the Caboolture River. Consultation consisted of drop-in sessions at Wamuran and Upper Caboolture and, to be blunt, they raised more questions than gave answers.

Stage 2 is from Moorina to Narangba. It is more defined, but that meant the first residents knew was a letter from TMR saying their property would be impacted. I met with many of the Springflats Court residents from Moorina, hosted by Wayne and Pam Morris—I thank the Morrises—and I really must commend them for the mature and considered approach they are taking to working with TMR, despite the way they have been treated to date. I also want to raise the environmental concerns of Herman Lanning, who rightly points out that this corridor has a significant koala habitat which needs to be considered.

Finally, stage 4 is Beerburum to Moodlu. I start by tabling a document which shows just how vague TMR has been on potentially who is affected.

Tabled paper: Map depicting Caboolture and surrounds [\[218\]](#).

It is this shaded-out grey area which takes in just about all of Moodlu, the part of Caboolture which is in the electorate of Glass House and much of Elimbah and their hundreds and hundreds of residents. They have contacted me frustrated that there is literally no detail.

In conclusion, I reiterate my request for a briefing so that I can help Transport and Main Roads and my residents work through this process. Let's get this right. Let's treat our residents with respect and get the best outcome possible for the government, for the commuters and for the residents of Glass House.

Sunshine Coast, Aged Care



Mr SKELTON (Nicklin—ALP) (6.28 pm): I rise to speak on the issue of the aged-care crisis gripping our country and our beautiful Sunshine Coast. I acknowledge the members for Kurwongbah and Thuringowa for their contribution. I first need to thank the nurses, cleaners, cooks, doctors, physios, lifestyle coordinators, administration and support staff, and volunteers. I acknowledge everyone working in our aged-care centres for their tireless efforts and endless compassion and for their consistent drive to provide the best possible care for their residents, our elderly. They are tested before every shift. They wear layers of PPE for hours to prevent the spread of this insidious disease. This is exhausting, yet they continue to show up and perform their duties. They all wear this burden on their shoulders. They have already done so much during this pandemic. I thank them.

The aged-care system was broken before the COVID pandemic. No additional funds or resources were forthcoming after the long-awaited recommendations of the aged-care royal commission. The blame for the crisis in our aged-care system lies solely at the feet of the federal LNP government. It is the federal LNP government that needs to abide by the royal commission. In many instances facilities have had to secure enough vaccines to ensure their staff and residents were fully vaccinated. They have done this on their own with the help of the state or other allied health professionals. The federal LNP government left them waiting, left them without vaccines. This federal LNP government did nothing to secure enough RATs. Again, our aged-care facilities were on their own. The state government, the wider community and the providers themselves have met the shortfalls, and I thank them for it, as everyone should.

I deplore the consistent calls to open the border and let it rip. The lack of PPE, vaccines, tests and promptly acting on the best health advice could and should be seen as gross negligence. Our aged-care system needs support. Its workers need to be properly resourced. This is an unsafe workplace with COVID running rampant throughout the sector. These underpaid professionals need our help. They thoroughly deserve it. I have raised this issue with federal members and have only heard silence. Unfortunately, their interest is in headlines and photo opportunities. We are all affected by this. We all have loved ones who have been touched in some way by this crisis. I call upon the federal government to do its job.

The House adjourned at 6.31 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Andrew, Bailey, Bates, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Boyce, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Camm, Crandon, Crawford, Crisafulli, D'Ath, Dametto, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gerber, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hart, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Janetzki, Katter, Kelly, King A, King S, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lister, Lui, MacMahon, Madden, Mander, Martin, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mullen, O'Connor, O'Rourke, Palaszczyk, Pease, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Purdie, Richards, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Skelton, Smith, Stevens, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Watts, Weir, Whiting