



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

### Thursday, 17 March 2022

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## THURSDAY, 17 MARCH 2022

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The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

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

### PRIVILEGE

#### Confidentiality of Portfolio Committee Proceedings



**Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (9.30 am): The three LNP members of the Economics and Governance Committee boycotted this morning's scheduled meeting. We do not take this action lightly. However, we will not be silenced or allow our silence to become misrepresented by the failing of the portfolio system which allows four votes of government members to three votes of non-government members.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members, I do not need any assistance. I ask, member for Mermaid Beach, if you can point to a particular standing order which is relevant to this being a matter of privilege; otherwise, I will ask you to resume your seat.

**Mr STEVENS:** It would be under standing order 211, Mr Speaker, that the LNP members of the Economics and Governance Committee are totally committed to honesty, openness and transparency for the public interest of matters for its jurisdiction.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I am going to ask, member, that you get to the point or you write to me because matters—

**Mr STEVENS:** Mr Speaker, I shall be writing to you to outline what we believe—

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, member—

**Mr Hinchliffe** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** No; thank you, Acting Leader of the House. This is not an opportunity to have a platform to speak about the issue.

**Mr STEVENS:** I will be writing to you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I appreciate that and I look forward to receiving that correspondence.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

### SPEAKER'S RULING

#### Questions on Notice and Responses, Compliance with Standing Orders



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the Legislative Assembly's standing orders exist to ensure that we have a framework within which the Assembly can carry out its responsibilities. A fundamental responsibility of this Assembly is to scrutinise the activities of government. An important way that all members participate in this role is by asking questions of the government about its policies and its administration. Unfortunately, there has been an increase in disputation in relation to questions on notice and responses. This has led to increased pressure on the resources of the parliament. I take this opportunity to remind all members of my expectations in respect of questions on notice and ministerial responses to those questions. Some members, unfortunately, require this advice more than others. Some key points of this advice need to be explicitly stated, which I will now do.

In relation to questions, I shall consider questions which contain gratuitous political statements as argumentative and such questions will be ruled out of order. Furthermore, misleading the House via a question on notice is just as unacceptable as doing so in the chamber. Members must take care to ensure that questions are not argumentative and do not contain inferences or imputations of wrongdoing or factual inaccuracies. In relation to answers, as long as the question accords with the standing orders and is genuinely seeking to elicit information which should be available to the minister, I will rule that the minister should answer the question in a relevant and genuine manner.

In 2021 there were a steady number of complaints that responses did not answer the question asked. Approximately two per cent of answers to questions on notice asked in 2021 have been the subject of complaints. Approximately one per cent of answers to questions on notice asked in 2021 have required amendment from their initial answer to be compliant with the standing orders. These may seem like low numbers, but the tax on resources is high. Responses must pertain to the question asked. If not, they are irrelevant and the question will be considered unanswered. Answers which contain gratuitous political statements that are not relevant to the question asked will be ruled out of order.

As stated above, questions on notice and answers to the same which contain gratuitous political statements are out of order. Simply put, 'political attacks' which are superfluous to putting a question on notice or to answering the same will be considered gratuitous political statements. Questions on notice and their answers by their nature are premeditated. Members, I want the House to consider this: the latitude given to off-the-cuff contributions in the House, particularly in a time like question time, is important, but it does not apply to the questions on notice process. As I said, the process is considerably premeditated. When I am asked to make determinations that questions on notice and/or answers thereof are compliant under the standing orders, I will apply previous Speakers' rulings and the principles enunciated in this statement. I seek leave to incorporate a full statement about this matter circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

#### SPEAKER'S STATEMENT—QUESTIONS ON NOTICE AND RESPONSES

The Legislative Assembly's standing orders exist to ensure a framework within which the Assembly can carry out its responsibilities.

A fundamental responsibility of the Assembly is to scrutinise the activities of the Government. An important way that all members participate in this role is by asking questions of the government about its policies and administration.

Unfortunately, there has been an increase in disputation in relation to Questions on Notice and responses. There has led to an increased pressure on the resources of the Parliament.

Approximately 2% of answers to Questions on Notice asked in 2021 have been the subject of complaints.

Approximately 1% of answers to Questions on Notice asked in 2021 have required amendment from their initial answer to be compliant with the Standing Orders.

The increased focus of myself and my delegates (the Clerk and the Table Office) on determining if Questions on Notice and their answers are within the Standing Orders serves to strengthen the fundamental responsibility of the Assembly to scrutinise the activities of the Government.

I wish to remind all members of my expectations in respect of questions on notice and ministerial responses to those questions.

#### **Process of Determining Complaints**

As to process, I have delegated the initial assessment of both questions and responses to the Clerk and the Table Office.

In the case of questions, where time is of the essence, if a compliant question cannot be negotiated with the member asking the question, the Clerk will refer the question to me for a determination.

In relation to responses deemed wholly or partly out of order, to date the Clerk and their officers have only reviewed answers in terms of compliance with Standing Orders.

However, I have now requested that the Clerk and their officers view answers with regard to relevance—that is, whether answers are responsive to the question.

This means the processing of responses will take longer. Questions received later in the afternoon, may not be uploaded to the questions webpage until the following day (as is already the case for responses received after 5pm).

Responses referred back to minister's offices by staff as non-compliant, will not be considered 'received' until the date they are determined to be compliant.

If the relevant minister disagrees with the Clerk and their officers' assessment they should write to me making their case, and I will make a determination. Ministers will be given 3 business days after my determination to lodge an answer.

My determinations will be based on the following rules and principles.

**Questions**

The rules for questions are set out in chapter 20 of our standing orders, and in particular Standing Orders 112 and 115.

As to content:

*Multiple parts to questions*

Questions are to be brief, and relate to only one issue. There is a habit amongst some members of including an unreasonable number of parts to their questions, including at times some with very tenuous links to the primary issue.

If members ask multi-part questions they run the risk that some or all will be ruled out of order; and, that some or all parts will not be answered to their satisfaction.

*Arguments, inferences, imputations*

Questions must not contain arguments, inferences or imputations.

I shall consider Questions which contain gratuitous political statements as argumentative and such questions will be ruled out of order.

Furthermore, misleading the House via a question on notice is just as unacceptable as doing so in the chamber. Members must take care to ensure that questions are not argumentative, and do not contain inferences or imputations of wrongdoing or factual inaccuracies.

Members must be prepared to authenticate the facts stated in the question. Where facts stated in questions cannot be authenticated, I will rule such questions out of order.

Similarly, I will rule out of order questions which offer opinions or state facts beyond those necessary to explain the question.

I remind members of the rule in Standing Order 231 against anticipating debate of a matter on the notice paper.

**Responses to Questions**

I turn now to responses to questions on notice.

The general rules for responses to questions are in Standing Order 118. They provide that in answering a question a minister or member must not debate the subject to which it refers; and that an answer shall be relevant to the question.

*Relevance*

As long as the question accords with the Standing Orders and genuinely seeks to elicit information which should be available to the minister, I will rule that the minister should answer the question in a relevant and genuine manner.

In 2021 there were a steady number of complaints that responses did not answer the question asked.

Common complaints include but are not limited to;

Responses being very broad, to the point that they do not answer the specific question asked;

Responses not providing the information requested, often without explanation.

Responses must pertain to the question asked. If not, they are irrelevant and the question will be considered unanswered.

Answers which contain gratuitous political statements that are not relevant to the question asked, will be ruled out of order.

If a specific unit of measurement or geographic area is the focus, the response should reference that unit or area. If data pertaining to that unit or area is not readily available but data is available for a more commonly used unit or an overlapping area, this may be acceptable as an answer provided this is explained in the response.

Answers which provide data in accordance with agreed national standards for the subject matter of a Question on Notice can be provided, however such data must be pertinent to the Question as asked.

*Unreasonable Burden on Agency*

I accept the potential for information gathering at a minute level to pose an unreasonable burden on an agency's resources in situations where data is not readily recorded in the terms sought by the Question.

Where this is the case, ministers should explain why an answer cannot be provided in the terms posed in the Question. If ministers provide a reasonable explanation I will rule the question answered. Ministers are ultimately responsible for the accuracy of their answers, including assurances that the information is not available and difficult to source.

If the data is available it should generally be provided.

That specific data can be misrepresented is not an acceptable reason for not providing it. Data can be provided with caveats or explanations as appropriate.

*Best and Reasonable Endeavours*

Responsive answers begin with proper questions. If a question is broad in scope, or seeks minutely detailed information I have followed Speaker Wellington's rulings of 22 March 2017 and 23 May 2017.

Specifically, I am comfortable with the minister making an attempt to answer the question in a genuine manner: that is, they should use their best and reasonable endeavours.

*Information already in public domain*

In some instances, ministers respond that the information sought is already available in the public arena. This is an acceptable answer, where the information sought by the question is, in fact, readily accessible and specific to the question asked.

An explanation of where and how the data can be obtained should be detailed in the answer. It is generally not acceptable to identify a website or a report or series of reports, without reference to specific webpage or location in the report.

If where and how the data can be obtained is not in the answer, and the information should be available to the minister, I will rule that the minister should answer the question with specific reference to this information.

*Debating the question*

Answers which contain gratuitous political statements that are not relevant to the question asked will be deemed as debating the question under Standing Order 118(a) and will be ruled out of order.

**Gratuitous Political Statements**

As stated above Questions on Notice and answers to the same, which contain gratuitous political statements, are out of order.

Gratuitous political statements are statements which are superfluous to putting a Question on Notice or to answering the same, such statements include, but are not limited to;

- Commentary on;
  - previous State and Federal Governments and the Ministers who served in them. This expressly includes the immediately previous State Government.
  - other Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland
  - the Federal Government, Federal Opposition, Federal Members of the House of Representatives and Federal Senators
  - Local Governments, mayors and councillors
  - potential or declared candidates for election to Local Government, State of Federal Parliament
- Insults
- Smears
- Politically inspired nomenclature.

Simply put, "political attacks" which are superfluous to putting a Question on Notice or to answering the same will be considered gratuitous political statements.

Questions on Notice and their answer by their nature are pre-meditated. The latitude given for "off the cuff" contributions in House does not apply for the Questions on Notice process.

*Advice to Members*

I again encourage all members to familiarise themselves with the Standing Orders in relation to Questions on Notice and responses and to take note of the principles that I have detailed in this Statement.

**PRIVILEGE****Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Reflection on the Chair**

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 20 December 2021 the member for Capalaba wrote to me alleging that the member for South Brisbane reflected on the Speaker in a Facebook post on 3 December 2021. The matter relates to comments made on Facebook by the member for South Brisbane discussing the motion of dissent that the member for South Brisbane gave notice of on 18 November 2021 and which was debated in the House on 1 December 2021. Specifically, the Facebook post of the member for South Brisbane described the ruling as 'flawed'.

The member for Capalaba argued that by referring to a ruling of the Speaker as 'flawed' the member for South Brisbane was calling a ruling of the Speaker a defect or a fault and as such made a reflection on the chair. I sought further information from the member for South Brisbane about the allegation made against her in accordance with standing order 269(5). The member for South Brisbane submitted that she was not making assertions that I had acted in bad faith or in a partial manner; rather, she was summarising the motion of dissent as part of her 2020 parliamentary summary to her constituents.

Standing order 269(4) requires that, in considering whether a matter should be referred to the Ethics Committee, I should take into account the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter.



Standing order 266(23) is clear that, if members comment or reflect on a decision of the chair, except by a substantive motion of censure, this is a clear example of contempt. This reflects the longstanding parliamentary practice in Westminster parliaments.

I caution the member for South Brisbane that the member should take care in her commentary about the rulings of the chair to avoid committing a contempt of the House, but as this matter hinges on the use of a single word—'flawed'—which is not inherently offensive I consider the matter ultimately trivial and does not require the attention of the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter to that committee. I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 20 December 2021, from the member for Capalaba, Mr Don Brown MP, to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt, regarding a matter of privilege [306].

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 24 January 2021, from the member for South Brisbane, Dr Amy MacMahon MP, to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt, regarding a matter of privilege [318].

*Table paper:* Letter, dated 10 January 2022, from the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt, to the member for South Brisbane, Dr Amy MacMahon MP, regarding a matter of privilege [307].

#### SPEAKER'S RULING—ALLEGED DELIBERATELY MISLEADING THE HOUSE

On 20 December 2021, the Member for Capalaba wrote to me alleging that the Member for South Brisbane reflected on the Speaker in a Facebook post on 3 December 2021.

The matter relates to comments made on Facebook by the Member for South Brisbane discussing the motion of dissent that the Member for South Brisbane gave notice of on 18 November 2021, and was debated in the House on 1 December 2021.

Specifically, 'Defended the Big Bank Levy Bill after a (flawed!) ruling that the Bill was out of order (an old convention, private members' can't introduce tax bills, despite nothing in our rules to say otherwise'.

The Member for Capalaba argued that by referring to a ruling of a Speaker as flawed, the Member for South Brisbane was calling a ruling of the Speaker a defect and/or fault and as such made a reflection on the Chair of Queensland Parliament.

The Member for Capalaba also argued that the Member for South Brisbane should have contained her comments on the Speaker's Ruling to the debate in the House, rather than make further comments on social media.

I sought further information from the Member for South Brisbane about the allegation made against her, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The Member for South Brisbane submitted that she was not making assertions that I had acted in bad faith or in a partial manner, rather she was summarising the motion of dissent as part of her 2020 Parliamentary summary to her constituents.

The Member for South Brisbane stated that the motion of dissent was entirely consistent with Standing Orders and premised on the argument that she was of the belief the decision was flawed, and the Facebook post was summarising this process for her constituents.

While the Member for South Brisbane further stated she is of the belief that Standing Order 266(23) permits a motion commenting on the Chair, and that such a motion would not be considered a reflection on the Chair, she is mistaken in her belief that a motion of dissent falls within the definition of a substantive motion of censure as referenced in Standing Order 266(23). A substantive motion of censure is essentially a motion of no confidence in the Speaker, and differs significantly from the motion of dissent put forward by the Member for South Brisbane.

In my view, the correct avenue to dispute a ruling is via a motion of dissent. If the motion is resolved in the negative, as was the case here, my ruling is upheld.

Standing Order 269(4) requires that in considering whether such a matter should be referred to the Ethics Committee, that I should take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter.

Standing Order 266 (23) is clear that if members comment or reflect on a decision of the Chair, except by a substantive Motion of censure, this is a clear example of contempt.

This reflects long standing Parliamentary practice in Westminster Parliaments.

I caution the Member for South Brisbane that the member should take care in her commentary about the rulings of the Chair to avoid committing a contempt of this House.

I consider that as this matter hinges on the use of a single word "flawed", which is not inherently offensive, I consider the matter ultimately trivial.

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

For completeness, it should be noted that the Member for Capalaba raised another potential breach of privilege in his correspondence. He alleged that the Member for South Brisbane brought the House into disrepute with her statement, '... if I've learned anything this year, it is that there are many archaic rules in this place just begging to be broken ...'

There was insufficient particulars put forward with respect to that allegation, and as such, I have decided the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House.

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### School Group Tours



**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, I wish to advise that we will be visited in the gallery this morning by students and teachers from Samford State School in the electorate of Pine Rivers and Clontarf Beach State School in the electorate of Redcliffe.

## MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

### Dollin, Mr RH



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.38 am): I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late Robert Henry Dollin, a former member of the parliament of Queensland.
2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the parliament of Queensland, in the loss they have sustained.

Bob Dollin was born in Kyogle, New South Wales, on 6 December 1928. He moved to Queensland in 1944 and worked extensively in the timber industry, including at times as the director of sawmills in Central Queensland and the Wide Bay. Timber cutting as a young man will not have been an easy life, but he persevered and rose in the industry. Bob's knowledge of the timber industry, especially on the Fraser Coast, was second to none which he carried into his parliamentary service.

My father Henry remembers learning more about trees from Bob Dollin than he thought was humanly possible. On a trip to timber regions, Mr Dollin pointed out all the species, where they grew, which ones grew best on slopes, which ones grew best on flat ground, where logging had occurred—anything his fellow MPs needed to know.

Mr Speaker, 1989 was a landmark year for government in Queensland, and for Bob Dollin. He was preselected by the Labor Party to contest the seat of Maryborough at what turned out to be an historic state election. Maryborough had an interesting history. It was a Labor seat for much of the 20th century until Gil Alison won it for the Liberal Party in 1971. Brendan Hansen won it back for Labor in 1977, before Alison returned in 1983, this time for the National Party. Then on that momentous day in Queensland political history, 2 December 1989, Bob Dollin was able to win Maryborough. He played his part in helping Wayne Goss to form the first ALP government in this state for 32 years. Mr Dollin won again in 1992 and 1995, serving as a member of this House for almost nine years until the state election of June 1998.

It is not surprising that during his first speech in this place, Mr Dollin spoke passionately and with great insight about the timber industry. I also note that during that first speech, Mr Dollin spoke about Walkers Limited of Maryborough, nowadays Downer. He spoke about the company's importance locally as a manufacturing hub and a major supplier of railway rolling stock to Queensland Rail. When I consider his legacy and his standing in the Maryborough community, it gives me great pride to mention our commitment to the largest rail investment in Queensland history: to build 65 trains, creating 800 jobs in Maryborough and the Wide Bay region and up to 3,000 jobs throughout the state. I hope and trust that Mr Dollin would have been proud as well. Mr Dollin's service to the House included the Select Committee on Travelsafe from 1990 to 1998—a lengthy period on that important committee—and from 1992 to 1995 he was a member of premier Goss's Rural and Northern Taskforce.

Robert Henry Dollin passed away on 5 November last year, a month before his 93rd birthday. A service to celebrate his life was held at the Bayside Memorial Gardens in Hervey Bay. The current member for Maryborough describes Bob Dollin as a Labor legend who was his mentor. Knowing the member as we do, that is high praise indeed. We know that anyone who qualified as the member for Maryborough's mentor must have been an outstanding person.

I place on record the government's thanks for the years of service that Bob Dollin gave to Queensland. On behalf of the government, I extend my sympathy and that of this House to Mr Dollin's family and friends: to his wife, Verlie, and their children Stephen, Stewie, Maree, Michelle and Katrina. I welcome their granddaughter Penny who is with us today. Bob Dollin lived a long and fruitful life of hard work and dedicated community service. I know he was greatly loved in the region. His family can be immensely proud. Maryborough will always be grateful and our state is the better for his life.



**Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.42 am): It is always a matter for deep regret when this House is called upon to express its condolences upon the passing of a former member. Sometimes it seems even more significant when that former member came into this place at

a time of significant social, political and cultural change in this state. In this instance I refer, of course, to the passing of Robert 'Bob' Dollin, a former member for Maryborough who entered this House upon the election of the Goss government in 1989. In that capacity, he joined a generation of members who were able to say that they helped generate a range of changes and reforms. Bob Dollin represented the electorate of Maryborough from 1989 until 1998. Maryborough had been represented by the ALP from 1932 until 1971 and by both the Liberal and National parties until Bob Dollin's election. It is interesting to note that Bob Dollin's campaign director in his first election was Brendan Hansen, a predecessor in the seat of Maryborough and the former federal member for Wide Bay.

Bob Dollin was very much a part of his local community. Much of his working life was involved with the timber industry, one of the mainstays of the local Maryborough economy. In his maiden speech in March 1990 he spoke of the need to increase the amount of land available for plantation timber as increased demand for housing put pressure on timber supplies. He spoke at length of the problems for those seeking housing if timber resources were shut up rather than being properly managed and he warned of the activities of those seeking to close the timber industry.

As the member for Maryborough, Bob Dollin was equally vociferous in his advocacy for the other significant industries in the city: engineering, particularly the local firm Walkers; and sugar milling as undertaken by the Maryborough Sugar Factory. In the latter case he drew attention to the potential conflict between the sugar industry and the broader community as competition for scarce land and water resources continued to grow.

Bob Dollin acknowledged that Maryborough was undergoing significant change. The number of factories, processing plants and manufacturers was in decline, unemployment was growing and job opportunities were declining. He expressed the hope that the incoming government would respond to these challenges and restore Maryborough's fortunes. Bob Dollin's time in this House came to an end at the 1998 election when he was one of the six ALP members to lose their seat to One Nation. Despite the premature conclusion to his parliamentary career, he was able to look back with pride on his advocacy for the electorate and its people. I did not know Bob Dollin personally, but I suspect few could summarise his life better than a former colleague from the timber industry who described him on social media as 'a great boss, a great mate and an absolute gentleman'.

The Opposition extends our condolences to Bob Dollin's wife, Verlie, his children, grandchildren—including Penny Liedersdorff who joins us today—as well as his great-grandchildren, and we join in support for this motion.



**Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (9.45 am): I rise today to talk about one of my mentors and a great man in the Maryborough electorate, Bobby Dollin. We did not call him Robert, we called him Bobby. For many years he kept it very quiet that he was born in New South Wales. I first met Bob when I joined the Australian Labor Party branch in Maryborough as a young man. Bob was coming and going in the timber industry in those days. To be honest, I did not know Bob was a Labor man, because most in the timber industry were old Nats. I got to know Bob very well. The Leader of the Opposition was correct when he said he was a fantastic boss. The men and women who worked for him talked about how good he was. You realised the true Labor values of this man by how he treated his workers.

In 1989 I was living in Mount Isa when the Goss government was elected. The then member for Mount Isa, Tony McGrady, invited me down to parliament and I had a few ales with the member for Maryborough. He was talking to me about the future of Maryborough and the way he wanted the timber industry to go. After the devastating loss in 1998 I called back through Maryborough and spoke to Bob. We talked about the decline in the great city of Maryborough after Bob Dollin. Very graciously the Premier's father stepped up as a pseudo member after 1998 until he retired. He was the shadow member for Maryborough and kept Maryborough alive in those days.

Bob was one of the best men you will ever meet. He was a man of his word. You did not have to have a contract or write anything down. Bob shook your hand and told you that was it. When I went back to Maryborough we kept in touch. In 2014 I rang him and said, 'Bob, I'm thinking about running for Maryborough,' and he said, 'Oh, we better have a talk.' We caught up a few times. He gave me some really good advice about winning the seat. We followed that advice and that is why the Palaszczuk government came to power.

On one occasion I thought I would have a talk to Bob about timber. Four days later I was still there talking about timber. As the Premier said, any time anyone wanted to know about timber—and the member for Gympie will know this—they would ring up Bob. You would have about 15 or 20 minutes spare, but an hour and a half later you would still be on the phone talking about timber. There is not a man I know who knew about timber like Bob Dollin. As the Premier said, he could tell you about the

leaves, the trees, the country it grew in and what they used it for. Every time we talked about timber at a branch meeting people started looking at their watches because we all knew it was not going to be a 10-minute talk.

Bob was a tremendous member. As I said in my adjournment contribution when Bob passed away, I ran into a bloke at the markets one day and he said to me, 'I've made two mistakes in life, mate,' and I said, 'What are they?' and he said, 'I didn't back a tip I got on the Melbourne Cup and I voted against Bobby Dollin.' When Bob was the member, Downer Rail, or Walkers as it was called in those days, had 772 staff. It went down to 122. This bloke said to me, 'I was one of the blokes who lost their job. We didn't realise we had a fighter like Bob Dollin as our member. We thought we could do that protest vote and go with Pauline Hanson to show the Labor Party what we thought of them. It taught me a lesson. It cost me my job. It nearly cost me my home.'

As I said before, they broke the mould with a man like Bobby Dollin. He was well respected in Maryborough. His family are absolutely brilliant. They are good people and Bob was a good man. He and his wife, Verlie, married in 1966. Besides trees, Verlie was his next love. Verlie is a tremendous woman. The Labor members and the union members of my area are going to miss Bob. I miss him.

Bob always ran the Burrum Heads booth for me. I would say, 'Bob, you're getting a bit long in the tooth, old mate. You don't have to run the booth all day if you don't want to.' He would be there setting up at six o'clock in the morning and he would still be there counting the votes at nine o'clock at night. We are talking about a man who was in his late 70s and 80s, but Bob was always there. He knew everyone in Burrum Heads. We would go to 'speaker's corner', as Bob called it, at the beachfront of Burrum Heads. Every day he would be there lecturing people about the values of the Labor Party and the values of the timber industry.

The Premier came to town for a cabinet meeting in Maryborough and she said that Maryborough was going back to being a timber and train town. I have never seen a bloke stand so tall as when the Premier announced that Maryborough was going to be a timber town again, because it was Bobby's dream for Maryborough to be again recognised as the timber city of Queensland.

We are going to miss Bobby. Every day that I walk into my office I see a corflute of Bobby Dollin's on my wall because it reminds me of the great things that he did in the nine years that he was the member for Maryborough. He was a man of his word and a man who, I am proud to say, stood for Labor values. He stood for the values that we stand for in the Labor Party and the union movement. You could see that at his funeral as the ex-workers came up. His electorate officer Adele talked about some of the meetings that they had had. I was talking to one of his ex-workers who told me—as I was saying to Penny, his granddaughter—that on a Friday afternoon they used to knock off work and Bobby would take all the workers down for a few beers. I do not know if that would pass today's OH&S rules but it was pretty good in those days.

Bob Dollin was a fine man and Maryborough will miss him. We respect our Labor elders in the Wide Bay and, particularly, in the Maryborough electorate. We call them 'Labor legends' and we have only one left now, Maryborough's first lady: Mrs Moira Hansen. Bobby was one of our Labor legends and everyone misses him—particularly me. Every time I need timber advice now I do not know who to turn to, because I used to be able to talk to Bobby.

I again pass on my condolences to the family. It is great to have Penny here today. Penny was telling me what a great grandfather he was. He was a good man: a good man for his community and a good family man. I wish we had more in society like Bob Dollin. From the Maryborough ALP and all the union people in my electorate, I say to the family that we are going to miss Bob Dollin.



**Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Innovation and Sport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics and Paralympics Sport and Engagement) (9.53 am): I want to add a few brief words in support of the condolence motion. Bob Dollin was a Labor great. He was a very passionate advocate for his community. My direct dealings with him were as a young Labor member. I met him when he was a member of the famous Goss caucus of the late eighties and early nineties. I saw the commitment that he had to his community and to his beloved timber industry.

That came to a sharp and difficult point when the Goss government was pursuing the policy of ceasing timber harvesting on Fraser Island and transitioning Fraser Island to a World Heritage location. That was challenging and difficult for members such as Bob. However, he saw the way in which the balance had to be struck and he brought his friends and his colleagues in that industry along on the journey. He fought hard on behalf of the industry for the concessions and support that it needed for the transition. He fought hard on behalf of his fellow AWU members, as he had been from his very early days as a timber-getter, to get the best outcome for them from that transition. That was a tremendous

example of the way in which fundamental Labor values deliver transition in challenging times. That was very much a part of who he was and the community that he represented, based on the old Labor families and traditions in Maryborough.

I particularly acknowledge that in the context of Bob's family. I acknowledge his wife, Verlie, and their children, Stephen, Stewie, Maree, Michelle and Katrina, and Penny in the gallery as well. On a personal note, my late brother had an insight into the Dollin family atmosphere when he billeted with the Hansen family while at a cricket carnival in Maryborough in the late seventies. He was brought into that genuine Labor family network that was very much a part of who the Hansens and the Dollins were and so many other important Labor families in the Maryborough region. Vale, Bob Dollin.



**Mr SPEAKER:** I want to briefly remark that I recall Maryborough becoming a timber town again. You know it is a timber town when the local fire station is going to be made out of timber. The member for Maryborough would know all about that.

I pass on my condolences and the condolences of my family. My father, Warren, served with Bob Dollin in the parliament. He was the chair of the rural and regional task force under the Goss government. I know that he spent considerable time with Bob and always respected him and his counsel. Bob Dollin gave great service to the state. Members, I ask that, if you agree with the motion, you stand in your place in silence for one minute.

*Whereupon honourable members stood in silence.*

## TABLED PAPER

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

REPORT BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Clerk—

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

### **Police Legislation (Efficiencies and Effectiveness) Amendment Bill 2022**

Amendments made to Bill

#### **Short title and consequential references to short title—**

*Omit—*

'Oaths Regulation 2021'

*Insert—*

'Oaths Regulation 2022'

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### **Renewable Energy**




**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.58 am): It is impossible to talk about improving the resilience of this state without talking about the need to confront climate change. Extreme weather with more frequency and more severity are symptoms of global warming. Even the Prime Minister has said that Australia is becoming harder to live in due to the increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters as a result of climate change. Not one of us can reverse global warming; it is going to take all of us, and our government is doing its part.

A centrepiece of economic recovery is our \$2 billion investment in renewable energy. Investing in renewables provides cheaper and cleaner energy. It powers more jobs and it creates more industries. It supercharges our resources sector with the demand for new minerals. This is part of our commitment to achieving 50 per cent of our energy needs from renewable sources by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050. I am proud to announce our latest investments in renewable energy: \$192.5 million for a large-scale wind farm at Wambo near Dalby; and the \$170 million agreement to connect the Karara and MacIntyre wind farms and deliver power to the grid near Dalby. The Treasurer and energy minister will provide more details shortly.

Together these projects will provide 820 jobs and unlock 1.25 gigawatts of electricity. This is in addition to our partnership with Andrew Forrest to build Australia's first manufacturing site building electrolyzers to produce hydrogen. Mr Forrest's company has signalled a \$3 billion investment in wind

and solar farms in Central Queensland. This is in addition to building one of the world's biggest hydrogen manufacturing facilities, adding another 300 jobs in construction and thousands more in years to come. This is our economic recovery plan in action. We promised to bring manufacturing back to Queensland; it is happening. Resilience, recovery and renewables are the ingredients for a better future for all of us.

### Sunshine Coast, Rail Infrastructure

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (10.00 am): Delivering reliable public transport is also a priority of our government and it is crucial as we prepare to host the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. That is why over the last five years we have delivered record funding for transport and roads, including \$27.5 billion in the last budget.

Today I am proud to announce another major milestone for one of Queensland's most important rail projects. I can confirm that work has begun on the \$550.8 million Beerburrum-Nambour upgrade at Landsborough. This project will: duplicate tracks on the north coast line, ease congestion on the Bruce Highway, increase freight capacity, and improve services between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast.

This will change the lives of thousands of people right throughout South-East Queensland, improving services for commuters from Caloundra to Landsborough right through to Nambour and Palmwoods. This major upgrade will ensure that we are ready to welcome thousands of visitors to the south-east in time for the 2032 Olympic Games. Beerburrum-Nambour is also vital when it comes to rebuilding our economy and creating opportunities for local businesses. I am advised that Hall Contracting, a local company, will complete early works. Ten workers will start the job this week. This number will grow over the next three months as we move towards heavy construction.

In total, the Beerburrum-Nambour upgrades will create more than 300 jobs for local workers throughout the life of the project. Beerburrum-Nambour is just the beginning. We have Cross River Rail, the Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3, works to progress a heavy rail connection on the Beerwah-Maroochydore section, our Logan-Gold Coast faster rail initiative and our historic train manufacturing program in Maryborough. No matter where you look throughout the state, we are investing in important public transport projects to cut commute times for Queenslanders. On this side of the House we are delivering for Queenslanders. We are delivering for the Sunshine Coast because we have two outstanding members on the Sunshine Coast who work hard.

**Mr Dick:** They go to committee meetings!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** They go to committee meetings.

**Mr Walker:** They do their job.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** They do their job.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, you have the call.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I was just starting, Mr Speaker. Our public transport system was hit hard in the recent weather event. In the past two weeks alone—

**Ms Simpson** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, member for Maroochydore. I am talking about things that are actually benefitting the Sunshine Coast.

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right: delivering.

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, Leader of the Opposition!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I was provoked, Mr Speaker. In the last two weeks alone, workers from the Department of Transport and Main Roads have conducted 188 safety inspections on flood impacted bridges, delivered 194 tonnes of plant mix to repair potholes and keep inland freight moving, and helped to reopen 1,000 roads. I can also confirm that today our rail schedules across the state are back to normal following the devastating floods here in the south-east. Well done to everyone involved. That is an outstanding commitment. I thank the thousands of engineers, tradespeople and labourers across Queensland who worked around the clock to make this happen for our great state. We know that to create jobs and rebuild our economy we must invest in new infrastructure. I will continue to fight for Queensland's fair share of funding for roads and rail.

### Gold Coast Commonwealth Games; Queen's Baton Relay



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (10.04 am): Finally, next month will mark four years since the Gold Coast hosted the 2018 Commonwealth Games. What an event that it was! We delivered: a fully integrated para sports program for the first time; equal number of medal events for men and women; the first regional Australian city to host games—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I know they do not want to talk about the Commonwealth Games because at one stage they wanted to cut the Commonwealth Games, but we delivered it. We got on with the job and delivered it. We built the infrastructure—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Please, Premier, continue with your ministerial statement.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The fact that we actually hosted the Commonwealth Games so well had the spotlight of the International Olympic Committee on the south-east. If it were not for the Commonwealth Games, there would have been no Olympics. We also had 6,600 athletes from 71 nations and territories competing in 22 sports.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Nanango.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** This is not offensive; this is about the Commonwealth Games.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Grow up.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, can I ask you to withdraw that remark. Please continue with your statement.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Who could forget the incredible sea of—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I did. Who could forget the incredible sea of blue and yellow games shaper volunteers who made the event possible? Successfully hosting the Commonwealth Games, as I said, was a critical part in Queensland securing the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games which is going to be on a much bigger scale.

At the 2018 Commonwealth Games closing ceremony I said in my speech, 'This should be the model for all games to come.' Then the Commonwealth Games flag was passed to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham. It is their time now. I am pleased to say the Queen's Baton Relay, which traditionally starts at Buckingham Palace, has now reached Queensland's shores to start its Australian leg. It was at Broadbeach on the Gold Coast this morning—the former host city—and this afternoon it will make its way to Parliament House with athletes Riley Day and Ebony Gorincu in attendance. We will also have present the Governor, you, Mr Speaker, the opposition leader, the minister and the shadow minister for sport and of course the Consul-General. The baton is only here for one day before heading to Sydney. It has to move on. It is travelling 140,000 kilometres over 269 days with over 7,500 baton bearers visiting 72 nations and territories of the Commonwealth. There are 133 days to go. I welcome the Queen's Baton relay to Queensland once again. It is an exciting time for Birmingham in the lead-up to their Commonwealth Games, and I wish them all the very best for an incredible event.

### Weather Monitoring



**Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure) (10.07 am): Yesterday I wrote to Senator Bridget McKenzie seeking priority funding from the Australian government to upgrade Queensland's rain gauge and warning network as part of the 2022-23 federal budget. The Palaszczuk government will share half the cost of the ongoing operations, maintenance and asset replacement of the flood warning system if the Commonwealth government invests in the upgrade of the network. It is essential that we upgrade more than 870 of the bureau's gauges from manual to automatic. This will ensure accurate, timely and consistent flood-warning information is being provided to the bureau and to our local communities.


The rain and river gauge network is critical to informing the Bureau of Meteorology's flood warnings to communities during flood events like those we have experienced this year. More than 80 per cent of Commonwealth owned gauges in Queensland are manually read. With the scale of flood events experienced by Queenslanders, it is vital that the Australian government invest in technological improvements in our flood-warning infrastructure. Queensland is undoubtedly the most disaster prone of all the states. Already this disaster season we are reeling from the effects of six disaster events which have flooded much of the state.

When the Morrison government called for grant applications as part of the first round of its national Flood Mitigation Infrastructure program, Queensland's application for \$14 million in funding to improve the state's flood-warning infrastructure network was declined. This funding would have gone towards infrastructure in the south-east corner of the state which has now experienced a flooding event comparable in scale to 2011.

The Australian government has announced a \$4 billion Emergency Response Fund to build resilience and reduce the risk of future natural disasters, but only \$50 million has been allocated nationally from the ERF and investment returns have seen the fund grow to \$4.8 billion. The Bureau of Meteorology, through its recent scoping study, identified options to address the shortfall in the current network, including a Commonwealth investment of \$161 million for capital uplift of the network. The Palaszczuk government is committed to working with the Commonwealth government to ensure Queensland has an appropriate flood warning infrastructure network in place, but we need the Australian government to invest in an upgraded system.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I wish to advise the House that question time will commence at approximately 10.42 am.

### Renewable Energy

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (10.10 am): As I have said many times in this House, Queensland has powered Australia's economic recovery from COVID-19. In a time of radical uncertainty, our state was a beacon of confidence and stability. Just as we have powered the recent economic recovery, our state has long powered the nation thanks to our publicly owned energy assets. By keeping public assets in public hands, our government has powered Queenslanders with the confidence that comes from a reliable supply of affordable energy. It has been true of our coal; it is true of our gas. For generations to come, it will be true of our abundant renewable energy resources.

That is why I am proud to support the Premier in her announcement that our publicly owned transmission company—Powerlink—is ready to start work connecting one of Australia's biggest wind farms to the grid. This project will put even more renewable power in the hands of Queenslanders. The MacIntyre Wind Farm precinct will consist of two wind farms. The 102-megawatt Karara Wind Farm will be built, owned and operated by our renewable generator CleanCo. CleanCo has signed a power offtake agreement for an additional 400 megawatts from Acciona's neighbouring MacIntyre Wind Farm.

The agreement with Powerlink will unlock \$2 billion worth of renewable energy investment in Queensland. It will support 400 wind farm construction jobs and another 220 jobs building Powerlink's transmission lines. Beyond the combined power generation of those two wind farms, Powerlink's connection will offer up to 500 megawatts of additional capacity for future projects. The precinct is in an area of high and consistent wind, with a total of 180 turbines to be built across both wind farms. The MacIntyre Wind Farm precinct will generate enough energy to power 700,000 homes.

It is only possible because Queenslanders own our own power companies—companies like CleanCo and Powerlink. While other states have privatised their electricity assets, our government has kept Queensland's power in public hands. Public ownership means that Queensland has power over our energy policy. That is the envy of every other state and territory. Public ownership has provided a foundation of confidence and stability for Queenslanders. On that foundation we are building a sustainable, renewable powerhouse in Queensland that will supercharge investment and economic growth for years to come.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members may hear some activity outside. It is great to see that the celebrations for St Patrick's Day have started early. It is really pleasing to see. Speaking of celebrations, I wish the Minister for Resources a very happy birthday.

**Mr Stewart:** Twenty-six. I just look a lot older. It's been a hard life!

**Mr SPEAKER:** You do realise it is an offence to mislead parliament, Minister!



## Renewable Energy



**Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (10.13 am): Queenslanders have taken on the wild weather. We have swung into the recovery that follows when the rain finally cleared. Along with the immediate emergency response, our nation is also ready to tackle climate change. This nation's climate emergency is Queensland's jobs opportunity. It is a huge challenge but also a massive opportunity for Queensland with a pipeline of projects, generating new value chains for Queensland businesses and their workforce. It will create a new workforce that needs grader drivers, concreters, crane operators, electricians, project managers and more. It is an opportunity to harness some of the best renewables in the world and use them to fuel the decarbonisation of our industry and new jobs for Queenslanders.

Queensland's Southern Renewable Energy Zone has now been initiated, with the Premier today announcing \$192.5 million for the Wambo Wind Farm near Dalby. It is set to deliver more than 200 jobs and 252 megawatts of cheaper, cleaner energy for Queenslanders. We have also announced our first tranche of major investments for the Karara and MacIntyre wind farms from our \$2 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund.

Queenslanders, through their publicly owned energy company, Stanwell, will own 50 per cent of the 252-megawatt Wambo Wind Farm located on the Western Downs. As joint owners of the project, we are maintaining strong public ownership of our energy system, ensuring Queenslanders continue to control their essential services. This project, which will construct 42 towers, is set to get underway this year, creating 200 local jobs. Our Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund has done exactly as its name suggests—it is delivering jobs for Queenslanders.

These wind farms are set to become the cornerstones of our Southern Renewable Energy Zone. We are not just stepping up with investment; we are stepping up to guarantee decent, secure jobs for Queenslanders. Queenslanders' ownership of their energy companies means we can apply our Buy Queensland approach to these projects. Across Queensland's renewable energy zones we are ensuring that communities are at the forefront of planning, giving locals more say on these developments. Progression of our projects will be conditioned on accessing local supply chains and employing locals, including apprentices and trainees. They will work with local business, supporting Indigenous employment.

Critically, these projects will start ratcheting Queensland towards its 50 per cent renewable energy target. The largest employers on the planet are demanding emissions-free energy. That is what the Palaszczuk government will deliver. We understand that diversifying our energy system brings those employers to our state and that equals more jobs for Queenslanders.

## National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence



**Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (10.16 am): Tomorrow, 18 March, around 1,700 state, Catholic and independent schools across Queensland will participate in the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence under the theme 'Kindness Culture'. I am proud to say that almost every single Queensland state school is registered to participate—much higher than the 66 per cent average across Australia. It is great to see many members wearing their ribbons today too. The irony that it is also St Patrick's Day does not escape me. Happy St Patrick's Day everyone and happy birthday Minister Stewart.

Now in its 12th year, I am proud that Queensland continues to be the lead jurisdiction and coordinates the national day of action on behalf of all states and territories. The national day of action is an important opportunity for school communities to rally together and take a stand against this insidious issue.

We know that new technologies can bring new challenges, and the Palaszczuk government is leading the nation in response to cyberbullying. We are implementing all 29 recommendations of our Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce—the first of its kind in Australia—and have committed \$3.5 million towards their implementation. Through my Ministerial Student Advisory Council, I have heard from students firsthand the impacts of bullying on mental health and wellbeing.

The slogan 'Bullying. No way!' is a clear message to students. There is zero tolerance for this behaviour in our schools and help is available. Our \$100 million Student Wellbeing Package and GPs in Schools Pilot are providing students with free and easy access to qualified health and wellbeing professionals at their school. Over the next three years, we will be employing an additional 464 health and wellbeing professionals, mainly psychologists. There are already around 65 employed in our schools and all 50 GPs in schools are on track for May.

Tomorrow, I will be joining Minister Furner at Newmarket State School to unveil a mural in their assembly area that depicts what kindness culture means for their school. The artwork will serve as an important reminder to be kind to one another—

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** Be kind, member for Kawana. The artwork will serve as an important reminder to be kind to one another each and every day, not just this one day of the year.

**Mr Bleijie:** Remember I saved you with a bottle of water! Remember the water I rushed to you?

**Ms GRACE:** I will take the interjections from the member for Kawana. I will say again: be kind, member for Kawana.

We will also see landmarks across Queensland light up orange to mark the national day of action including Suncorp Stadium, the Qantas Founders Museum at Longreach, which was wonderful—we had a great visit there to Longreach—Dreamworld and Brisbane City Hall, just to name a few.

We all have a role to play—even the member for Kawana. I encourage all members to take part in their school activities tomorrow—even the member for Kawana—for the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence. Be kind, member for Kawana. Bullying. No way!

### Queensland Floods, Housing



**Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (10.19 am): The Palaszczuk government puts people at the centre of our response—whether that be the pandemic or the floods. The recent SEQ flooding event has had a huge impact on so many Queenslanders, and this government has responded swiftly and with compassion.

We have been working hard to get people back on their feet and into homes as we recover from the floods. We were quick to act. We had housing officers on the ground in evacuation centres and in our community hubs and pop-up hubs that we stood up within days of the event to help make sure people had a roof over their heads. So far we have assisted 621 households who have requested help. That is 1,386 people with emergency or temporary accommodation who have been impacted by the floods. I am advised that there are 96 motel and hotel accommodation providers being utilised to enable that assistance. Housing staff are conducting regular wellbeing checks with people in temporary emergency accommodation.

We have had more than 20 community recovery hubs and pop-up hubs open across the south-east, operating from Maryborough on the Fraser Coast to Palm Beach on the Gold Coast and Gatton in the Lockyer Valley. So far, more than 65,000 people have been supported with grants for emergency hardship and other service assistance following the recent flood, with over 28,000 payments made totalling more than \$11.8 million.

I also announced a \$600,000 Rapid Response Fund to deliver enhanced housing and homelessness services in impacted areas. We continue to work closely with specialist homelessness services and community housing providers, providing essential housing support. We also acted quickly to expand the eligibility for bond loans and rental grants, easing added pressure on people in the private rental market.

For our residents in social housing, we had QBuild teams on the ground quickly, assessing damage to social housing homes. In some instances, QBuild were on site the same day that issues were raised by our tenants. I want to acknowledge the Minister for Public Works for the great work of QBuild.

Yesterday I convened the same meeting of emergency housing security stakeholders where I provided an update on the suite of housing supports being offered on the ground and we continued our work on next best steps. Whether it is supplying emergency housing, planning longer term housing solutions or providing immediate financial relief, we have been supporting the people at the centre of this disaster.

I encourage people impacted by the floods that if they need help please reach out. We have many contact points, including community recovery hubs and housing service centres, where people can receive the support they need. We know there was unprecedented demand on Queensland's housing market prior to this most recent flooding event which was why we announced \$2.9 million at the last budget to build 7,400 new social and affordable homes over four years—the largest concentrated investment in Queensland's history.

Record interstate migration, rising house prices, very low vacancy rates, COVID-19 and now severe weather has sadly created a perfect storm. Every Queenslanders deserves a roof over their head and the Palaszczuk government continues to look at all options to inject more supply into the housing market. As always, the Palaszczuk government is laser focused on delivering safe, secure and affordable housing and providing the right supports in times of crisis. It matters. We are getting on with the job. It is what Labor governments do.

### Queensland Floods, Environment



**Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (10.23 am): This week we have heard many stories about the resilience and strength of Queenslanders—of frontline staff and communities rallying together to respond to the immediate threats of flood and what is now a long recovery process ahead. That same spirit has extended to our much loved national parks and marine areas and the hundreds of businesses who rely on them.

Last week I joined rangers and volunteers who have mobilised to bring Queensland's parks back online and reignite the state's tourism industry. I am pleased to advise the House that the Palaszczuk government is providing up to 16 volunteer groups across the south-east and Wide Bay, with \$740,000 to help recovery efforts.

As rangers focus on rebuilding damaged tracks and reopening parks, this funding will enable the groups to focus efforts on clearing rubbish that has ended up in our rivers and the bay. I want to acknowledge the member who was with us when we made that important announcement in Manly. It will go to help funding the cost of equipment, PPE and coordinating volunteers and vessels.

There is a mammoth task ahead of us, but crews have swung into action already cleaning up pontoons on Mulgumpin, Moreton Island, while some 70 volunteers have worked with rangers to repair tracks at Bunyaville and Samford. Now the clean-up begins at K'gari, where in the last couple of days rubbish has started washing up. We have given the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation \$20,000 to help begin this clean-up alongside our rangers and plenty of volunteers. Already—picking up just small items alone—they have collected enough to cover half a football field. Pontoons, rainwater tanks, kayaks and rubbish bins have all washed up on this natural wonder, and large machinery is being rolled out to remove these items.

Our rangers have not stopped working since the start of this event. When it began, they supported emergency services, including assisting the Queensland Water Police with their response in the Brisbane River during the peak of the flood. Now they are working hard to ensure these parks are safe for visitors, especially ahead of the busy Easter period.

These past two weeks have shown just how big an impact waste can have on our environment. That is why we are providing this funding to help with the clean-up in addition to our \$1.1 billion Recycling and Jobs Fund. I want to place on the record my thanks and acknowledgement to all of our rangers, waste team and volunteers for all of the efforts they have already put in and for all they will do over the coming weeks and months.

### Queensland Floods, Resources Industries Support



**Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (10.25 am): Top o' the mornin' to you, Mr Speaker! Like all of us, workers from across Queensland's resources sector have felt the pain of the recent floods. The sector has responded to calls for help and is pitching in to help Queenslanders recover from this disaster.

Glencore will be donating \$2 million to the Salvation Army Flood Appeal, assisting recovery efforts in Queensland and in New South Wales alike. That donation alone already makes up one-fifth of the Salvos' target of \$10 million to help Aussies who have been hit hard by flooding to get back on their feet.

The BHP Foundation is also donating \$2 million to support emergency relief efforts, as announced by the Premier last week. Rio Tinto is putting forward \$1.5 million—\$750,000 of this will go to the Red Cross floods appeal, \$500,000 will support disaster-affected small and local businesses and \$250,000 will buy essential items for flood victims. It does not stop there. Rio Tinto will also match employee donations dollar for dollar.

Anglo American has donated \$1 million, split evenly between the Queensland SES and the Red Cross appeal. Meanwhile, Shell will be donating \$750,000 to the Red Cross. But wait—there's more!

South32 is putting forward \$500,000—split evenly between the Red Cross and Salvation Army appeals. Santos has committed \$250,000 to flood recovery efforts. Newcrest Mining is donating \$150,000 to the Red Cross appeal and will match a further \$100,000 in employee donations. Origin Energy has put \$100,000 towards supporting flood-affected small businesses, while Senex has committed \$30,000—including \$10,000 from its own generous employees—and Denison Gas has contributed \$20,000.

There have been more than just cash donations too. There have also been resources sector workers donating their time. Employees from Theiss rolled up their sleeves, creating their own mud army to clean up homes in Ipswich and to cook hot meals for residents. There are more and more resources companies donating each and every day—so many in fact that I have to apologise if I have missed any.

The measures taken by these companies show their commitment to helping out those in need. It embodies the Queensland spirit, and I thank them for it. It is times like these when everyone comes together to help each other. It happened during the devastating floods in Townsville. The members for Thuringowa and Mundingburra will know that for sure.

Three years later, it is amazing to see support coming from the entire Queensland community once again, including our resources sector—a sector that is creating jobs and contributing royalties that help build and, in light of the floods, rebuild Queensland's infrastructure. As we emerge from COVID-19 and the floods, the resources industry will be a vital pillar of the Palaszczuk government's plan for economic recovery. I am always proud of the resources industry, but today my chest is a little more pumped up.

### Public Safety Mobile Broadband



**Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.29 am): Mr Speaker, picture this: it is dusk on the second day of efforts to control a major bushfire. Over 300 firefighters and Rural Fire Service volunteers have been deployed to battle the fire. The response includes six water-bombing aircraft and dozens of vehicles. The response is monitored from above. A fleet of drones maintain watch over the fire front. The drones communicate with each other. When one leaves to refuel, another one automatically takes its place. Deployable base stations provide the drones with a data network to stream their data to a nearby command centre.

To make this scenario real requires public safety mobile broadband capability. The platform to do that already happens to exist, and for some considerable time jurisdictions right across Australia have been working cooperatively to achieve this goal. It is a matter of national importance; it is a matter of public safety. The recent flooding events that unfolded across Queensland and New South Wales emphasise the desirability of having advanced communication capabilities for public safety agencies like police, firefighters and paramedics.

It is with great disappointment I inform the House that the federal government has not acted in the national interest. Despite protests from the states, the federal government has sold the preferred spectrum for public safety mobile broadband to a private entity rather than preserve this spectrum for public safety agencies. The federal government should have ensured that the preferred valuable broadband spectrum required for public safety mobile broadband was made available to the nation's public safety agencies, but the federal government did not do this. It sold the preferred spectrum to a private entity for—and this is the scandal—significantly less than what it offered to sell it to the states for.

It beggars belief that the federal government, knowing how critical this preferred spectrum is for public safety, would not offer the same arrangement to the states as it offered to a private entity. Despite representations from the states, including most recently from the Liberal New South Wales government, the federal government's actions mean that the best and most cost-effective communications capability is now no longer an option for public safety agencies and public safety in communities.

I have written to every emergency services minister across the nation to have this significant issue of national importance put on the agenda for the next meeting of the nation's emergency management ministers. To be frank, the federal government has let down Queenslanders and Australians. In fact, the federal government's actions also conflict with a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Natural Disaster Arrangements—also known as the bushfires royal commission—which states, 'The federal, state and territory governments should expedite the delivery of public safety mobile broadband capability.' Instead, despite strong protests from the states, the federal government

has sold out the Australian people by selling a critical public safety asset for a relative pittance. The federal government has preferred the privatisation of this essential public safety asset over the public safety needs of Australians. The actions of the federal government are scandalous, they are outrageous, and they should be held to account.

### Work in Paradise Campaign



**Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Innovation and Sport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics and Paralympics Sport and Engagement) (10.34 am): Young Australians are jumping at our irresistible opportunity to work and play in Queensland's paradise destinations. Fuelling tourism jobs and rebuilding the capacity of tourism operators in Queensland's north and outback are critical to the industry's economic recovery. The message we have heard from many northern Queensland tourism operators is that the shortage of tourism staff has left them working overtime to meet the growing demand for great visitor experiences.

Queensland's \$7.5 million Work in Paradise campaign is an Australian one of a kind, with incentives and a one-stop shop for connecting tourism and hospitality operators with the staff they need for their recovery. On behalf of northern and outback tourism operators the Palaszczuk government offered workers \$1,500 incentives, payable in three instalments over six months, to take up a job in paradise. We offered holiday passes and \$250 to cover travel costs beyond 100 kilometres. Top-rating radio talk shows in Melbourne and Adelaide picked up on Work in Paradise, sparking a wave of interest from interstate gap year students. Around half of all successful Work in Paradise job applicants relocated from the southern states. The two most popular destinations for Work in Paradise were the Whitsundays and the Far North, including Cairns and Port Douglas. That is not a surprise to you, Mr Speaker.

Work in Paradise has filled more than 3,000 tourism and hospitality jobs from Mackay to FNQ and throughout the outback. Work in Paradise has secured the industry's most sought-after workers: nearly 800 bar staff; more than 650 hard-to-find chefs; 650 cleaners; 600 waitstaff; and around 140 tour guides. With hundreds of applications for Work in Paradise payments currently in the system for assessment, and considering digital marketing costs, incentive payments for new applications will unfortunately close this month. The success of Work in Paradise means we will keep the free jobs opportunity portal online to link jobseekers with tourism and hospitality operators throughout Queensland.

### Workforce Summit



**Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (10.36 am): The Palaszczuk government is focused on ensuring not only that Queensland employers have access to the workforce they need now and into the future to take advantage of the enormous economic opportunity before us but also to ensure that all Queenslanders are supported to have the quality of life they deserve. Which is why last Friday the Premier and I hosted more than 350 workforce leaders, business, education and training employee groups and the community sector to come together at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre for the Queensland Workforce Summit. Along with the Premier, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and fellow ministers, an important conversation was had about the future of our state's workforce because, like the rest of Australia and the rest of the world, labour shortages, both skilled and unskilled, are one of the biggest challenges now ahead of us.

Queensland's strong response to the COVID-19 pandemic has provided the foundation for our economic recovery. Our economy is now booming, growing at a rate of 6.3 per cent against the national average of 3.7 per cent. We have created over 124,000 jobs since before COVID. Projections from Jobs Queensland are that we will have created an additional 281,000 jobs for Queenslanders by 2025. We have the Olympics ahead of us in 10 years. Queensland's annual investment in skills and training is around a billion dollars a year, but this is against a backdrop of: unemployment at its lowest rate in over 14 years; the number of job ads is 56 per cent higher than three years ago; and borders closed to international workers for the last two years.


The summit was a resounding success with positive feedback right across the spectrum of Queensland society. We focused on ideas and practical solutions that will help us build the workforce the state needs both now and in the future. We considered which actions should be prioritised in designing the Queensland government's future workforce strategy, announced by the Premier on the day. In addition to the strategy the Premier also announced a \$15 million investment in four key emerging and evolving industry sectors through our VET Emerging Industries initiative: agribusiness,

energy, manufacturing, and screen and digital. I was also pleased to announce the new Growing Workforce Participation Fund to help industries experiencing staff shortages. Through the fund, one-off grants of \$20,000 up to \$200,000 will be available to industry groups to trial new ways of job matching, creating pre-employment pathways and developing innovative resources for jobseekers and employers.

I look forward to working with all groups and all sectors, across all regions across the coming weeks and months to see the workforce strategy developed and to look at a new and exciting future for Queensland.

## COMMITTEES

### Membership


 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (10.39 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That the member for Glass House be discharged from, and the member for Scenic Rim be appointed to, the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee;
2. that the member for Scenic Rim be discharged from, and the member for Oodgeroo be appointed to, the Community Support and Services Committee; and
3. that the member for Oodgeroo be discharged from, and the member for Bonney be appointed to, the Health and Environment Committee.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

### Reporting Date


 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (10.40 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the date for the Health and Environment Committee to report to the Legislative Assembly on the inquiry into the provision of primary, allied and private health care, aged care and NDIS care services and its impact on the Queensland public health system be extended from 31 March 2022 to 8 April 2022.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (10.40 am), by leave, without notice: I move—


That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 29 March 2022.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

### Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Email Accounts

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.41 am): The independent watchdog, the CCC, fully investigated a complaint made by the member for Clayfield in relation to me in 2017. The matter was finalised in September 2017 and I was cleared of any wrongdoing. I apologised in 2017 and I stand by that. I respect the independent CCC and its findings, unlike those opposite who continue to undermine its work and findings to this day. It was not me who voted to sack the PCCC, who voted against every integrity bill and opposed the federal ICAC.

**Mr POWELL:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is straying from what is ideally a personal explanation and into debating matters.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, I ask that you address the issues you wish to explain to the House and not venture into commentary on other matters.

**Mr BAILEY:** Certainly. I am focused on supporting Queensland's flood victims and restoring our transport network. I am fighting for equal treatment for Queensland flood victims from the Morrison government to flood victims in New South Wales. I am focused on supporting our public sector workers. I am focused—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members to my left, the minister may well have some additional information he is relaying to the House. Equally, it is convention to hear personal explanations.

**Mr BAILEY:** I am focused on supporting our public sector workers, like our transport and power workers, our fire, and our police, nurses and doctors who are working day and night to support Queensland through difficult times. Fortunately, this government restored our frontline workers—

**Opposition members** interjected.

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

**Mr BAILEY:**—after 14,000 were sacked by those opposite.

**Mr POWELL:** Mr Speaker, we have just finished the period for ministerial statements, there are private members' statements after lunch and there are also adjournments this evening where these matters could be raised.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** If members to my left have finished, I might rule on the point of order. Minister, it is not an opportunity to provide broader commentary. I ask you to get directly to the matter that you are speaking about in terms of the personal explanation, otherwise I will ask you to resume your seat.

**Mr BAILEY:** Mr Speaker, I take your direction. In closing, I say that our frontline workers have done a magnificent job supporting Queenslanders over the last three weeks and throughout the pandemic, and I continue to support them 100 per cent.

### **Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement, Email Accounts**



**Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (10.44 am): I have previously been asked about the use of private email. Out of an abundance of caution and to be absolutely clear, I have not used private email to correspond about portfolio related matters. Importantly, these matters were investigated five years ago and it was found there was no case to answer.

## **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Mr SPEAKER:** Question time will conclude today at 11.45 am.

### **Public Service, Appointments**



**Mr CRISAFULLI** (10.45 am): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier advise whether any public servants whose names appeared on the reported union hit list were dismissed?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I do not know what list the member is—

**Mr Crisafulli:** It's in the email.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Well, if you table the email, I am happy to have a look at it. I am happy to look into the matter. While I am on my feet—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members, I have made this direction clear to the House previously—if the Premier or a minister is responding to the question asked, which I believe is indeed the case now, we will hear the answer.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** There was certainly a list for 14,000 from the LNP—14,000 jobs. 14,000 jobs, and the member sat around the cabinet table and made that decision, with the member for Clayfield and the member for Kawana.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** OMG! That escalated quickly. Members, I was having difficulty hearing the Premier's response. I need to hear that, and so does Hansard. The level of interjection is too high.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** On this side of the House, we stand up for the workers in this state. This is a job-creating government. Let me say this, because it has just come to hand that Queensland's unemployment rate—wait, Leader of the Opposition—is 4.3 per cent, down from 4.4 per cent. If you want some numbers, I will give you some numbers. They sacked 14,000 jobs; in February Queensland created 14,500 jobs. That is our record—a job-creating government. Since 2015, there are 405,200 more jobs that now exist in Queensland.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, I ask that you come back to the question as asked. It was a specific question and you are now straying into much broader territory. Can you please come back to the question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I will end with this: we support jobs; they cut jobs.

### **Minister for Transport and Main Roads**

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier explain how Queenslanders can trust Minister Mark Bailey?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Queenslanders can trust every member of this government—every member of this government. I tell you who Queenslanders do not trust—that side. The member for Nanango will love this, because Queenslanders still think Deb is the leader of the LNP. The public still think the member for Nanango is the leader of the LNP—fact. Bring back Deb.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Nanango, you know what is coming. You are warned under the standing orders.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We have had three elections on trust—not one, not two, but three elections on trust. Who does the public trust? I am very confident—

**A government member** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I will take that interjection, and every time we have increased our majority. Perhaps the leadership team on that side might have a little think.

**Mr Minnikin** interjected:

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock! Member for Chatsworth, you have had a good go this morning. You are not directing your comments through the chair; that is clear. You are warned under the standing orders. Premier, you have one minute, 30 seconds remaining.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am delighted by that. On this side of the House, we turn up to work. That is right. The member for Mermaid Beach gets paid an extra \$25,000 to do his job. He stood up and said, 'I do not want to turn up today. I do not want to turn up to work.' Give the money back! Who else is on their committee who did not turn up? Sack them!

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Lazy LNP! They are just lazy. It is in their DNA.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The House will come to order.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Let me tell you this—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Guess what? We are building schools. We are increasing education for the students. That is right—

*(Time expired)*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Buderim, your interjections were designed to deflect, interrupt and numerous other things. You are warned under the standing orders.

### **Queensland Floods, Agriculture Industry**

**Mr MADDEN:** My question is of the Premier and Minister for the Olympics. Will the Premier update the House on the flooding impacts to the agricultural industry of Queensland, and is the Premier aware of any alternative views?



**Ms PALASZCZUK:** On this side of the House, we care about the agricultural industry. We care about the bush. We care about the farmers and we will continue to support them in their time of need. These are the issues that Queenslanders want to talk about. How do I know that? Because I go out and talk to Queenslanders every single day. I am inspired by everything that they say to me.

I was very pleased to travel with the Treasurer and the Minister for Agriculture out to the Lockyer Valley, to see the impact of the floods. We went to Qualipac; it was great to catch up with Troy. In fact, my father, Henry, remembers Troy very fondly as well—another person devoted to community service. They told me that they had \$500,000 worth of damage to the farm, including the summer crop losses. It was great to see them packing pumpkins again, ready to go to Woolworths.

That day we also went to the Lockyer Community Centre at Gatton. This is community spirit: the local IGA gave \$3,000 worth of food vouchers to help out as well. I really want to pay tribute to that. This is what community is all about. This is what Queensland is all about; people helping each other out in their time of need. We also saw the ADF there. They were then going from the Lockyer Valley down to Logan.

QRIDA is administering disaster recovery assistance for the rural sector. It has received nearly 1,000 grant applications. Almost two-thirds have been processed, 204 have been finalised and 143 approved, worth \$1.87 million so far.

On this side of the House, you can trust us to do the flood recovery. You can trust us to go out and visit these farms and talk to people about their need for recovery. You can trust this agriculture minister, the farmers' friend, to deliver to the bush. That is right, there is no National in the leadership now—no Nationals. The once great National Party of this state—where have all the great Nats gone on the LNP? They have been sidelined into history—absolutely sidelined to history. They have all been demoted. Those opposite will never back the bush, but we will continue to do so.

### **Palaszczuk Labor Government**

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question is to the Premier. I refer to the mangocube email from Noel Morris saying the Premier's hand-picked director-general Dave Stewart is of high risk to Jackie and the government and media reports that the former deputy premier is having her legal costs paid for her to hide a CCC report. Is this further proof Jackie Trad and the dominant left faction remain the driving force behind this government?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No. I haven't seen it. Let me say this: we are getting on with the job. We are getting on with the job of—

**Mr Bleijie:** 'I haven't seen it'? It's everywhere!

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock! Leader of the Opposition, you are given latitude because of the role that you have. You will cease your interjections and you will certainly cease those comments directly aimed at other members.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am surprised the member for Kawana wants to talk about emails today. Where are the former attorney-general's emails? We cannot find them because it is alleged he deleted them. Oh, yes, here we are! 'Oh, delete'—the member for Kawana as the attorney-general!

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** And they promoted you to deputy!

**Mr Bleijie:** Jackie's pulling the strings.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Clive Palmer! Where's Clive? Where's your mate Clive?

**Mr Bleijie:** A little dance to the left, Jackie says.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You are the only dancing queen in this House.

**Mr Bleijie:** I don't dance to Jackie's tune!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Come on, give us a rendition.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members! Pause the clock! Members to my left, there is an increasing amount of interjections which are directed at other members, not through the chair. As I said previously, there are no acceptable interjections, but I tolerate them. The interjections will cease. I am having difficulty, particularly with the external noise, hearing the Premier's response.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The LNP have to live with their decisions. They have to live with the fact that they have now promoted the worst attorney-general in Queensland's history as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition of the LNP, the man who says here they routinely deleted emails when he was the attorney-general of the state.

Let me say this: the old gang is back together. They are all back together. They are just missing Campbell Newman. They all served on the front bench. They all sacked 14,000 people.

**Mr Crisafulli:** She has not read the report to the parliament. She has not read the newspaper.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members to my left!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** They think Deb's you.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, it is not helpful.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is very hard with the noise outside. Let me say this: on this side of the House we will continue to stand up for jobs, employment, recovery and resilience. Those opposite can sit there with their heads down and talk amongst themselves, fight amongst themselves and not turn up to committee meetings.

*(Time expired)*

### Natural Disaster Preparedness

**Ms LUI:** My question is of the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. Can the Deputy Premier outline to the House what the Palaszczuk government is doing to protect Queenslanders' homes and businesses from natural disasters, and is the Deputy Premier aware of any alternative approaches?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for Cook for her question. I know that while recent disasters have been centred here in the south, her electorate of Cook is uniquely exposed to all sorts of natural disasters. If honourable members think about the isolation of the Torres Strait Islands and the massive coastline both east and west of the cape, they will realise that it is more important that that area—more than anywhere else in Queensland—and those Queenslanders are well prepared for what might come at them. The Far North is more exposed to cyclones than anywhere else in the state. In fact, Cairns has experienced six cyclones in the last 10 years, including of course, members would recall, tropical cyclones Yasi and Nora.

That is why I was so surprised to receive a letter from the Cairns mayor, Bob Manning, saying that he wrote to the Commonwealth government expressing concern that the Commonwealth had determined that the Cairns local government area was not a priority area for tropical cyclone risk. Mayor Manning described this as 'unquestionably puzzling', especially given that locations that were determined to be a cyclone risk included Barcaldine, Southern Downs and Toowoomba. I am not sure when a cyclone last hit Toowoomba, but according to the Commonwealth government it is more likely that a cyclone will hit Toowoomba than Cairns.

The mayor said in his letter, 'Based on this, we can only assume that Cairns' omission was an error.' I wrote to the minister and said, 'It seems to me this might be an error. You should add Cairns to the list of places where cyclones might happen.' The Australian government wrote back and said, 'No, no. It is not an error. We think Toowoomba is a more appropriate location for a tropical cyclone risk.' If honourable members ever wanted a better example of how the LNP does not get how disasters affect Queensland, it is the omission of Cairns from that list.

Let me give some more examples. We wrote to the Commonwealth to inform them they are entitled to appoint two representatives onto the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. We wrote and asked, 'Who would you like to appoint to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority?', and the Morrison government nominated someone from Victoria and someone from Perth. The LNP was unable to come up with a single Queenslanders who should sit on the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. No wonder they think Lismore should get three times the amount of hardship payment that Queenslanders do. They cannot even think of a Queenslanders to sit on the Queensland Reconstruction Authority.

Finally, I credit Catherine Cusack, a Liberal from New South Wales; she is able to do what none of those can do. She came out today and said, 'I can't defend it and I'm outraged by it,' referring to the Lismore payments.

### Cabinet Confidentiality

**Mr JANETZKI:** I have a question to the Premier. Former ETU boss Peter Simpson wrote to Minister Bailey before cabinet, 'Comrade, you are apparently getting three options to vote upon tomorrow. A) is the only one acceptable.' Can the Premier advise on how many occasions union officials have received confidential cabinet papers and directed her ministers how to vote during her seven years in power?

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. There is both an inference and an imputation contained within the member's question. The premises that he bases his question on are, indeed, imputations in relation to the motives of ministers and inferences about the concept that there are people who had access to materials they should not have had access to.

**Mr POWELL:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The quote comes from documents tabled as part of the report from the CCC. They clearly refer to options contained in a cabinet paper. Therefore, the inference that the Leader of the House is referring to does not exist.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** This will be the last point of order on this matter.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** There is no evidence contained within those documents that the Manager of Opposition Business refers to that authenticate that they are actually genuine things that were before the cabinet.

**Mr SPEAKER:** In terms of the question that has been asked, there are definitely options for a rephrasing of the question rather than subjecting the House to that. I will allow the question, but I will allow a response to be provided in very broad terms. If it is factual information that is being provided or direct quoting, then the House must consider that to be a part of a reasonable question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The minister has made a personal explanation. All of these matters have been canvassed by the CCC.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** They have; they have been canvassed by the CCC. These are issues that occurred over five years ago.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left, it is not an opportunity to react and respond. We have had a question asked. The answer has been provided. I now move to the member for Lytton.

### Employment

**Ms PEASE:** My question is of the Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the Treasurer please update the House on how Queensland jobs are performing as part of the Palaszczuk government's economic recovery plan?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the member for Lytton for her question. I am so pleased that since the start of the pandemic our stand-out health response as a state has meant that we have been the stand-out when it comes to job creation in this country. Since our government was elected seven years ago there have been seven years worth of labour force figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The data shows that our government has created, on average, a thousand jobs each and every week of every month of every year for seven years in a row.

A few minutes ago I received the ABS labour data force figures for February 2022. Following seven years of delivering a thousand jobs a week, the Palaszczuk Labor government in February delivered a thousand jobs every two days. Aren't those outside loving Labor's job figures? Those out there are absolutely loving it, and why wouldn't they? There were 14½ thousand jobs created in a month. That is as many as those opposite sacked as soon as they got into government. We created 14½ thousand in a month, 152,700 since COVID struck our state and 405,200 jobs since the election of the Palaszczuk Labor government. Two-thirds of those jobs that we have created have been full-time and our unemployment rate has dropped. It has dropped to 4.3 per cent, the lowest it has been since December 2008.

There is one job that even I cannot salvage and that is the job of the Leader of the Opposition. It has been 490 days since he became the Leader of the Opposition, and what has he got to show for it?

**Ms Palaszczuk:** Nothing!

**Mr DICK:** The member for Kawana is the deputy; that is it. You are right, Premier; 490 days and what does he have to show? Absolutely nothing! Here we are in the parliament, the most important deliberative body in this state, a chamber that has existed for more than 160 years, and what are those opposite talking about? Emails that were examined five years ago!

This is breaking news for the LNP brains trust on the Economics and Governance Committee who cannot even bother turning up to work. There have been two elections since then and our majority has gone up on each occasion because of our Premier and her leadership of this state and our strong economic management. That is Labor's record. The Leader of the Opposition is obsessed by the past. He is stuck in the past and living in the past. What does that mean for Queensland? He has absolutely nothing to offer for the future of this state.

### **Palaszczuk Labor Government**

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier explain who this government is listening to: Queenslanders or unions and Labor lobbyists?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for the Dorothy Dixier. Every single day, we are listening to Queenslanders. Whether it is talking to people who have had their homes impacted from the recent floods; whether it is talking to men and women on the front line who are helping with the flood recovery; whether it is talking to the Army that has come in to help; whether it is going out to people's properties; whether it is going into our community recovery centres talking to the local neighbourhood centres; or whether it is going to Kedron Brook and stopping to chat to people about their experiences, every single day this government listens to Queenslanders.

If you want to know why we are in government, it is because we listen and we deliver. Queenslanders have put their trust in us and we value that trust every single day. The Borbidge-Sheldon report was very interesting. It said that the LNP needs to have a good, hard look at itself to regain the trust of Queenslanders. Let me say: Queenslanders want a good job for their family.

At the moment, many people who have been impacted by the floods want a roof over their head. The department of housing is doing an amazing job in finding emergency accommodation for those people. We have a world-class management system when it comes to dealing with natural disasters. As I said yesterday, we have had over 64 natural disasters since 2015. We are very experienced in dealing with natural disasters due to climate change—something that we acknowledge and something we are doing something about. Today, we are announcing a strong investment in wind farms, with a \$2 billion renewable energy fund.

From that side of the House we hear crickets. There is absolute silence when it comes to any new policy initiatives—nothing. What has the LNP announced since the last election? I can name hardly any policies. There has been hardly anything from this LNP to symbolise how they would be different from the LNP of the past. The only thing that we do know is that they still think the member for Nanango is their leader.

We will continue to travel across the state. We will still deliver. We will always listen to Queenslanders and our government will always deliver for Queenslanders.

### **Respectful Relationships and Consent Education**

**Ms McMILLAN:** My question is of the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing. Will the minister update the House on recent developments to improve respectful relationships and consent education in schools, and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for Mansfield for her question. As an ex-principal, she understands fully how important it is to have the Respectful Relationships program in schools. I congratulate her on her position against Citipointe Christian College. They showed no respect for students who have a different sexual orientation or gender identity. She fought, along with her community, to ensure those practices were reversed. That is what respectful relationships and consent is all about.

I welcome the announcement made by the federal opposition of \$77 million to assist states to implement, upgrade skills and train teachers on the new curriculum on respectful relationships and consent. Queensland is ahead of the curve. We started this work in March last year ahead of any other state. We are ready to implement our curriculum well before 2023. I am looking forward to the education ministers meeting next month, where we will be signing off on the new age-appropriate curriculum that

will go from prep to year 12 in relation to respectful relationships and consent. I once again want to thank my student advisory council for the sound advice that they gave me in relation to what they want to see in the curriculum and in schools.

In terms of alternative approaches, when I am in this House I am appalled that the more things change the more they stay the same. There is nothing respectful about the manner in which those opposite conduct themselves in this House. I see the Nationals opposite. They are all a bit worried about what is happening in their party. I see them walking around, concerned about the way things are happening. We see those opposite today fighting for attention. The member for Kawana is pulling focus from the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition is allowing the member for Kawana full rein on the questions that are being asked in this House.

As the member for Cairns says, great minds talk about ideas; small minds talk about people. That is all those opposite have been doing all week. They are not talking about jobs, floods, victims, COVID, where Queensland is heading, the economy or unemployment—nothing. They have nothing. Small minds discuss people, LNP.

*(Time expired)*

### **Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Email Accounts**

**Mr HART:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. The minister has another private email address, bailey\_mark @ outlook.com. The opposition has confirmed that this address receives emails about government business. How can Queenslanders trust the minister when the culture of cover-up continues to this day?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the honourable member for the question. All of these matters were looked at by the independent watchdog five years ago. They looked at every aspect of it, the matter was settled in September 2017 and I was cleared. This is something the LNP continue to argue about, when it was their complaint. All of these matters were looked at. This was a linked account; it was looked at as part of that complaint. There is no issue here. However, I did not hear any apology from the member for Kawana for using his private email account. In the *Courier-Mail* dated 16 November 2012, when he was the attorney-general, the article states—

**Mr Bleijie:** Ten years ago!

**Mr BAILEY:** You can dish it out, but you cannot take it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, it would be helpful if you could direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr BAILEY:** I quote from the *Courier-Mail* of 16 November 2012—

Mr Bleijie denied the use of private emails was a tactic to avoid having them released under the RTI Act, but said he used private email at home ...

It is okay for them but apparently not for others. It is a matter of public record that the member for Coomera has used his private email account. We know that the former Liberal member for Mount Ommaney used his email account. We have an opposition who are obsessed with a matter that was closed five years ago. They need to move onto 2022—that is the year that we are living in.

### **Integrity in Government**

**Ms KING:** 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 Attorney-General update the House on the work that the Palaszczuk government is doing to ensure Queenslanders can have confidence in our government institutions, and is the Attorney-General aware of any other approaches?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Queenslanders know our track record on strengthening integrity measures, including strengthening our donation laws—an issue which I have spoken about many times in this place but which those opposite opposed—every single one of them.

Queenslanders also know that when matters arise in government we take them seriously, we act decisively and we turn to those with expertise. That is why we have established a review of the CCC's use of seconded police officers and charging powers headed by the architect of accountability and integrity mechanisms here in Queensland, Tony Fitzgerald QC. It is why we have established a review into Public Service culture and accountability headed by the highly experienced Professor Peter Coaldrake.

It is why we asked Mr John McKenna QC to investigate claims by the former state archivist when he alleged that there had been interference in the finalisation of annual reports. It must be noted that Mr McKenna did not find anything of concern. He found that absolutely no-one from the minister's office

or indeed the minister had contacted the former state archivist whilst preparing these reports, that the departmental officers who did contact him acted completely within the bounds of their duties and that there was 'no reasonable suspicion' that any wrongdoing had occurred.

Naturally, upon reading Mr McKenna's report, I was wondering when the Leader of the Opposition will be issuing his apology. For weeks the Leader of the Opposition has been jumping up and down over these allegations that have turned out to be nothing more than political pointscore from the Leader of the Opposition. In a massive overreach, the Leader of the Opposition went to the extraordinary length of calling on a government minister to resign over these allegations. Calling on a minister to resign—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for McConnel.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Calling on a minister to resign should be the most serious demand that one can make in political life, but the member for Broadwater throws it around like a bone for the media to chew on. Anyone with a shred of integrity would absolutely stand up and apologise, but he has no integrity, he is not interested in integrity, he will not apologise and he has absolutely nothing to offer Queenslanders. It is shameful that he will not issue an apology.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, I know you are a newly minted deputy leader and you have had some more latitude, against my better judgement, but you are warned under the standing orders.

#### **Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure, Email Accounts**

**Mr MANDER:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. I refer to the Deputy Premier's comments made in estimates and in this House about the use of private emails and emails released in the State Archivist's report to the CCC. Can the Deputy Premier explain how he did not mislead the House on his use of private emails for government business?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for Everton for his question. The matter he refers to has been investigated by the Crime and Corruption Commission. It found no wrongdoing. The investigation was closed in 2017. I understand the acting CCC chair reiterated that that was the case to the PCCC's hearing on 25 February when he said—

We have not looked again at these particular matters because we feel they were satisfactorily dealt with previously ...

I have previously acknowledged using my private email on occasion early in our first term some five to six years ago. I have acknowledged this and apologised for this. It was widely reported at the time. I again apologised for doing so. I have not since the Ministerial Handbook was amended in 2017 and, in answering the question from the member for Maroochydore at the estimates hearing as to whether I did use my personal email, I said that I did not because I have not since that instance in 2017.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

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

#### **Great Barrier Reef Protection**

**Mr HEALY:** My question is of 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 upcoming reactive mission to the Great Barrier Reef, the Palaszczuk government's actions and of any alternative approaches and how those alternative approaches could risk the reef and the 60,000 jobs that rely on it?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Cairns for the question. As someone who has worked on the reef for many years, he knows how important it is that we protect this asset and the 60,000 jobs that rely on it. As has been mentioned, next week the World Heritage Committee reactive monitoring mission will be coming to Queensland to look at the current actions that are being taken and what further measures are needed to protect this World Heritage listed icon.

Of course, we all know what the science says: the two biggest risks to the reef are climate change and water quality, but, frankly, there is another big risk to the reef, and that is those opposite. We know when they were last in power the World Heritage Committee was about to list the Great Barrier Reef

on the in-danger list. It was only because we were elected and we put real measures in place that we were able to keep it off that list. We banned the dumping of dredge spoil. We brought in net-free zones. We committed to vegetation management laws that those opposite said that they would take an axe to and then they doubled down on that position and came into this House last term and voted against them again. We increased funding for water quality—\$20 million every year of additional funding compared to those opposite to help the agriculture sector.

**Ms Camm** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Whitsunday.

**Ms SCANLON:** We actually took a position on climate change unlike those opposite, who not only did not take a position but actually disbanded the Office of Climate Change and sacked a whole lot of Department of Environment and Science employees who were doing that important work.

**Mr O'Connor** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Bonney.

**Ms SCANLON:** Once again though we know that there is still a threat. That threat is the Morrison-Joyce government. Last year when the reef was about to be put on the in-danger list, we had a Commonwealth that still had not even signed up to a net zero emissions reduction target. Countries across the world—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I am sorry, Minister. Pause the clock.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Whitsunday, I have tried to give you some guidance. You are warned under the standing orders. Member for Bonney, you are also warned under the standing orders. I have called the House to order. I expect it to come to order. You continued to interject. Minister for the Environment, you have one minute and nine seconds remaining.

**Ms SCANLON:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The federal government had no net zero emissions reduction plan. After the rest of the world committed to the targets it finally signed up, but it is hard to believe anything it says when people like Gerard Rennick, Matt Canavan and even Colin Boyce and George Christensen are all talking down things such as renewable energy and zero emissions vehicles—things that we know we need to decarbonise our economy and create, frankly, more jobs in more industries.

It is all well and good for people like Trevor Evans and Warren Entsch to pretend that they are progressives and say that they care, but care will not protect the Great Barrier Reef. We need actions, and that is what our government is doing. Today we have heard about our \$192 million commitment to fund a mega wind farm. We have \$170 million to build more infrastructure to be able to connect more renewable energy across the state. Yesterday we had our zero emissions vehicle announcement worth \$55 million. What those opposite could do that would be helpful is lobby the Commonwealth to match our \$2 billion commitment. That would help in reassuring the World Heritage Committee that this country takes—

*(Time expired)*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before calling the next questioner, Minister, I just remind you to ensure that you are using members' correct titles in the chamber. Thank you.

### **Domestic and Family Violence**

**Mr KATTER:** My question is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. The horrific domestic violence related murder of Stanley Obi is a timely reminder of the often untold experiences of men who are also victims of domestic and family violence and who commit suicide at a rate of three times that of women. Will the minister explain what efforts will be made to address the suicide crisis in domestic violence impacting Queensland men?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before calling the minister, member for Traeger, there are components of your question which I would suggest stray into sub judice given matters that may be before the court.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Okay. I just wanted to ensure that that was the case.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for Traeger for his question. We know that men and boys can be victims of domestic and family violence. This government is absolutely committed to eliminating domestic and family violence in all its forms. The very tragic news of the death of Mr Stanley Obi in Logan last week was devastating. My condolences and thoughts are with the family and the neighbours who are grieving and, in particular, with the children whose lives will be forever affected by this tragedy.

I do know that this happens right across Queensland. Sadly, there are many complex characteristics in families and relationships where domestic and family violence is present, but my strong message to all members of the House, to all Queenslanders, is there is help available to men, to women, to young people and children. Men who are experiencing domestic and family violence should absolutely call DVConnect Mensline. It is a free, confidential telephone counselling service. There is information and support.

For those victims identifying as male there are also referrals to other services. In Mount Isa we fund Relationships Australia to provide counselling to both men and women. I am very happy to work with the member for Traeger on services in his community. I know that the member covers a huge part of Queensland and it can be difficult to get face-to-face services, but I am very happy to work with him to make sure that no matter where you live in Queensland you can reach out for help.

We have done a lot of work as a government increasing our funding to services, making sure that there is help available no matter where you live. We have implemented all of the recommendations of *Not now, not ever*. We are now working through the 89 recommendations of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce which is all about making sure our system is trauma informed and there is support for Queenslanders no matter where they live. I am very happy to continue to work with the member for Traeger, particularly on services in his very rural and regional electorate, but my message is clear to all Queenslanders: there is help available. Please call DVConnect Womensline or Mensline in the first instance.

### Manufacturing, Jobs

**Mr SMITH:** My question is to the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water. Can the minister please explain how Made in Queensland grants are creating jobs and re-shoring manufacturing and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I know that he is passionate about not only regional Queensland but also manufacturing in the state. Since 2017 Made in Queensland grants have supported more than 5,300 jobs and generated more than \$100 million in private sector investment in Queensland, especially in regional Queensland.

A couple of weeks ago the member for Bundaberg and myself stood together and made an announcement of nearly \$4 million worth of Made in Queensland grants for two fantastic local companies in the Bundaberg region: NewFresh Foods and Aletek. It was great to get out to those businesses with a passionate local member who knows how important manufacturing is to his region and see exactly what they do. Since the start of the year I have been all over regional Queensland announcing millions of dollars in grants and funding for our critical manufacturing industry and creating jobs and even re-shoring some of these manufacturing businesses back home to Queensland.

What did we see under the LNP? I wish I could say that they did nothing, but it is worse than that. Under the LNP 10,300 jobs in the manufacturing sector were lost. Not only did the LNP preside over a fall in the number of manufacturing jobs in Queensland, it sent contracts overseas, like it did with our trains. Thankfully this government is making good by building trains in Maryborough. We know the Libs in Queensland will sell out the first chance they get, even at the expense of their own party.

I love the Nats here in Queensland. I love what they do. But where have they all gone? They are now in the back row. The poor buggers are out in the wings. The once great National Party in Queensland is now suffering from the savage cuts of the Liberal Party here in Queensland. They are just like rats on a sinking ship. Even the member for Callide is jumping off the sinking ship. He knew nice and early. A little birdie has been telling me that a former member of the Liberal and National Party has been scoping for other jobs—doing her work on that. Trust me, I think she can work it out for herself. The former leader of the LNP has been scoping out other jobs. I can see it now: with a by-election after the member for Callide jumps ship, I reckon there might be two on the cards. You can say you heard it here first. There are jobs on offer. I can offer a job in the manufacturing sector when the member for Callide fails—

*(Time expired)*



### Coronavirus, Vaccination Mandate

**Mr ANDREW:** My question is to the Premier. Over a quarter of Queensland's agricultural shows have been delayed or cancelled due to mandates. Given the vaccination target of 90 per cent has now been reached and markets and fairs have run safely for months without any vaccine requirements, will the Premier lift the mandates on our much loved shows?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for the question. I know the show societies are speaking with the Chief Health Officer.

**Ms Leahy:** No, they're not.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My understanding is that they are.

**Ms Grace:** RNA is. Ekka is.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I understand there are some that are. I gave a very comprehensive response yesterday about our vaccine mandates. I thank Queenslanders for going out and getting vaccinated. As I reiterated yesterday, we need to make sure that our younger people are getting vaccinated. COVID is still with us. Although not much is said about it these days, it is still here. Tragically people are still losing their lives. We want to continue to keep people safe and that is why the mandates are staying in place at this particular point in time.

### Resources Industries, Jobs

**Mr O'ROURKE:** My question is to the Minister for Resources. Will the minister update the House on how the Palaszczuk government is creating jobs for Queenslanders by investing in new economy minerals and advise of any alternative approaches?

**Mr STEWART:** I thank the member for the question. I know that he is a big supporter of the resource sector, particularly in his home town of Rockhampton. It is the Palaszczuk government that is ahead of the curve when it comes to investing in Queensland's new economy minerals, the vital minerals that are fuelling the renewable energy revolution right across the globe, and why not? We have them in huge abundance right here in Queensland. They are creating jobs in my own community of Townsville where the government has put in at least \$10 million towards a vanadium processing plant, a decision that has been met with absolute rave reviews from industry.

It is only Labor that is ensuring Queenslanders benefit from investment in a new economy minerals future. One cannot say the same about the party of those opposite, and I can prove it. The *West Australian* newspaper is not normally on my reading list, but yesterday an article caught my eye and I am happy to table it after I quote from it. It says—

As we face a more uncertain world, we're setting up WA to be a powerhouse and reliable partner for Australian and global businesses that need critical minerals. At every part of that supply chain, we want to make WA the partner of choice. A partner whose products are high quality and consistent.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the *West Australian*, dated 16 March 2022, titled 'Why WA is so critical to nation' [309].

Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that he wanted to make Western Australia a partner of choice in critical minerals, not Queensland. The Prime Minister announced that he will put \$243 million towards four new economy minerals projects, three of them in Western Australia. We all know the Morrison-Joyce government loves pork-barrelling—and I smell bacon! This arrogant LNP PR firm masquerading as a federal government needs to save seats in Western Australia to try to cling to their jobs in May.

Western Australia is a state where the Liberals have been rejected by the people—where their state MPs can now have parliamentary meetings in a phone box. The National Party still exists as the opposition in WA, which is more than can be said for Queensland. The Queensland Liberal National Party are not a coalition. The Liberals are a clapped-out motorbike and the Nationals are their sidecar.

Meanwhile, the Palaszczuk Labor government is creating jobs in new economy minerals. Our Collaborative Exploration Initiative grants are helping small businesses find the next big mineral deposits, minerals that will create jobs and royalties and power the renewable energy revolution. These royalties will build our schools, our hospitals and our roads. So far 79 projects have been funded across Queensland. Unlike the LNP, we do not care which electorate you live in; we support all Queenslanders.

### Ukraine, Immigration

**Ms BATES:** My question is to the Premier. Queenslanders saw it with families stuck over the border and now they are seeing it again with Ukrainian refugees sent to Wellcamp. Why does the Premier show no compassion until it looks bad for the government in the media?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for the question. The member might be interested to know that where my grandfather lived was once a part of Poland but is now considered a part of Ukraine.

**Ms Bates:** And?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Just wait, member for Mudgeeraba. On this side of the House we understand—and I personally understand—what it is like to have families fleeing war-torn Europe. My grandparents came to Queensland and went into the Wacol migrant camp. They came here with absolutely nothing and built a better life in Queensland.

My understanding is that the family in question, and I am happy to be corrected, is not on a refugee visa but they were placed there because they are unvaccinated. They have since applied for an exemption. I understand that exemption came through last night. The family is speaking with the department.

Just as Afghan refugees were given a home in Australia, I firmly believe that we should be doing more for refugees fleeing Ukraine. When I see the photos of people fleeing from Ukraine to Poland—my grandparents are Polish, member for Mudgeeraba—it makes me think about my grandparents fleeing the Nazis. We have a dedicated facility that could cater for more humanitarian refugees in this state.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

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

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We have a facility that has beds available now. I say to Peter Dutton and Scott Morrison, on humanitarian grounds, just as they supported the Afghan refugees, let us help the Ukrainian refugees.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Premier, please resume your seat. Member for Mudgeeraba, you have consistently been interjecting. I have cautioned you. You are now warned under the standing orders. The Premier is free to answer the question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Why aren't we doing more? Why aren't we offering the hand of friendship at this time? Why aren't we saying, yes, we will help Ukraine? Why aren't we doing that? Yes, that is compassion. There are beds available for use right here, right now. The planes can fly directly to Toowoomba and people can be housed there straightaway. I know Daniel Andrews has made that offer and we have made that offer. It is up to the federal government. I thank the member for Mudgeeraba for asking me that really important question today. It is probably the best question that has been asked.

### Events

**Ms BOYD:** My question is to the Minister for Tourism, Innovation and Sport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics and Paralympics Sport and Engagement. Can the minister update the House on Queensland's events calendar for 2022?

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


**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** It is nearly the end of question time so I think it is time that we talk about some really good things that we can look forward to. Queensland is shaping up to be Australia's events destination in 2022 as we emerge from the pandemic and the floods. Our state will host a vast range of events this year, ranging from rock concerts by some of the world's biggest acts to major sporting events. With restrictions easing, that has been really great news for everyone. As we were saying yesterday, nothing beats Queensland and we are definitely open for business.

I will run through some of the highlights of our events calendar, which is expected to generate over \$500 million in economic benefit in 2022. Highlights include the magic rounds, the Townsville supercars, the Gold Coast Marathon, the Birdsville Big Red Bash and the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers. On the music front we will have the Wiggles tour in April, the KISS 'End of the road' world tour in September in Brisbane and Townsville, Snoop Dogg in November, Justin Bieber in December and the Foo Fighters in December as well.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Fo shizzle.

## STATE PENALTIES ENFORCEMENT (MODERNISATION) AMENDMENT BILL

### Message from Governor

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (11.44 am): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The message from Her Excellency recommends the State Penalties Enforcement (Modernisation) 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

STATE PENALTIES ENFORCEMENT (MODERNISATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2022

*Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68*

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


A Bill for an Act to amend the Land Tax Act 2010, the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, the State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Act 2017, the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2014, the Taxation Administration Act 2001, the Traffic Regulation 1962 and the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 for particular purposes

GOVERNOR

Date: 17 March 2022

*Tabled paper:* Message, dated 17 March 2022, from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the State Penalties Enforcement (Modernisation) Amendment Bill 2022 [\[310\]](#).

### Introduction

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (11.45 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Land Tax Act 2010, the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, the State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Act 2017, the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2014, the Taxation Administration Act 2001, the Traffic Regulation 1962 and the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of capability with human rights. I nominate the Economics and Governance Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* State Penalties Enforcement (Modernisation) Amendment Bill 2022 [\[311\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* State Penalties Enforcement (Modernisation) Amendment Bill 2022, explanatory notes [\[312\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* State Penalties Enforcement (Modernisation) Amendment Bill 2022, statement of compatibility with human rights [\[313\]](#).

I am pleased to introduce the State Penalties Enforcement (Modernisation) Amendment Bill 2022. The main purpose of the bill is to give legislative effect to the integration of specified fine administration functions into the Queensland Revenue Office from the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Queensland Police Service. Integration of fine administration functions into the Queensland Revenue Office is part of the Queensland government's initiative to modernise the state's fine administration system, announced in the 2021-22 state budget.

From 1 February 2022, fine administration functions relating to camera-detected offences, such as not stopping at a red light, speeding and tolling offences, were integrated into the Queensland Revenue Office administratively. Fine administration functions relating to mobile phone and seatbelt camera-detected offences will be integrated into the Queensland Revenue Office from 30 November 2022.

The bill will amend the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, the State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Act 2017, the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2014, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 and the Traffic Regulation 1962 to give legislative effect to the integration of functions. These amendments will generally commence on 1 July 2022, to ensure an orderly transition from the current arrangements. Amendments relating to mobile phone and seatbelt camera-detected offences will commence on 30 November 2022, reflecting the deferred integration of functions relating to these offences.

The amendments will result in the Queensland Revenue Office, which includes the State Penalties Enforcement Registry, becoming the single agency for issuing and administering infringement notices for the relevant offences, as well as collection of amounts under those infringement notices. DTMR and QPS will retain responsibility for the prosecution of the relevant offences.

The bill will also make a number of amendments to modernise the operation of the State Penalties Enforcement Act and ensure the continued effective administration of SPER and the Queensland Revenue Office. The bill will insert a head of power into the State Penalties Enforcement Act to enable a timeframe for the registration of default certificates for defaulted infringement notices with SPER, to be prescribed by regulation.

The bill also provides for the possibility of registration after the prescribed timeframe, subject to payment of a prescribed late registration fee. Currently, an administering authority may register a default certificate at any time up to and including the last day on which a proceeding for the offence may be started. This is typically one year but may be longer. Lengthy delays in registering default certificates with SPER result in increased difficulty and cost in recovering debts. A registration timeframe and any late registration fee will be prescribed at a later date, subject to the passage of the bill and consultation with administering authorities.

The bill amends the State Penalties Enforcement Act to provide that the registrar of SPER is the person who is the Commissioner of State Revenue under the Taxation Administration Act 2001. This amendment reflects current practice. It also addresses an issue in that there are no express provisions in the State Penalties Enforcement Act relating to how a person is appointed as the registrar.

The bill amends the State Penalties Enforcement Act to expressly authorise the use of body-worn cameras by SPER enforcement officers while exercising functions under the act. The amendment is consistent with similar provisions in other legislation governing the use of body-worn cameras by enforcement agencies.

The bill amends the State Penalties Enforcement Act to expressly authorise the registrar to disclose personal information of a SPER debtor to an entity. Disclosure of information will be limited to where information is contained in a court order that has been registered with SPER for enforcement. The disclosure must also be for the purposes of remitting an amount collected under the court order to the entity. This amendment addresses the issue of SPER remittance advices not identifying the debtor against whom the court order was made. The entity to which the amount is remitted must contact the relevant Magistrates Court registry to obtain the identity of the debtor, creating increased workload for Magistrates Court registries. Identifying the debtor in remittance advices will enable entities to more easily reconcile remittances.

The bill amends the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation to prescribe the types of enforcement costs that can be recovered from SPER debtors. Associated amendments will be made to the State Penalties Enforcement Act to clarify that enforcement costs are costs reasonably incurred by SPER in taking a step for the purpose of enforcing payment of a fine, penalty or other amount under the act. Amendments will also clarify that enforcement costs are ordinarily recoverable from debtors by payment from the sale proceeds of seized property. The types of enforcement costs to be prescribed relate to seizure and sale action, for example, costs relating to vehicle towage, storage costs and costs relating to sale.

The bill amends the State Penalties Enforcement Act to modernise and clarify the process for appointing enforcement officers, similar to the process for appointing investigators under the Taxation Administration Act. The bill will also amend the Land Tax Act 2010 to provide beneficial land tax treatment for trustees of special disability trusts. Special disability trusts are established under Commonwealth law to provide for the care and accommodation needs of profoundly disabled beneficiaries. Special disability trusts attract a number of benefits under Commonwealth and state revenue law to further their primary purpose.

The bill amends the Land Tax Act to ensure that trustees of special disability trusts are subject to the higher tax-free threshold and lower land tax rates that apply to individuals. I wish to acknowledge and thank the Deputy Speaker and member for Greenslopes, Mr Joe Kelly, for bringing the need for this legislative reform to my attention.

The bill also amends the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 to provide for a transparent and stable funding model for the Residential Tenancies Authority, otherwise known as the RTA. The RTA currently relies on investment returns on tenants' rental bonds to meet its operating expenses. Under the proposed funding model, instead of relying on investment returns the RTA will receive annual grant funding to fund its operations. This will ensure funding stability and allow the RTA to continue to deliver essential services and support to the rental sector.

The bill also includes a statutory guarantee on the payment of rental bond moneys to ensure the security of rental bonds held. The amendments will not impact the RTA's operations, powers or functions and no jobs will be lost due to the reforms. The bill will not impact renters or landlords. There will be no change to the way renters and landlords interact with the RTA, with all services including those relating to the payment, redemption and holding of rental bonds remaining unchanged. It is the intention of the government that the new funding model will commence on 1 July 2022.

Finally, the bill amends the State Penalties Enforcement Act and the Taxation Administration Act to modernise the confidentiality provisions. The bill amends these acts in line with other laws to permit personal confidential information to be disclosed to an officer of the department or relevant responsible minister if the disclosure is permitted under a law.

This bill delivers on the Queensland government's initiative to modernise the State's fine administration system and improve the administration of SPER and the Queensland Revenue Office. The bill also provides beneficial land tax treatment to special disability trusts, ensuring that more funds can go towards providing care for beneficiaries with severe disabilities.

Finally, the bill delivers on reforms to the Residential Tenancies Authority's funding model, ensuring transparent and stable funding for the RTA. The statutory guarantee on the payment of rental bond moneys also provides greater protection to Queensland tenants. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

**Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (11.55 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 Economics and Governance Committee

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

## LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Message from Governor

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (11.56 am): Madam Deputy Speaker, I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Lui): The message from Her Excellency recommends the Land and Other Legislation 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

LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION 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 Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007, the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement Act 1968, the Land Act 1994, the Land Regulation 2020, the Land Title Act 1994, the Place Names Act 1994, the Stock Route Management Act 2002, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Regulation 2014, the Vegetation Management Act 1999 and the legislation mentioned in schedule 1 for particular purposes, and to repeal the Foreign Governments (Titles to Land) Act 1948, the Starcke Pastoral Holdings Acquisition Act 1994, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure (Survey Standards) Notice 2021, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure (Survey Standards—Requirements for Mining Tenures) Notice (No. 1) 2011 and the Yeppoon Hospital Site Acquisition Act 2006

GOVERNOR

Date: 16 March 2022

*Tabled paper:* Message, dated 16 March 2022, from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 [\[314\]](#).

## Introduction



**Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (11.56 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007, the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement Act 1968, the Land Act 1994, the Land Regulation 2020, the Land Title Act 1994, the Place Names Act 1994, the Stock Route Management Act 2002, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Regulation 2014, the Vegetation Management Act 1999 and the legislation mentioned in Schedule 1 for particular purposes, and to repeal the Foreign Governments (Titles to Land) Act 1948, the Starcke Pastoral Holdings Acquisition Act 1994, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure (Survey Standards) Notice 2021, the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure (Survey Standards—Requirements for Mining Tenures) Notice (No. 1) 2011 and the Yeppoon Hospital Site Acquisition Act 2006. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Transport and Resources Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 [\[315\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, explanatory notes [\[316\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, statement of compatibility with human rights [\[317\]](#).

I am pleased to introduce the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The bill makes minor administrative amendments to nine acts and two regulations across the resources portfolio, adopting contemporary approaches to regulation. It introduces flexibility paired with prudent safeguards and makes the intent of the legislation clearer. The bill makes several administrative amendments to the Land Act 1994 that will modernise land administration in Queensland and support economic growth. These amendments will enable the government to proactively manage the state land portfolio and support local governments to better manage public lands.

A number of proposed changes will support the Department of Resources to proactively offer conversion of leasehold land that is neither essential to government business nor delivers a public benefit. Conversion to freehold would not be offered where a lease occurs over land that has an underlying tenure, for example, a community purpose reserve, national park or state forest. Of course, national parks and state forests can only be revoked following a resolution of parliament requesting the Governor in Council to make the revocation. Of course, any action taken under the Land Act, including the offering of conversion of a lease to freehold, must be taken in a way not inconsistent with the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993 and the Queensland Native Title Act 1993. As such, some existing land leases will not be eligible for conversion to freehold.

The key change to the existing conversion process is removing the requirement for leaseholders to make an application before the department can offer freehold tenure. This proactive conversion process will support business development and economic growth by granting increased tenure security. Importantly, a lessee's right to possess and use the leased land for the term of their lease is not impacted if they do not want to convert their lease. This is a change that allows the Department of Resources to make sure leaseholders know what options they have under the act to convert to a more secure tenure type if they desire.

Local governments across Queensland are trustees for thousands of public purpose reserves such as parks, sporting grounds and recreation areas. The bill improves the day-to-day management of these reserves by providing the trustees with greater flexibility and discretion to allow short-term secondary uses that are otherwise inconsistent with the purpose of the trust land. This will apply where the trustee has an approved management plan in place for the land.

The bill also contributes to the delivery of the Australia-Singapore Military Training Initiative by supporting more efficient development outcomes for the training sites at Shoalwater Bay and Greenvale. These dealings include subleasing and creating easements and covenants and the changes will mirror similar arrangements for leasehold transport land.

Queensland's stock route network is made up of a series of roads and reserves primarily used for droving stock. The network is administered jointly by state and local governments, with local governments responsible for the day-to-day management of the network in their local area. Amendments to the Stock Route Management Act 2002 will enable local governments to keep all stock route fees and allow for local governments to charge an application fee to cover some administrative costs.

The stock route network is a key piece of infrastructure for Queensland's \$18.5 billion agriculture sector. These changes will assist local government to achieve greater cost recovery for managing the stock route network. Importantly, local governments will be able to waive these fees in cases of hardship—for example, during drought. Giving local governments the ability to apply an application fee will help to cover the administrative costs of assessing an application, which may include, for example, an on-ground assessment of the pasture and water available for stock.

The public benefit, and benefit to stock route users, from improved cost recovery will deliver a better managed stock route network. This will also reduce the level of local ratepayer and government subsidisation of commercial uses of the network. Importantly, the stock route amendments are informed by public consultation which concluded last year and are supported by key stakeholders, including local governments, the Local Government Association of Queensland and AgForce.

Amendments to the Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003, Place Names Act 1994 and the Vegetation Management Act 1999 will minimise arrangements that can be resource intensive for the community and government. For example, amendments to the Place Names Act 1994 will allow place name change proposals to be published in another suitable way other than by traditional hardcopy newspaper ads. Unfortunately, with many regional newspapers only published online, or not at all, this is often not an option. The Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003 will be amended to provide efficient processes for making cadastral survey standards. Operational requirements for ambulatory water boundary provisions are also being made clearer.

In 2016, the Vegetation Management Act was amended to be consistent with terminology in the Planning Act 2016. This amendment assigned development categories to some clearing activities under the Planning Act which had the potential to generate confusion between the Vegetation Management Act and the Planning Regulation 2017. Very simply, the previous changes do not clearly spell out that certain vegetation management activities—like the construction and maintenance of large fire breaks—can be approved by the relevant authority. This bill will help clarify and make consistent that certain vegetation management activities, like large fire breaks, are not prohibited. Let me be clear: this bill does not change current practices or requirements. The amendments are to stop any potential confusion by mirroring the language under the Planning Act.

The bill also proposes to amend the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement Act 1968. These amendments will vary the current Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement to allow the companies to apply to either remove an existing special coalmining lease from the operation of the act and agreement without any transfer of interests in the lease or remove an existing special coalmining lease from the operation of the act and agreement and transfer the interests in the lease.

Where a transfer of interests is proposed, the provisions of the Mineral and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Act 2014 relating to approval to transfer a mining lease or an interest in a mining lease are taken to apply. Additionally, the amendments ensure that any rehabilitation liability risks relating to the removed special coalmining lease will be assessed as part of the financial provisioning scheme under the Mineral and Energy Resources (Financial Provisioning) Act 2018. If either of the applications is approved, the removed mining lease will then be administered under the Mineral Resources Act 1989 and the provisions of the Central Queensland Coal Associated Agreement Act 1968 and the Central Queensland Coal Associates Agreement will no longer apply.

Three redundant acts are also proposed to be repealed. The Starcke Pastoral Holdings Acquisition Act 1994 and the Yeppoon Hospital Acquisition Act 2006 are two special purpose acquisition acts that were enacted to acquire certain land. These acquisitions have been finalised, which means these two acts are no longer required. Similarly, the Foreign Governments (Title to Land) Act 1948 is proposed for repeal as its requirements are outdated and unnecessary and there are other more contemporary, legislative instruments regulating foreign ownership. Foreign entities, be they governments, companies or individuals, must register land ownership under the Queensland Foreign Ownership of Land Register Act 1988 as well as comply with notification requirements under the Commonwealth Foreign Acquisitions and Takeover Act 1975.

Finally, a number of technical corrections will bring provisions back in line with the original intent of legislation such as the outdated definition of 'landholder' for Aboriginal land under the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007. Another corrects a technical error identified by the Supreme Court, in which a provision in the Acquisition of Land Act 1994 wrongly references another section. I commend the bill to the House.



### First Reading

**Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (12.07 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### Referral to Transport and Resources Committee

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Transport and Resources Committee.


I remind the House of those members on a warning until after lunch. They are the members for Nanango, Buderim, Kawana, McConnel, Whitsunday, Bonney and Mudgeeraba.

## SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

### Second Reading


Resumed from 16 March (see p. 500), on motion of Ms Farmer—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (12.08 pm), continuing: The bill provides that the commissioner will advise an alternate dispute resolution service and mediation process for small business lease disputes, rental tenancy disputes and small business franchise disputes.

Small business has done it tough throughout COVID and continues to do so. Many in the south-east corner are now suffering the effects of water inundation from the recent floods and are at their most vulnerable. Those who have suffered structural damage are faced with a long delay as they seek to have repairs done. This is at a time where there is a shortage of building supplies and materials, which is resulting in a dramatic price increase, putting budgets under immense pressure. We are seeing some price increases of over 100 per cent in a week and wait times of many months.

There is a severe shortage of skilled workers across many industries such as builders, boilermakers, mechanics and chefs. You name the trade and there is a shortage. Small business is and always has been the backbone of our economy, but they are facing challenging times not helped by ever-increasing regulation and red tape. Hopefully the establishment of the Small Business Commissioner will alleviate some of these issues for those who are caught up in some of these disputes. The LNP will be supporting the bill; however, the member for Buderim will move some commonsense amendments that would further enhance the scope of the Small Business Commissioner's role.

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (12.09 pm): I would like to start by wishing everybody a happy St Patrick's Day. It is nice to be surrounded by the Ryans, the Scanlons, the Peases, the Powers and the many other members of Irish descent here. As I said in my opening address to the parliament, my family covers all sides of the Irish flag, but it is a good day to be Irish.

It is appropriate, lest I be accused of being irrelevant to the bill, that when we talk about small business we do talk about the Irish and the significant contribution they have made. There is an excellent book in the Parliamentary Library titled *A New History of the Irish in Australia* by Elizabeth Malcolm and Dianne Hall that I would encourage all those who are interested to read. They talk about the early years of the Irish in Australia—those who came either voluntarily or at the hospitality of His Majesty. They had very limited options for employment. They had no options in the Public Service—small as it was at that stage. There was significant discrimination, so often one of the only ways to provide for their families was through taking up small business opportunities or the worst of the worst jobs. I think it is appropriate that we acknowledge that on this special day. I will say Erin go Bragh and I will leave it there.

I want to respond to some of the things that the member for Southern Downs said in his contribution. I will congratulate the member for Southern Downs on his elevation to the Panel of Temporary Speakers, but that is where the congratulations will end. I will get on to his speech now. The member made the statement—

... 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 we should compare the Small Business Commissioner being put forward by the minister—well done, Minister—to the small business commissioner under the LNP. You would have had great concerns about the tools and the independence of that small business commissioner because that small business commissioner did not exist. It was abolished. They got rid of it. Yes, you need tools. You need a hammer, but you also need someone to swing the hammer, and the LNP abolished that position. He also went on to say—

**Mrs Frecklington:** Get back to 2022.

**Mr KELLY:** I take the interjection from the member who is on a warning, Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart):** Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, I am afraid you are going to have to leave the chamber for an hour. You were on a warning. He took your interjection. I was going to warn you.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Nanango withdrew from the chamber at 12.13 pm.*

**Mr KELLY:** I just wanted to give the member more time to celebrate St Patrick's Day! The member also raised concerns 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'. I think again we should compare the powers that existed for the small business commissioner under the LNP. That is right; they were abolished, so they had no powers.

It is true that they should have concerns about these things. The permanency that we are granting to this body will allow this body to play a really important role for small businesses in our community. I will get on to that in a moment. I wanted to respond to one more thing that the member for Southern Downs said. The member said—

It is quite obvious that the state archivist was forced out because he was doing his job too well.

It takes a certain kind of arrogance to walk into this place and start pontificating on integrity and to come in and make a statement for which you provide no proof—zero proof—of your statement. In my opinion, the member would have known that this statement was factually incorrect. The statement is factually incorrect and the member would have known that he was intending to mislead the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Greenslopes, there are processes in place where you can make that complaint to the Speaker, if you would like to.

**Mr KELLY:** Thank you. I intend to do that. I also intend to exercise my parliamentary right to call on the member to correct the record. He has made a statement in this debate which I believe is incorrect and misleading to the House and he has the opportunity to correct the record. I will leave it there because I do want to get on to the bill. It is a fantastic bill.

The LNP like to peddle the myth that they are the party of small business. I think over the last seven years a significant proportion of the growth in employment that we have seen in this state which we have heard today—4.3 per cent—has been achieved through the work that various ministers have done, and now this minister has done, in relation to strengthening and supporting the small business sector.


I literally ran out of time to go around and congratulate businesses that were receiving funding grants during the very difficult time of COVID. We know businesses were doing it extremely tough—businesses like Liquid Admin, The Old Seven, Lavelle Hair, Ashton & Old, Fitstop, Furniture Packages Australia, Little Black Pug, Stephen Dibb Jewellery, Olympus Cheese, the Institute of Culinary Excellence and Video Media Productions. I could go on because there are literally hundreds and hundreds of businesses in my electorate that received funding grants. Whenever I had the chance to catch up with those businesses, they were telling me how fantastic our government was in terms of creating the conditions that they needed to be successful in business, and a big part of that was then also to create employment for people. I think this bill is an important step in supporting small business.

I want to talk about some of the poor behaviour we saw from commercial landlords during the COVID period. I cannot speak for absolutely every commercial landlord. I am sure there are some good ones out there, but we saw some horrendous behaviour during COVID. I will tell one story, but I could tell it 20 or 30 times across my electorate.

We had an iconic business that was in a building that they had fitted out and renovated. They had built a successful business. Prior to that business renting that building, that building had sat empty for 10 years. Nobody else wanted to rent that building. This business came in and they rented that building. They established a successful business. Due to the nature of their business, when the lockdowns happened they lost all of their income. They had extended three times and taken up the

entire building by this stage. They turned to their landlord and asked for assistance and were effectively told, 'Two for the Valley.' They were not only told, 'Two for the Valley,' but also told, 'By the way, your renewal is coming up. We think we're going to bump up your rent.' That is the sort of appalling behaviour that people had to endure. I do not know how commercial leasing works, but if that business left that particular premises it would be another 10 years before somebody else might want to go into those premises.

I can tell the House what that business said when I rang them and told them about the creation of the Small Business Commissioner and the role it could potentially play. They were over the moon. I had so many good conversations with small businesses who were having those sorts of disputes. I think if you can get sensible and decent people in a room through a mediation process, you can get outcomes. That is what I believe we have seen over and over again. The reality is that we need the capacity to support small businesses to continue to grow, to continue to employ people. I think this bill is going to do just that. That is why I support this bill. It is going to be good for small business. It is going to be good for employment in our state. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (12.18 pm): I am pleased to be speaking on this bill to establish a permanent office to be known as the Small Business Commissioner. The LNP has always understood that small business is the backbone of the Queensland economy, and that is nowhere truer than in regional and rural Queensland. It is small businesses that maintain the livability of our communities and sustain our local economies. To see that confirmed as simple truth, one only has to look at the role of small business in the Emerald flood recovery process in 2011 and the role of small businesses in nearly 10 years of drought in the central west—and, yes, the drought is still ongoing in Gregory, Warrego and Traeger.

In the central west we set up the Western Queensland Drought Appeal to help those small businesses over the last 10 years. The approach was deliberately chosen as a way of supporting our small businesses. Small business is key to the functions of daily life in outback towns. It is the doctor, it is the chemist, it is the vet and it is the newsagent who sells school supplies as well as news. It is the fuel distributor, it is the tyre shop, the mechanic and the hardware. It is the butcher, the baker, the chippie and the sparky. The drought was killing these small businesses in the west, and each small business represents a family—a mum, dad and kids—so that rolls on to affect our health, education and police services.

There was a study done by a committee of the Western Queensland Drought Appeal, which was set up in Western Queensland by locals, and I have to congratulate them for what they have done over the last 10 years. A lot of money has gone through that drought appeal to small businesses to help them get through. They may only get a \$200 debit card, but that is a little bit so they can shop. The most important thing about the Western Queensland Drought Appeal is that you have to spend your money in those local businesses. For the record, I would like to thank and congratulate Westpac for coming on board. Peta is the regional manager for agribusiness at Westpac, based at Toowoomba, and she has been marvellous at helping to set that up. It is fantastic.

The first recipient might spend the donated money at the butcher; the butcher then spends that at the servo; the fuel distributor spends that at the newsagent—it just goes on and on. I hope there are some helpful lessons here for those in charge of the flood relief appeal. With regard to this debate, what the experience highlights is that small business is central to the economic ecosystem of every community. Small business has direct links to big business and it has direct links to other small businesses. It is not just the engine of prosperity; it is the driver of community life. Lose small business and you lose not just a marketplace; you lose the vitality and the vibrancy of your small communities.

This has been obvious in the fallout from two years of COVID-19 restrictions. Small businesses have been asked to carry such a load. Decisions have had to be made with little understanding of their magnified impact on these rural communities. It sounds almost cynical to mandate vaccines for certain workforces. In the bush, these workforces constitute individuals, and not anonymous ones either. Workers and their bosses are often just family. The enforcement of vaccine exclusions has affected people being able to work when that is their only job out there. They have had to do that, and they have done it hard.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr MILLAR:** No, I do not want that, but we need to understand that vaccine mandates have had an incredibly crippling effect on small businesses—

**Mr Power:** You support the mandates?

**Mr MILLAR:** I support vaccination—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Through the chair, please, member. Member for Logan, cease the interjections.


**Mr MILLAR:** I support this bill. I certainly believe that we need to have some protections for small business. Small business is the backbone of every regional and rural community. Equally, the Small Business Commissioner needs to be unshackled from the bureaucrats of any government department and the games they seem to play. When small business owners seek help from the commissioner in resolving an issue with a state government department, they need to know that the Office of the Small Business Commissioner is truly independent and unshackled from both politics and the administrative elites of the day. If the dispute is with a government department, they want an independent officer who has the rights and resources to access information from the department on their behalf.

I do not see that in this bill. Often their dispute will not be with a government department at all but with another large business. I have helped small business constituents in such situations. It is the local country newsagent being threatened by large suppliers into spending a small fortune to display that supplier's products in a certain way. It is a small shop tenant being bullied by large out-of-town landlords. It is small suppliers and contractors being paid on unfair and extended terms by big business. They feel they cannot protest at the treatment or they will lose work.

I will give you an example of that. When we were building the Landsborough Highway north of Longreach about 30 kilometres to the Darr River, a small business—well, a medium business in Longreach—owned by a well-respected family who had been there all their life was caught up in a dispute with a head contractor that was not from Longreach. They went a long time without being paid properly. This is where I think governments do need to step in. Where the Department of Transport and Main Roads is releasing money to build roads, they have to make sure the contractor pays those smaller contractors on time. This went on for two years. The Moore family—a well-respected family in Longreach—had to endure trying to keep people on but they were not getting paid. There is a responsibility to make sure they get paid.

In order to prevent this from happening again, we need all of the things I have mentioned addressed: independence, a clear definition of the beneficiaries of the office and a clear definition of its duties to those beneficiaries. There also needs to be some muscle in the law to compel the release of information. Finally, it will need the staffing and funding to take this role on properly, including providing small business with clearly communicated advice.

I truly welcome this bill—I truly do—but the test will be in the tasting, as they say. I do fear this legislation, while well-intentioned, is too vague and will not do the job that is necessary for our small businesses. I hope the powers that be do not use it to run protection for themselves, and I hope the minister will fight to reinforce the office and give it some true muscle. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (12.26 pm): I rise in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill. I do that because, of course, in Queensland we support small businesses as both significant job creators and an important means of earning a living for many families.

Before I discuss the merits of the bill, I want to take the opportunity to reflect on commentary from those opposite, who have made scandalous remarks about the attitude and posture of the Public Service and bureaucracy in Queensland. Any imputation that they engage in games or politics must be completely rejected; they are entirely inappropriate. It is clear to all of us on this side of the House, and it is clear to the quarter of a million Queenslanders who show up to work every single day to serve the people of this state, that those opposite have learned nothing in their long years in opposition. It is clear to all Queenslanders that their position in opposition will continue for a long, long time with that attitude towards the people of Queensland.

The establishment of the temporary Queensland Small Business Commission has been a great success thus far. Since her appointment, the commissioner has supported businesses during what has been an incredibly challenging time in Queensland's history to navigate available services and finalise disputes quickly with early information. Hallmarks of the office have been timely advice and access to mediation services. The commissioner herself has been a vital point of contact for businesses which have been facing unprecedented circumstances throughout the pandemic. The value of this service is clear. By making these arrangements permanent, tenants and landlords in retail shop leases will have a clear and early process for accessing dispute resolution services. They will have a permanent source of information and advice instead of heading straight to QCAT. That is why we committed to the appointment of a permanent Queensland Small Business Commissioner and the establishment of the supporting office. We did that so small business could focus on their business and, in turn, focus on creating even more jobs for Queenslanders.

As the Treasurer noted in this House earlier today, Queensland continues to lead our nation when it comes to job creation. Earlier this year, in January, Queensland created another 17,500 jobs. We heard reports from the Treasurer about the jobs created. I think he indicated 1,000 jobs every two days.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr de BRENNI:** I take the interjection from the member for Logan. That is an extraordinary result. Many of those jobs have been created amongst small business. As well, our strong health response has enabled conditions in which businesses can continue to thrive despite the challenges of the pandemic. Nevertheless, some challenges exist that are unique to small businesses, and I have seen that in the community I am honoured to represent. That includes challenges faced by small shop owners in getting a fair deal from large lessors. In the electorate I represent there are both large shopping centres and smaller centres—or strip malls—from Rochedale South all the way down to Loganholme and around the east to Mount Cotton. There are also shops owned by local families.

Many businesses have been working from home during the pandemic and many more small businesses are trying to compete with global franchises. From what they tell me and from what their loyal customers say as well, small businesses are about more than the goods and services that they sell, produce or deliver. They are family businesses. Far more than a nine-to-five job, running a small business is clearly as much a way of life as it is a way to make a living. People invest far more than just their time and labour into their small businesses. Small businesses are their blood, their sweat and their family's tears. I know, because my mum and dad still run their small business in our community; in fact it is a bit of a local icon.

I have heard from other small businesses about some of the specific challenges within the electorate of Springwood. Getting landlords to invest in appropriate security for retail premises is one that comes up time and time again—with landlords who refuse to pay for simple security measures like locks, alarm systems or even working surveillance cameras—or staff to protect the livelihoods of small businesses. This legislation is action for those businesses, for those families. Other small retailers are having to compete with businesses which flout the law by marketing illegal tobacco. This legislative action is for you.

Small businesses within the community I represent have been encouraged by the advocacy role of the Small Business Commissioner and their dispute resolution function, and that is why I am so supportive of this bill. Appointing a permanent Small Business Commissioner builds on the significant support the Palaszczuk government has provided throughout the COVID pandemic. It builds on more than \$2.5 billion in business support since March 2020.

We have put small and medium enterprises front and centre of the Queensland government's procurement policy as well, and that has delivered. Since 1 July 2020 Queensland government agencies have been required to invest at least 25 per cent of their procurement spend with small and medium Queensland businesses. I am pleased to report that we have exceeded that target. We have achieved more than 28 per cent of the value of the goods and services the government has purchased from small and medium enterprises in Queensland. From 30 June this year I am pleased to inform the House that that target will again increase to 30 per cent.

It is important that those people who serve the public in significant roles must be able to carry out those roles independently without fear or favour. Certainly they must be able to carry them out without the constant criticism of the Liberal National Party. The opposition have asserted in their statement of reservation that the Small Business Commissioner is not sufficiently independent from government. However, the bill clearly requires under clause 17(3) that the commissioner must include details in its annual report of any ministerial directions during the financial year and the actions taken by the commissioner as a result of the direction. This provides for transparency and public accountability.

What is clear is that the objectives of this government and Queensland small businesses are well aligned. This government's objective for our economy demonstrates that we set very much a pro-business posture. This posture is underscored with specific investment measures targeted at supporting small businesses to grow and to thrive. This legislation effectively ensures the accountability of the Small Business Commissioner whilst ensuring independence and transparency.

I reflect on the support of stakeholders for our legislation. I note the Master Electricians' submission was broadly supportive of this bill. I acknowledge they would like to see even more support given to small businesses from this role, and I thank them for their considered submission.

The Property Council of Australia as well said in their submission—

We applaud the significant role that the Queensland Small Business Commissioner (QSBC) continues to play as businesses navigate the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is clear that this bill will make sure that support continues. Whether you are selling gifts and magazines, whether you are delivering promotional wear for local sports clubs and schools, whether you are making pizza or slow-cooked ribs, whether you are running a gym, a bakery, a butcher shop, a florist or a travel agency, whether you are an accountant, a lawyer or an undertaker, whether you are a trophy engraver, a beautician, a hairstylist, a psychologist or a physiotherapist, whether you are a real estate agency or any other small business—our message is that the Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting your business to succeed in our community. In conclusion, I would like to thank the minister for progressing this incredibly important legislation. I commend this bill to the House.



**Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (12.34 pm): I rise to give my contribution on the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. The policy objective of the bill is to permanently establish a Queensland Small Business Commissioner and a supporting office. This will 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 only.

A further objective of the bill is to cease the operation of the temporary commissioner on commencement of the permanent commissioner. As part of this, it is intended to transition the temporary commissioner role from its previous arrangements, focused primarily on managing and responding to COVID-19 impacts, to a role with wider application to support small businesses. The bill also states that the permanent commissioner and supporting office will improve tailored support and advice to Queensland small businesses and provide timely and affordable access to justice through the permanent commissioner's dispute resolution function.

I wish to state that I will be supporting this bill. However, I want to put on record that the appointment of the commissioner must be transparent and devoid of cronyism to ensure we have a person on the job who is independent from government and can make decisions independently. I also want to place on record that the position and the office must have the authority to make effective, timely and decisive decisions in assisting small businesses in the state. Too often governments come up with great ideas to assist industry; however, they fail to ensure these positions provide effective services to the very people the office is created for. In other words, we do not want this position to be another reward for one of the boys. No, that never happens! What are you talking about!

I also point out that small businesses in regional Queensland face different issues compared to those in the large south-east corner so this must be recognised and considered when delivering these duties of the office. We have seen what happens in rural and regional Queensland when a bakery or a corner store closes down. It affects the community and it is then difficult to get another bakery or store like that up and going and get someone out to those regional areas. That is why it is so important to support these small businesses, particularly in rural and regional Queensland.

I am surprised, however, that the temporary commissioner has not heard the loud shouts from small business in regional Queensland about the absurd vaccination mandate imposed by this government—particularly when they have to police their premises—which has impacted heavily. If the temporary commissioner is truly doing his job, he should be constantly petitioning the government to immediately drop the vaccine mandates. Otherwise, many small businesses will be wiped out by the end of October. If the job of the Small Business Commissioner is to assist small business get back to normal business, then dropping the vaccination mandate should be the office's first priority.


However, apart from this failure in the current temporary office's duties, I can see the positives in the formation of a permanent commissioner and office. These positives include: reducing red tape for small business, which is very important; making it easier for small business to do business with the Queensland government, which is a priority; providing fair, independent and balanced dispute resolution; liaising regularly and effectively with small business stakeholders regarding upcoming initiatives of the Queensland government, which has been so vital through COVID; receiving and responding to queries, submissions and concerns raised by small business on the delivery of government policy and services; connecting small business with expert advice, which is vital; and communicating with the public and raising awareness of the benefits and opportunities of small business as well as with government departments.

I also welcome the priority policies which will focus on rental relief and dispute resolution, which has continually raised its ugly head through the COVID period. I welcome any initiatives by the commissioner towards enhancing the operating environment for small business and in particular any

changes that aim to reduce the complexity and costs. The establishment of an alternative, non-legal pathway for mediation will also save small business thousands in expensive legal fees that many simply cannot afford.

I cannot remember who it was that said this, but I used to quote that it was Peter Costello who said that if you give the incentive to every small business across Australia—because I believe it was 800,000 of them at that time—you would solve the unemployment problem. I quoted that the other day and someone said, ‘No, it was not Peter Costello; it was Paul Keating.’ Either way, it was a good line. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Try Google, member for Hill.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (12.40 pm): I want to recognise the hard work of the small businesses in Logan, especially during the COVID period that we have been through. They have been fantastic in their commitment to keeping the Logan community safe.

I have to question the member for Hill. The challenges that small business have faced have been significant, and the partnership they have had with government to help increase vaccination rates and also keep our community safe through sensible and well-explained rules has been fantastic and has made a difference. That is why we have had less closures than almost anywhere else in the world. That is why they have had their businesses run more actively. That is what this government is about. That is what this small business minister and indeed the Small Business Commissioner are about.

Faced with those difficulties, a small business commissioner would give accurate feedback about how we keep customers and how we avoid shutdowns. That is what this government has done for small business.

As we are moving forward, we are seeing cases increase in New South Wales, which is a concern. We are seeing winter coming, which is a concern. This government backs the community and backs small business by doing the right thing on COVID by continuing to keep them in work and keep them productive.

I want to particularly acknowledge one of the businesses in Logan—maybe they are not so small, but they came from a small base, the Logan Village pub where the McGuires took very seriously their responsibilities which was something that attracted customers. Because they were at the front door asking people to check in, people felt confident that they could go and have a meal there in the knowledge that they would be contacted if there was a serious infection in that pub. That is sensible, good policy and well-consulted within the industry, and it also makes consumers confident to go out and enjoy those facilities and to keep business going. That is what this government is about, member for Hill, when it comes to COVID; encouraging and supporting small businesses.

I want to record a few small businesses. It is fantastic to see the Minister for Education here because she enjoyed an iced coffee at Sorbello's Gloria Jean's at the Greenbank shops. After the speech I said, ‘Let's get out and support small business,’ and the minister immediately took that opportunity.

I want to speak about the chemists and the doctors who serve our community. They are often small businesses and often family-run businesses. I want to speak about the farms. I spoke about the farms which have been affected by floods, but there are all sorts of dynamic and creative farmers within the Logan area who often do small intensive horticulture and they are often family-run businesses. They are going to have issues where they will need a small business commissioner to support them.

I want to recognise Olley's Orange Country Market which is an iconic business, a grocery store in North Maclean. I encourage everyone to get down there. They compete directly against very large businesses which have huge advantages. However, they have the advantage of being a family-run business that is nimble, can get to the markets and get great produce. They are a business which is really supported by the local community and they very much support local workers. I want to recognise Chyerl Pridham with the Logan Country Chamber of Commerce. They are people who are active in the community. They see small business as not just about taking money from the community, but being a partner with the community in giving back. For instance, Chyerl was out there volunteering herself, setting up a flood relief station in Logan Village and she did that off her own bat. That is the type of small business we want to see which grow, develop and are encouraged by our community.

I want to recognise Park Ridge Produce and the other produce businesses. When people hear ‘the member for Logan’, they think of central Logan, but I am part of a dynamic area right on the periphery of the city and those produces are really important.

I want to recognise the bakery in Logan Village: of course, the famous Country and Weston—both types of music. The Country and Weston Bakery and Cafe in North Maclean is iconic for the local area and again a great local employer.

We on this side of the House recognise that these small businesses have a power imbalance often with big business who control the suppliers they have and the real estate they are in. We are the only party that actually recognises that imbalance and wants to actively address that. We see the LNP so often talk and support big business. They are there for the big businesses that are the monopolies or the duopolies that actually make life harder for the small businesses. We see that small businesses struggle when large corporations drive down prices, but especially when they drive down labour costs.

We see the LNP, especially federally, attack our trade unions who are trying to increase the quality of work. So many small businesses, just like other workers, are making their profits from their hard work—their labour. Although they are structured as a small business, they are in common cause with our union movement to make sure that our workplaces have quality work, safe work, fair work, as well as well-remunerated work; whereas the LNP line up against small business workers in small businesses and they line up against workers in general where they attack at every opportunity. They undermine wages and conditions, and those wages and conditions ultimately filter down to the small business person who is also making their living through their hard work and their labour.

That is why this side is the party of workers, the party of workers who are employed under wages, but also the small business worker, because so much of what they get for their families is from their hard work and labour.

Big business has the power over leases. It is often the very large, major corporations that own the underlying leases which are a big input and cost to small business. That is why we need to see that there is a fair process.

Under COVID, we could have seen so many businesses destroyed. That is why I think it was useful in the national cabinet process where we saw premiers from Victoria, even New South Wales and South Australia say, 'Look, there is this power imbalance. We need to have situations that actually address that because we do not want to see small businesses driven out of business, even though they are successful and hardworking when there is a temporary blip.' That is why I think the role of the Small Business Commissioner is so important. We saw it play out under coronavirus, but it does not mean that the problem goes away.

We know big business can often use disputes with small business as a tool to get greater profits and to also stifle competition. We do not want to see that because we are on the side of small business, not on the side of big business, like that lot opposite.


We want to see that disputes are fairly and easily settled and the way to do that is through mediation and dispute resolution. That is the way we can see that small businesses have their voice and are not dominated and that the large businesses, the LNP mates, are not actually using those disputes and the law courts to help stifle their competition.

I want to speak briefly about red tape. The last government wanted to take away red tape or regulation by the pound. They boasted about it. They actually weighed and measured how to do it. I want to talk about one small business where the regulation that governed some of the serious things that they did that had some waste implications and other implications was completely removed. Naturally enough, the local council and the community was asking, 'What regulates them?' The public servants had to look around for other regulation that was less well-suited to that small business.

I want to see a small business commissioner who is looking at regulation, reflecting the views of small business, but not doing it in the slipshod, dangerous and frankly damaging way that happened under the last LNP government where they did not get regulation right in order to protect the community, they did not get regulation right in order to see that one person who was willing to exploit and to damage the environment or to hurt their workers would get an advantage in the marketplace; instead, you want regulation that makes for a fair and good playing field, and gets the conditions right.

That is the why the Small Business Commissioner will be in touch with small business. Ultimately, that lack of regulation damaged that business because the new regulations—the only ones they could fit them into—were not as well suited as the ones that were stripped away by the LNP. That is why we need to be sensible about this, so we end up with regulation that is right for our community and supports our small businesses.

With that, I say that I support the creation of the Small Business Commissioner. As has been said, this is a government that is driving job creation, and they are driving it through small business—support for them and fair work for the small business worker.

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (12.50 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Small Business Commissioner. I wish to thank the committee members on both sides of the House for their consideration of the bill as well as the 13 submitters to the bill. I specifically want to mention the submission by Rural Solutions Queensland who are based in my electorate and have helped over a thousand small businesses since 2019. That is a commendable effort of their small business counsellors.

The Small Business Commissioner Bill seeks to establish a permanent Small Business Commissioner and a supporting office. It is intended to transition the temporary commissioner role from its previous arrangements, focused primarily on managing and responding to the COVID-19 impacts, to a role with a wider application to support small business. The proposed legislation will 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 only.

As the LNP shadow minister for family and small business outlined in his contribution—and I commend him for his contribution—the LNP will not be opposing the bill. We do, however, have some improvements, and the intention is to move two amendments. The first amendment seeks to omit clause 17, therefore removing the requirement for the Small Business Commissioner to receive ministerial direction. Bruce Billson in his submission identified that clause 17 conveys a potential for the role to be highly dependent on government and subject to operational instruction.

The second amendment proposed by the LNP would enable the Small Business Commissioner to have the power to obtain information from government entities. Like the shadow minister, I, too, have dealt with many family and small businesses in my electorate who have had issues with not being paid by Queensland Health. It just never seems to improve. The LNP amendment would give the Small Business Commissioner the ability to seek information for the purpose of a timely resolution to disputes. That would certainly help some of those small businesses who find themselves just not being paid by government departments.

I urge the government to take on board these amendments. They would improve the outcomes for family and small businesses right across Queensland. That is really important, particularly when we look at the situation that has occurred with recovery from COVID and also the flood situation here in South-East Queensland.

Small and family businesses are the backbone of Queensland and my electorate. Collectively across Queensland they are the biggest employer. In my electorate these businesses are crying out for more people. We have the jobs, but they do not have people to fill those jobs in skilled and unskilled positions. They are desperate for more workers and we need people to keep those businesses going. We need people to fill those jobs.

We have jobs in places like the butcher's shop and the coffee shop. People would be lucky to get a coffee in my electorate without someone coming forward saying, 'Do you know anyone who wants to work in my coffee shop?' I have a baker in Mitchell who is absolutely desperate for staff. We would happily fill some other positions, professional positions like nurses and accountants, where we have vacancies as well. The communities these jobs are located in have great livability and opportunity, but they struggle to attract staff to their businesses. Family and small business owners constantly ask me, 'Where can we find people for our jobs?' I will give some examples.

The sheep and goat abattoir at Charleville could employ another 40 people. I was talking to the managing director just last week. He said he could employ another 40 tomorrow in his business but he just cannot find those people. A local steel, retail and stockfeed business in Mitchell, Samios, need more staff. They could not even get someone during COVID who could just do general welding to come and work with them. In fact, the family members of that business say to their parents, 'Could you please have had some more children, because we're working so hard in our family business? We just can't keep doing this. We need to have more staff.' However, they just cannot get them to come to great little communities like Mitchell.

Another example is the coffee shop across the road from my office in Roma, Bear and Luca. Celeste is always asking me, 'Where can we find more staff?' She has gone to the extent of actually employing a nanny because she has so much work to do and she has small children.



Another example is the service station at the Moonie crossroads. They are always seeking staff. They found staff, but they could not get them across the border because of the border closures. They are absolutely desperate for more staff in Moonie, and it is a great thriving business.

There is also the Coffee Club in Dalby. I was talking to the owner last week. He does a great job in sponsoring staff and training them, but he needs more. His wife came to me and said, 'Can you please help us find some more staff because my knees cannot keep doing this?' because she is working in that business seven days a week.

I hope the Small Business Commissioner can help these small and family businesses with navigating the pathways with Migration Queensland. I have been working closely with the businesses in Dalby, and we found it is a very convoluted and complicated process for employers and employees. I will be helping those family and small businesses to reach out to Maree Adshead, the Small Business Commissioner. Hopefully she can help those businesses that are already sponsoring staff and wish to sponsor more staff, but come up against roadblocks in Migration Queensland, which is a part of Trade & Investment Queensland.

There is no doubt that family and small businesses have done it tough during COVID. The constant changes in restrictions and the complicated manner in which they have been presented have taken a toll on the patience of small business owners. They have taken a toll on some of our larger business owners as well. Some, though, have been lucky; they have had a good niche and excellent customer service which has enabled them to flourish during COVID. I have had some very good feedback from the hardware stores in my electorate when the travel restrictions were in place. They were very happy with the number of locals who were shopping locally on a consistent basis. I hope that continues and people do recognise that supporting your local small business supports jobs, supports families and supports your community.

I cannot say the same for those businesses located along the borders with both New South Wales and South Australia. Navigating three different states' COVID rules which do not change in unison was a nightmare for businesses. There was no border zone with South Australia. It may come as a surprise to some members of this House that parts of the far west of my electorate are by far closer to Adelaide than Brisbane.

Queensland has a Small Business Commissioner but what is also needed is a cross-border commissioner to ensure long-term solutions for the cross-border issues where businesses are hampered by two totally different state legislative regimes. That applies to South Australia as well as to New South Wales. I was at the Two Mile pub down near Mungindi. The family who own the pub in New South Wales have to navigate all of the different liquor licensing rules in New South Wales and in Queensland. It is complicated and it is different. That is why we need a cross-border commissioner; we need to have some seamless aligning of a lot of the regulation that impacts businesses that operate on both sides of the border. If anything, COVID has made it abundantly clear that those communities and businesses along the borders need a constant advocate for their cross-border issues that arise on a daily basis.

Earlier I mentioned Rural Solutions Queensland, a not-for-profit organisation established back in 1998. The service provides free financial counselling assistance to primary producers and small rural businesses across Southern Queensland through the Rural Financial Counselling Service Program. The main office is just down the street from my electorate office in Roma. Both my staff and I have a lot of interaction with the rural financial counsellors and the business counsellors. They provide an excellent service to Southern Queensland. They made a very good point in their submission. The journey of recovery after the impact of COVID-19 will be ongoing for many businesses. There will be an even longer journey of recovery for those businesses that have been sadly impacted by the South-East Queensland flood event. They were already struggling with COVID. Now they have the losses of stock and income from floods.

I can see the Small Business Commissioner's work will dramatically increase over the coming months as she works with those businesses that have been impacted by COVID and the floods. I can see that there will be some need for a lot of support for those businesses. I know there are assistance measures in place, but with the increase in the cost of materials and the lack of trades and labour it will be very difficult for some of those businesses to get back on their feet. The assistance and advocacy of the Small Business Commissioner will certainly be needed by those impacted businesses.

Debate, on motion of Ms Leahy, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Anderson, Mr B



**Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.00 pm): I want to give a voice to Barry Anderson of Redcliffe. He is a 58-year-old gentleman who works as a carer under the provisions of the NDIS. Members may ask why I am giving voice to Barry here today, so I will share his story.

On 23 January this year, Barry went out with his friends to celebrate his birthday. After dinner he decided to walk home with his mates along Redcliffe Parade when he was accosted by two Indigenous juveniles demanding cigarettes. When Barry informed the juveniles that he did not smoke or have any cigarettes, he was abused and then hit over the head with a piece of wood. That was not all, because two had become eight to 10 offenders. He had his teeth knocked out and he was assaulted so seriously that he was transported by ambulance to the emergency department at Redcliffe Hospital. He required six stitches in his head and, after two further visits to the emergency department because of the ongoing bleeding to the wound in his head, he required surgery to repair a ruptured artery which was suffered as a consequence of that assault. It is now going to cost him \$18½ thousand to have his teeth repaired. He cannot chew or eat properly; he cannot work or pay his bills. In Barry's words, he is 'not living life'.

This was a serious assault. I have written to the minister today asking for a 'please explain' because it would appear that these juvenile offenders have been cautioned for this offence—that defies belief. There has to be consequences for the actions of these juvenile offenders and, as Barry said, we cannot keep letting them get away with serious assault; someone is going to die. Barry has lost all confidence in everything he does. His life has been forever changed.

This is the reality of what is happening on our streets right across Queensland. This government needs to face the reality that it has a crisis on its hands and people's lives are at risk. I will continue to stand up in this place and give a voice to people like Barry, because they deserve better. They deserve answers and they deserve to be able to walk home at night without fear of being hit over the head with a piece of wood. It is about time that this government started listening to the community, started making the hard decisions and started protecting Queenslanders like Barry Anderson. I met with Barry today and he is still suffering the impact and the effects of that assault, and he will continue to do so for some time to come.

### Citipointe Christian College




**Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (2.03 pm): Manoj Tyagi, is a principal in India who is quoted as saying, 'Every child has a song and as teachers and school leaders it is our job to amplify the sound.' Since the issue of the Citipointe Christian College contract emerged, parents, current and former students and teachers have continued to raise further matters of concern with me. These matters should be of concern to all members of this House. I have been advised by members of the school community that there is no public acknowledgement of the school principal holding any educational qualification such as a Bachelor of Education or a Master in Teaching. Further, constituents are concerned that the principal may not even be a registered teacher with the Queensland College of Teachers.

This is not a small issue, especially in the context of a controversy surrounding the school in recent weeks. Having worked with hundreds if not thousands of school leaders both here in Australia and from across the globe, I cannot imagine a principal who holds educational qualifications ever supporting the policy position that informed the Citipointe school contract, regardless of their religious beliefs. Parents are understandably questioning the capacity of the school principal to lead a teaching and learning agenda that will deliver improved learning outcomes for their students. Parents are feeling angry and betrayed. They feel this is a significant violation of the trust that our community, and in particular fee-paying parents, place in our schools. Who could blame them? Parents have a right to expect that their schools will be led by someone with an educational qualification. I believe that the vast majority of Queenslanders would agree. I thank the Minister for Education for initiating steps to address this important issue through the timely revision of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017.

There are many other serious allegations that have been raised by parents and students which I have referred to the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board, known as NSSAB. I am confident that these issues will be investigated thoroughly by the board. I thank the Minister for Education, the Attorney-General and NSSAB for their ongoing response to this important issue, which has impacted hundreds of families in the Mansfield electorate, and for their acknowledgement of the impact this issue has had on public confidence and the broader Queensland community's expectations of student safety.

and the right of every Queensland child to experience fairness, equity, acceptance and the opportunity to experience educational success—to open the minds of our young people, not close the minds of our young people, and to amplify the sound of each child's song.

### **Queensland Floods, Palaszczuk Labor Government**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (2.06 pm): During a natural disaster, calm leadership and clear communication are required. Queenslanders look to the Premier and all state government ministers for certainty of message and for an understanding of the situation and what is required during large-scale natural disasters. The messaging and communication from the Palaszczuk state Labor government through the recent South-East Queensland severe weather and flood event a fortnight ago was nothing short of chaotic, confusing and, at times, downright dangerous.

Nowhere was this more evident than with the messaging about our Queensland schools. At a time when facts and certainty of information were of paramount importance, students, parents, teachers and school staff had to endure a week of mixed messages and chaos from the Labor Premier and the Labor Minister for Education. These matters are very serious and, whilst errors can occur, it is important that comprehensive reviews take place and that learnings are implemented to ensure mistakes are not repeated in the future.


On the afternoon of Monday, 28 February we saw Queensland schools communicating to their families that they would reopen for students the following day. This was supposedly based on guidance and information which was being provided by the Department of Education. Just hours later, on the Monday evening, the Labor Minister for Education had to rush out a media release confirming that, in fact, all South-East Queensland schools would be closed. The damage had already been done, and all schools had to urgently contact parents, teachers and families—because of the incompetence of the Palaszczuk Labor government. The inconsistency and uncertainty that so many families and school staff had to endure was extremely poor leadership. Days later, the incompetence of the state Labor government was on full display again after a shambolic press conference by the Labor Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk.

The Labor Premier's mixed messages on schools caused chaos and confusion across South-East Queensland which was only aided and abetted by the Premier's own team of spin doctors, who could not properly communicate essential information across multiple social media platforms. That afternoon, I was inundated by concerned parents and teachers who were unsure of what advice to follow. At a time when Queenslanders were only just starting to pick up the pieces and begin the difficult task of cleaning up and rebuilding, countless volunteers left what they were doing to collect their children. This was all because the state Labor government could not communicate clearly about the specific areas and communities that the advice applied to.

How do I know all this? At the time I was with the state Leader of the Opposition, David Crisafulli. We were cleaning up houses and businesses in my electorate of Moggill. There were parents volunteering alongside us who immediately thought they had to abandon what they were doing and collect their children, because that is what the Premier said to do. This happens when you have a state government that is far more concerned with how things look than how they are. Queensland parents, teachers and students deserve better.

*(Time expired)*

### **Stretton Electorate, Businesses**

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (2.09 pm): I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to supporting Queensland businesses and local manufacturers. The last few years have been very challenging for small business in Queensland, but they have been resilient and survived, thanks in large part to the strong health response of the Palaszczuk government which allowed our businesses to stay open whilst businesses in other states and countries faced extended lockdowns.

In my local area we are seeing strong signs of growth and the creation of new jobs. Over the last few months I have seen many new businesses start up in my electorate, including Cafe L'Oasis in Calamvale Central, Soba Shimbashi noodle restaurant in Sunnybank Hills, Anytime Fitness in Sunnybank Hills and also Australia's largest Asian supermarket Fresco in Calamvale. Thanks to this government's support and focus on the economy, all of these businesses have been able to make investment in our local area and create new jobs.

I want to recognise some of the fantastic local businesses in Stretton. Firstly, I mention Poly-Tek in Acacia Ridge. It manufactures its own design of soundproof fencing. Recently I met the owner Neil, who was very happy to have received \$50,000 as part of our business growth grants program. Neil's message to the Minister for Small Business is—

... thank you, we are delighted with your support for us, helping us grow and employ ... around 15 more people and look to export overseas.

That is a great example of what we are doing to support our economy and create jobs.

Also in manufacturing I recently visited Burndy Cable Support Systems in Sunnybank Hills. It manufactures cable supports for many large projects and it is very much looking forward to the many contracts and tenders that will be available in the Cross River Rail project, one of the big contracts it is putting together a tender for. This will support its workforce of machine operators and welders. I thank Peter and the team for recently providing me with a tour of its facilities and look forward to attending its 40th anniversary celebrations later this year. This government is supporting local manufacturers just like Burndy by bringing forward investment in job-creating projects like Cross River Rail, the Eight Mile Plains satellite hospital and the Kuraby to Beenleigh rail upgrades and others, supporting our continued economic recovery.

I also want to acknowledge businesses helping families impacted by the recent floods. I give a special mention to local business owner Rob Donald from Pacific Aquatics Pool Care—a great pool care business. Rob recently came to the rescue of local residents Mary and Mike, who are pensioners. Their pool was filled with sediment as a result of the recent floods. I called Rob after visiting and Rob was fantastic enough to offer his services for free to Mike and Mary and now their pool is spick and span. In conclusion, in the face of pandemics and floods, the Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting small business and local manufacturing with grants that promote growth, invest in job-generating infrastructure, support our economy and deliver our promise to put Queenslanders first.

### Queensland Floods, Housing



**Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (2.11 pm): In the last two parliamentary sittings we have had the housing minister trumpet this so-called great response by the government for those who have been displaced through the floods. Unfortunately, there are other stakeholders who do not agree with that assessment by the housing minister. This has come from the REIQ—

The Government's proposed solution to the immediate and long-term housing crisis resulting from the floods is impractical and immoral.

That is not what I have said; that is from the REIQ and Q Shelter which have had to do alternative programs to fill the gaps that the government does not provide. Why have they said that? They have said—

The Government's proposed solution to the immediate and long-term housing crisis is to utilise COVID-19 quarantine hotels and send displaced residents to Toowoomba's Wellcamp quarantine facility. This is a short-term solution to a long-term problem. Cutting people's financial and social ties to their schools, jobs and social networks, or cramming families into hotel rooms is impractical and immoral.

We have a housing crisis in this state at the moment—a housing crisis that has 50,000 people on the public housing waiting list. We have the lowest private rental vacancies in the history of this state. Despite a 70 per cent increase in the social housing waiting list, over the last five years there has been a one per cent increase in the number of social housing bedrooms. We have a crisis by the making of this government and we have no wiggle room when a natural disaster happens because there is no spare room at the inn. The REIQ and Q Shelter have decided to do something for themselves because this government dithers. In a press release the government says that it is—

... exploring offers from the private sector, including commercial, holiday, mobile or other short-term rentals.

The government is 'exploring'—and will probably do a study as well—whereas Q Shelter and REIQ have, under their own initiative, launched Help House a Queensland program, appealing to the private rental market and to the holiday accommodation market to provide some accommodation for these people. Here is the coup de grâce: the government has also offered rental grants and bond loans to get into properties that do not exist. There are no vacancies out there, so as usual it is smoke and mirrors and trumpet announcements which do nothing practically when it comes to housing vulnerable Queenslanders—ramming families into hotel rooms when they are in desperate need because it has not planned but has failed at every turn.

*(Time expired)*

### Ipswich West Electorate, School Infrastructure



**Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (2.14 pm): On Tuesday of next week the Minister for Tourism, Innovation and Sport, Stirling Hinchliffe, will be attending Ipswich State High School in my electorate of Ipswich West to officially open the school's new \$700,000 synthetic soccer pitch. This will be the first synthetic soccer pitch built in South-East Queensland west of the synthetic soccer pitch at the University of Queensland's St Lucia campus. In June 2021 a new \$7.8 million STEM building was opened at the school by the Minister for Education, Grace Grace, and in June 2019 the minister officiated at the opening of the school's \$9.9 million performing arts centre. Ipswich State High School is just one of my schools that have benefited from the Palaszczuk government's commitment to improving school infrastructure.

Last week I attended Walloon State School for a school leaders induction, after which principal Lisa Noonan gave me a tour of the school's recent \$200,000 refurbishment. Recently a tender was issued for a new \$5.2 million two-storey teaching block at the school that will provide four new classrooms, a lift and a large undercroft. At nearby Ashwell State School work is almost complete on a new \$750,000 amenities block that includes new toilets with disability access.

Work has begun at Rosewood State High School on a \$7 million building program that includes new classrooms, car parks and upgraded playing areas. At Rosewood State School the \$150,000 drainage works were completed, while at Ipswich North State School students will benefit from a \$300,000 refurbishment of B block learning spaces as well as a \$250,000 refurbishment of the outdoor learning areas. At Karalee State School there has been a badly needed \$200,000 upgrade of the school's septic system. At Mount Marrow students will benefit from a new \$750,000 amenities block. At Tivoli State School there has been a \$350,000 refurbishment of block B learning spaces. Meanwhile, planning is underway at Amberley District State School, which is located at Yamanto, for a new \$1 million multipurpose hall. Late last year at Haigslea State School a new \$750,000 amenities block was completed, with planning underway for a new play area.

Ipswich West state schools have also benefited from the installation of solar panels by the Palaszczuk government's Advancing Clean Energy Schools program and with air conditioning via the Cooler Cleaner Schools Program. Investment in Queensland schools by the Palaszczuk government is much more than just an improvement in our schools' infrastructure; it is an investment in our children's futures. I thank the Minister for Education, Grace Grace, for her continued support for my Ipswich West schools.

### Toowoomba Royal Show



**Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (2.17 pm): The Toowoomba Royal Show begins next Friday. Aside from the Ekka, it is Queensland's only other royal show. It is the flagship event for our region, bringing together the very best of the Darling Downs and beyond. It is also a special time where friends get together—more important than ever before given the times in which we live. However, there is a serious issue facing the show that requires the government's urgent attention.

As has been repeatedly argued by Trevor Beckingham, General Manager of the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies, there are serious inconsistencies in the application of COVID related restrictions that are impacting the holding of shows in the months ahead. It is inconsistent that the Queensland Health directive places entrance restrictions on Toowoomba's three-day show that do not apply for the same site for the remaining 362 days of the year.

Currently, the Toowoomba Showgrounds has 1,000 caravans on site. Equestrian events have occurred on the main arena. The pavilion can be filled with exhibitors for a market. We now face a situation where volunteers and volunteer groups like the Girl Guides will be unable to stand on the gate without the society engaging security, with security costs that will reach tens of thousands of dollars.


The Chief Health Officer has spoken publicly about the intention to pull back these restrictions, most recently at the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils Assembly in Charleville. Just yesterday Queensland Health advised that amendments to the directive are being prepared, but cannot say if they will be changed in time for next week. Time is running out for these amendments to be finalised. CEO Damon is today one week away from welcoming the first exhibitors. Every day that passes is costing thousands in lost revenue and an increasing level of frustration generally aimed in the direction of staff and volunteers.

Already the show I grew up around, the Oakey Show, has been cancelled. Gympie has been postponed and many others too. The Oakey Show Management Committee made the very difficult decision primarily on the basis of inconsistent restriction application. It would have been their 114th

show and leaves a gaping hole in their community that is impossible to fill. I will quote their president, Judy, who said that 'the future of local rural shows is at risk not only for the individual show committees but their own local communities who all benefit from their own local show'. Queensland shows contribute over \$140 million in direct economic activity to regional communities and attract 15,000 statewide volunteers.

I urge the health minister and Queensland Health to do everything necessary to complete their review of the directive and finalise the amendments immediately so that the beating heart of so many rural and regional communities goes on.

### Redland City, Housing

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (2.20 pm): Redland City is currently suffering a rental and housing crisis like I have never seen before. On a daily basis I am hearing stories from families and individuals about how they cannot find a rental. Stories like Shane's, who has lived in the Redlands for over 30 years and is afraid that he must move out now, or Gayle's whose son still lives with her because he cannot find a rental in the area, or the hundreds of mothers who are in the Facebook group Mums Zone Redlands who are asking people whether they are breaking their leases any time soon because they do not want to drag their kids out of their local schools.

Who could have predicted Redlands would suffer such a housing crisis? Our government did. The Deputy Premier and housing minister have been writing to the council and the mayor since 2018, including last year, asking them to complete a housing strategy for the city. In response to last year's request by the Deputy Premier to the mayor, the mayor said there was no urgent need for such a strategy. The mayor said, 'I am bewildered as to why the Deputy Premier sent a letter saying he is considering using his ministerial powers to force council's hand.'

The mayor went on to say they are using a 2011 housing strategy. That is not even her strategy, it is the strategy of the previous mayor that uses 2006 census data. It is that old it does not even include Victoria Point as a retail centre or deal with the growth of the Southern Moreton Bay Islands. The mayor has been in office for nearly a decade, but does not see the need to do basic planning or a housing strategy to guide our city into the future. I understand why the mayor did not do this work last year: she was looking for another job.

**Ms Leahy** interjected.

**Mr BROWN:** I take personal offence to what the member is interjecting.


**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Resume your seat. I will take some advice. The member has taken personal offence at your interjection, member for Warrego. I ask you to withdraw.

**Ms LEAHY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

**Mr BROWN:** Now that her preselection to the LNP has failed spectacularly I urge the mayor to start this basic work. Currently we are seeing this council actively work against supply and diversity of housing, winding back medium density utilisation allowing developers to build small lot housing in medium density, which is already at short supply, and taking mum and dad developers to court over small splitting proposals which they lose in the end and cost ratepayers thousands of dollars. Couple this with the most expensive rates in South-East Queensland and is it any wonder people are being forced out of our beautiful city.

We are playing our part. We are spending tens of millions of dollars on new social housing in our area, but this housing crisis is not affecting social housing, this is affecting normal renters who can afford to stay here. All I am asking the mayor and council to do is their basic job: to develop a housing strategy. Until that happens I am afraid that more Redlanders will be forced out of our beautiful city.

### Gregory Electorate, Renal Dialysis Services


 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.24 pm): As members know, for years I have been fighting for renal dialysis services in my electorate. It is heartbreaking to see your constituents having to lock up their homes and move to Rockhampton, Mackay or Townsville to receive this treatment. They live in so-called temporary accommodation because Queensland Health calls it a temporary relocation. It often means caravan parks. I have constituents who have been living like this for six or seven years. That is how temporary it is. Constituents like Ian Williams of Emerald have died waiting for the service to be provided.

Members would understand my delight when the health minister announced that renal dialysis services would commence at the Longreach Hospital in the middle of this year. It will bring home families and sustain life for patients in Longreach and all surrounding towns, such as Barcaldine, Blackall, Isisford, Yaraka, Jundah and many more. I have asked the minister whether recruitment has started for the renal nurses required. We have a housing crisis in the west which will make recruitment difficult. It would break our hearts to have dialysis chairs but not be able to use them because of staffing.

In 2018 the Labor government said it would review access to renal dialysis across regional Queensland. I thought, 'Great, both Longreach and Emerald hospitals will get their chairs.' Just on the parameters of population and distance to the next nearest service, the need in Longreach and Emerald does stand up. I was astonished and distressed to see Emerald Hospital completely overlooked. For the life of me I cannot understand how this can be justified. The dialysis procedure takes a minimum of four hours, maybe six. Then add the time for the patient to drive to the hospital. It cannot be done in a single day return trip. Patients lose their employment and, worse, patients do not get the full weekly cycle of treatments prescribed by their specialist. There sits Emerald. It is a hub hospital for an area nearly the size of the state of Tasmania.

The Queensland Central Highlands has a population of 28,000 people. It is a minimum three-hour drive one way to Rockhampton Base Hospital, if there are no holdups on the road. That is six hours driving, plus, let us say, five hours treatment. That makes each treatment day a 12-hour day. It cannot be done on a sustained basis two or three times a week. People do die. We look enviously to the services given to Charters Towers, a population of 8,000 less than two hours from Townsville, or Ingham, 1½ hours to Townsville with a population of 4,375. I do not begrudge them getting their renal dialysis. In fact, I welcome that Charters Towers gets their dialysis. But I really feel that Emerald is being overlooked and missed. We have a population of over 28,000 people. We are a major regional town, or city almost, in Queensland but renal dialysis is three hours away. I call on the health minister, I call on the Palaszczuk government, to please put renal dialysis in Emerald.

### Maryborough, Flood Barrier

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (2.27 pm): I rise to talk about the big blue line in Maryborough. No, we are not talking about the LNP, we are talking about the flood barrier that saved the Maryborough CBD. The blue barrier, called a penstock gate, failed in the flood in January which caused flooding in the CBD of Maryborough. We were all apprehensive when the second flood came along. I congratulate the Fraser Coast Regional Council workers, the CEO, the chief engineer and also Brendan who is the head of the local government disaster management committee.

**Ms LEAHY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have been advised by the council that there is legal action in relation to that matter and they do not wish to speak about it or have it spoken about.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will take advice. I will not take any advice from members. There is no point of order. It is not a criminal matter and there is no civil matter with a jury empanelled.


**Mr SAUNDERS:** That shows how out of touch those opposite are. I congratulate the Fraser Coast Regional Council workers. We were apprehensive as the flood was coming. We did not know how high the mighty Mary River was going to get. The barrier worked a charm. The penstock gate was fixed by a local company, the men and women at the boiler room of Persal. We watched it being fixed up.

It was amazing to watch the Fraser Coast Regional Council put the barrier together, given how quickly the men put it together and the precise location of where they put it to stop the water coming through the CBD. I have to mention that the barrier was funded by the Palaszczuk Labor government not long after we came to power. It was one of the recommendations from the Fraser Coast Regional Council following their study into CBD flooding. We paid for the barrier, working with the Fraser Coast Regional Council.

While I am on my feet, I want to thank the education cohort from St Helens State School, which was badly damaged during the flood event. The children from St Helens school will go to West State School. The St Helens principal, Kim Burns, and all the staff have done an amazing job in making sure that the children's education will not be interrupted. The other day, the education minister, Grace Grace, and I walked through the school, looking at what we can do to lift buildings to make sure that St Helens school will not be flooded again.

This shows us what happens when you do have a flood and the community comes together. The people of Maryborough have been outstanding, working with agencies and the state government. The housing minister spoke in the House today about how we are making sure that people have been relocated and have a roof over their head. People have been working with insurance companies and the Fraser Coast Regional Council. It has been an amazing result from a very resilient community. I thank the Maryborough community and all the volunteers who have made sure that the city got back to normal.

### Water Security

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (2.31 pm): Today is a very exciting day for Queensland. In fact, it is a very exciting day for North Queensland with the Deputy Prime Minister's announcement of \$483 million for the Urannah Dam. I give a big shout-out to all of the local advocates and champions of the project. It is a project that I have been championing for years as have, of course, the member for Whitsunday, Amanda Camm; the candidate for Dawson, Andrew Willcox; the hardworking member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry; and, of course, the member for Burdekin, Dale Last.

All of those great local members have been supporting this project because they know that water security means a future for regional Queensland, which is exactly why the federal Morrison government have got behind the project and it is why the state LNP team have supported the project. I want to congratulate Bowen River Utilities—

**Mr Brown** interjected.


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

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON**: I cannot even hear what that person is saying. I congratulate Bowen River Utilities for their work on the project. It is because the state Labor government does not want to have anything to do with it that the federal government stepped in. This will be the only project built by a private proponent with the federal government because the state government does not want to build dams. Right now what we need to see is the state government getting out of the way. We need the approvals to be put in place so that the dam can be built. It will be built thanks to BRU and the federal government.

While I am talking about water projects, what about the stump from the water minister yesterday? He has had a bit of heat from the member for Bundaberg for ripping down the Paradise Dam wall and he comes out with a publicity stunt because he is nervous about the integrity scandals of this government. I can tell the House that the people of Wide Bay and the Burnett do not need another review. In actual fact, they do not need an announcement about an announcement in two years time. What they need is for this government to stop reviewing and start doing.

If this government does not have a clue about what water projects the Burnett and the Wide Bay region need, they can just come and have a chat to me because I can tell them right now: get started on the Barilil Weir. That would be a fantastic project. How about we start working on the Barambah scheme while we are at it? How about the government makes water prices a little bit more affordable for our farmers? That would be another good start. I will say it again: if the water minister does not know what projects to do, he can come and see me.

### Shave for the Brave

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (2.34 pm): As of last Saturday, I paid for my first haircut since, as you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, 3 December when my team and I shaved our heads to raise funds for the Save the Children domestic and family violence refuge in Western Queensland. My team included, from my office, Ron Goodman and Fidelis Rego; and from DAF, Director-General Bob Gee, Wayne Hall and Stephen Smith, the regional director for the central region. Last year we committed to doing that. Online collectively we raised \$46,410. Several barbecues were held by DAF staff and we had a further \$1,000 worth of gift vouchers through Kerry Doorley, a hairdresser on the north side. I thank them for their efforts. I also thank all my Caucus colleagues who donated, including you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I want to thank the many friends and farmers—I am called 'Furner, the farmers' friend—who donated. I refer to people like Carl Walker of Phantom Produce; Bryce Camm; Mayor Brett Otto from the South Burnett Regional Council; former director-general Beth Woods; Nick and Chloe Kempe from



Agrimix; David Foote from Australian Country Choice; David and Andrew Moon from Moonrocks; Dean Goode from Kilcoy Pastoral Company; Georgie Somerset, the President of AgForce; Gary O'Halloran from the plumbers union; James Walker, a farmer from the Longreach area; Johnny Oliver from the United Firefighters Union; Mark Ryan from Tassal; Marshall Betzel from the Queensland Seafood Marketers Association; Troy Qualischefski from Qualipac in the Lockyer Valley; and Mayor Shaun Radnedge from the Murweh Shire Council.

This is something that this Labor government does. We take seriously our commitment to assisting people suffering from domestic and family violence. It is why we commit to these events. I am really pleased that this year's fundraising endeavours are being put together. I table the list of the names of all the donors, for the benefit of Hansard. I also table a flyer for the first fundraising event for this year, to be held on 7 April, 11.30 to 2 pm, at 41 George Street. It is an Easter sausage sizzle.

*Tabled paper:* Document, undated, list of names and companies [319].

*Tabled paper:* Document, undated, depicting advertisement for Department of Agriculture and Fisheries fundraising Easter sausage sizzle and raffle [320].

I want to give recognition to Annette from DAF for her ongoing support and commitment to making sure that we do not allow this scourge to continue to surface in our communities. In particular, I encourage everyone to support the Save the Children refuges. Generally it was mothers and their children with whom I met at the refuge late last year. You see the smiles on their faces when you present them not only with that sort of money but also toys, clothes and other things that families need at difficult times. It is such a privilege to support opportunities such as this.

### Canungra, Road Infrastructure



**Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (2.37 pm): It is far beyond time that Main Roads put Canungra's state road network on their priority list for improvement. For years now the community has suffered daily because of dangerous and congested conditions on Christie Street, which runs through Canungra, as people commute from Beaudesert and beyond to the Gold Coast for work and other things. Canungra is a serious bottleneck where the main roads run past most businesses, the school and many homes. It will only get worse as more people move into Canungra and the broader region.

Last week at school time outside Canungra, I was caught in a traffic jam that stretched for over two kilometres because the M1 was closed and a massive amount of traffic went via Canungra instead. It is unsafe and completely unsustainable given the growth projected for the future. Something must be done. Either Main Roads must make a bypass a priority and get on with genuine work to plan for its construction, or future development in and around Canungra must be stopped by the state.

Our community has suffered from a complete failure of planning for infrastructure for roads and water, and other types of infrastructure as well, including in relation to Canungra State School. Over the past year or so, a number of residents have raised concerns with me about the impact that very limited school parking has on the safety of motorists, pedestrians and, indeed, all of the school kids in Canungra. One recently wrote to me, saying—

During morning student drop off and afternoon student pick up, the traffic is absolute mayhem. Parents resort to using the small supermarket car park opposite the school, or double park. This causes confusion as cars block the pick up zone and buses are blocked in.

This is an accident waiting to happen! And with the population of Canungra growing at an alarming rate, the situation will only get more dangerous.

Our region is being steadily wrecked by the government's poor planning policies and complete failure to invest in infrastructure. That is bad enough but the impact of dangerous roads around schools, shops, doctors' surgeries and cafes will eventually claim somebody's life.

That is how bad it will become unless action is taken now. Main Roads must make improving Canungra's road network and the bypass genuine priorities. If that is not to happen, the state should step in and fix the problems it has allowed to come about by putting a halt to development in and around Canungra.

When we are talking about development, I also need to raise the issue of a proposed service station near Tamborine on Beaudesert-Beenleigh Road. Recently, that area suffered serious flooding. There is a proposal to put in a new service station there, well outside existing town centres and in the middle of a flood plain. It will require a whole heap of land to be shifted into place for that to be built. It will change the direction of water and obviously make flooding worse into the future so that more people are inundated. It should be stopped.

## Operation Energise



**Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (2.40 pm): It was a proud moment for me recently to address the crews about to be deployed on Operation Energise's latest incarnation to the Bundamba and Gympie area which, as we have all heard, recently were devastated by flooding. For those unaware, Operation Energise is an initiative of the mighty Electrical Trades Union that mobilises when Mother Nature shows us her worst side and Queenslanders have electricity issues that need to be urgently repaired.

Our publicly owned electricity network will always be restored faster than a privately owned one, but homes and sporting clubs still need to be made safe and rectified before they can reconnect to the network. Operation Energise is set up to help those who are uninsured and those not-for-profit organisations get back to some sort of normality as soon as possible. Having participated in one of these two-week deployments myself in Bundaberg—albeit a few years ago—I can relate to what a humbling experience it is to be helping someone whose home has been devastated. It is a simple job for us: making safe a switchboard, installing a new power point so they can plug in a fridge, radio, mobile phone charger or pressure cleaner. That can just be the thing that enables their rebuilding journey to begin.

There are some low points in doing this work as well. I give a shout-out to Mates in Construction for providing the specialised help and advice about what to do when conversations take a downward turn. Recently I was joined there by energy minister Mick De Brenni, parliamentary colleagues, member for Redlands Kim Richards and member for Bundamba Lance McCallum to talk to the crews before deployment. I know that they know our government appreciates their help.

I am always amused at the opposition's seeming hatred of the union movement—we heard a lot about it today—when its members are so supportive of other representative bodies such as AgForce, the chamber of commerce, the show society and REIQ. Maybe it is just worker representatives they do not like?

During my time here, I have copped heaps from those opposite for being a proud ETU member. For the record, I would not have it any other way. As a licensed electrician, I could not join the plumbers or teachers unions, both of which are fine bodies. But as I am an electrician, it is the mighty ETU for me! I stand here today with another good example of how good the union movement is and what it does for our community, stumping up to help when needed most. While at the same time the federal LNP goes missing in action, alternating between making excuses for why they cannot help and playing politics with tragedy, funding recovery efforts in conservative areas.

We know how to hold a hose and a whole bunch of other tools. No Queenslanders in desperate need will be left behind in Operation Energise's recovery efforts. If only our federal government learned from the examples in our state and the union movement, it may be more palatable to Australians. I look forward to hearing the member for Gympie stand up and commend the efforts of Operation Energise in his patch, because there they are doing a great job. Everyone in this place could learn from the mighty Electrical Trades Union.

## Fuel Reserves



**Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (2.43 pm): Firstly, I acknowledge the Brisbane floods, the Ukrainian-Russian crisis going on right now, the humanitarian crisis and the loss of life that follows. Two weeks ago we saw people start boycotting Russian products such as vodka, with it being taken off the shelf in a stance against what is going on there. I really hope that we do not see China move into Taiwan at some stage, because I believe most of us would then enter this House with no shoes or shirts on.

To get to my point, we have a major problem in Australia and in Queensland. We are seeing COVID, overseas conflicts and, most recently, flooding cut supply chains. In Queensland right now we see supermarket shelves with nothing on them. We now see petrol stations charging fuel at an increased price of \$2.20 plus. We need to decentralise. We need to bring back local Australian manufacturing.

Unfortunately, our reliance on the world to supply these services and goods has left us in the situation where we have very little fuel security. In the interests of national security, that should be everyone's concern—not just the federal government but here at the state level as well—because when we have trouble like this it is everybody's problem. We have 30 days of petroleum in this country. From July this year, the federal government will impose that all fuel manufacturers and importers have at least 24 days of fuel for Australia. That is great. There has been \$2 billion allocated to make sure that happens over the next 10 years.

Let us return to this local manufacturing issue. In 2003, we had eight refineries in Australia. We now are down to two. We have seen them close. One way of solving some of our problems in Australia—and especially in Queensland—with fuel security is by bolstering our ethanol production. We in Australia only produce 10 per cent of all our fuel. Ethanol production could help fix that. This needs to be a multipronged approach.

I understand that yesterday the state government said it would provide a \$3,000 grant for electric cars. That is great. Go and order one right now. They are about 12 months away if you want to get on a waiting list. We need to problem-solve now.

The Dalby ethanol plant closed. NQBE, an ethanol project in the Hinchinbrook electorate that needed government support, could not get legs. MSF Sugar in Innisfail has an option to build an ethanol plant. They just need an opportunity for an offtake of their product. 'Biofuels' was the buzz word of the last term. We are seeing 'hydrogen' take over now. We are missing probably another 10 to 20 years where we could be capitalising and fixing some of our fuel security problems. We need a national fuel reserve policy and we need to start bringing back manufacturing for fuel security right here in Queensland before it is too late.

### **Queensland Women's Week; Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence**



**Mr SMITH** (Bundaberg—ALP) (2.46 pm): Last week was of course Queensland Women's Week. In Bundaberg, our Zonta club of Bundaberg held its breakfast. We heard two powerful stories from two very strong women in Oke and Kristie-Lee. I will share especially some of their story. These are two women who have overcome coercive control, domestic and sexual violence. They are now leaders in our community and are shaping the future for many young women and men into the future.

I really want to pay tribute to Oke who had the courage to stand up in front of hundreds of us in attendance and speak about some pretty traumatic things that she has overcome in her life. Oke from a young age at five was traded by her mother for sexual favours to men. That affected her life throughout every single facet that she had to overcome. Both Oke and Kristie-Lee gave tribute to Herna Conrdie, who runs the STEPS program at CQU. Oke said that Herna saved her life. Now, they are both university graduates, are professionals in their field and have proven that as a community, as a society, we can overcome domestic, family and sexual violence to create a better place for young women and men all throughout our great community and country.

We held the Bundaberg Women's Voice to Government forum, a forum that I have established through my office with the help of my AEO, Teisha Russell, another fantastic young woman really making waves in our community. I know that the member for Miller will appreciate hearing how well Teisha is doing, especially in our community. It was wonderful to have Attorney-General Fentiman there, via Zoom of course, to share what the government is doing in terms of ending domestic, family and sexual violence and how we can make sure that we are creating a more inclusive society.

I also attended the Chamber of Commerce and Regional Business HQ breakfast where we heard from Peta Jamieson and Anne Vogler who spoke about their roles and careers in 'non-traditional roles'. How wonderful it will be when that term 'non-traditional roles' for women is abolished from our lexicon. These two women, one through government and through chairing the Wide Bay Health Board, and Anne Vogler, who has come up through the Queensland Police Service, have overcome a lot of the misogyny that was often faced by women and still is faced by women. Again, they spoke about how they are changing futures in our community. A big thing that we need to reflect on from Queensland's Women's Week is that every day we take steps—and it needs to be us all—as we walk towards an end to domestic, family and sexual violence and true equality for all in our communities.

### **Maiwar Electorate, Primary School**



**Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.49 pm): I rise to address plans for a much needed new primary school in the inner west, which the state government is proposing to build at the old Toowong Bowls Club next to Perrin Park. It is clearer than ever that the site goes under in major floods—we already knew this—and the adjacent road at Heroes Avenue floods much more easily, cutting off one of two possible road access points. I stopped past the site on the Saturday before the flood peak and a few times since to see the damage for myself. It really was shocking to see and smell the impacts, and particularly at Perrin Park, which sits lower than the bowls club.

I am as worried as others are about building in a flood zone and I am genuinely disappointed that the state government did not plan ahead and acquire privately owned land rather than using scarce public land for the new school. I have consistently expressed this in meetings with the minister, with the project team, through the public consultation and in two written submissions, which I table.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 26 February 2021, from the member for Maiwar, Mr Michael Berkman MP, to Building Future Schools regarding a new school in the inner west of Brisbane [321].

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 30 June 2021, from the member for Maiwar, Mr Michael Berkman MP to Building Future Schools regarding a primary school for Maiwar—second round of consultation [322].

I have raised my concerns again since the flooding. It is clear that neither the Toowong Bowls Club site nor the Indooroopilly State High School campus is ideal. The department's decision is not something I can control. Even if they could be persuaded to change location now, that decision would be at the expense of students and teachers at Indooroopilly, Ironside and Toowong state schools, which have been bursting at the seams. I know there are some locals who continue to oppose the department's decision. I understand their concerns and I respect their position.

My role now must be to fight for the best possible outcome for the community, in light of the decision, just as I was ready to do if the department had chosen the Indooroopilly State High School site. This means making sure—as the department has proposed from the start—that the building design provides the best possible flood immunity, similar to the new building at Milton State School that stood up so well during the recent floods. It means ensuring the necessary upgrades for Heroes Avenue and safe road and pedestrian access from Gailey Road. It means ensuring design and construction is sensitive to the surrounding ecology and making sure the community is not left with less public green space.

On the issue of green space, we all know that this is a council responsibility and council is far better positioned to deliver new green space with the compensation it is entitled to, on top of the high rates base of these areas and the infrastructure charges paid by developers. Instead, the Lord Mayor and the local LNP Councillor James Mackay have tried to pretend that council might not be entitled to compensation for the state acquisition of the bowls club. Both the federal LNP member, former councillor Julian Simmonds and Councillor Mackay refuse to support any location for the new school.

Councillor Mackay says he has proposed an alternative, but when asked in council he was unwilling to even name the proposal that he has put up as the alternative because it caused such a backlash with the QASMT school community, who he proposed to move from their newly refurbished and expanded campus. I am sincerely hoping all players on the west side can start acting a bit more like grown-ups and collaborating in the best interests of our area.

### Queensland Floods, Recovery; North Queensland Cowboys



**Mr WALKER** (Mundingburra—ALP) (2.52 pm): As the former chair of the flood recovery for the Townsville 2019 flood, I know firsthand what challenges lie ahead for the people of Brisbane and the surrounding communities. It is going to be a long journey—a marathon. It will take great leadership from so many and empathy from those who will feel hopeless, lonely and a sense of failure and, in a lot of cases, will be suffering with mental health issues. We will need to rally behind our fellow Queenslanders and give them all the support they need during this time. I thank the Premier for her quick response to the Brisbane floods, along with the relevant ministers and the local MPs whose areas were severely impacted. It was excellent work. We watched on television people help fellow Queenslanders.

I know the vital role our Army and RAAF personnel played with the rescues and subsequent clean-up during our event in Townsville. They worked alongside other emergency services and volunteers from the SES, rural fire brigades and service clubs such as Lions, Rotary and many others. The Townsville community greatly appreciated their support and help. The brave men and women of the Australian Defence Force serve this country every day of the week. It does not matter what is thrown at them, they are there for all Australians no matter what—rain, hail or shine.


It was personally gut-wrenching to watch the floods unfold in Brisbane and surrounding towns and see the untold damage to so many properties and businesses. I, like many others, could personally relate to what was happening and what lies ahead for so many.

As those in this place may know, the seat of Mundingburra has the largest military base in Australia—Lavarack Barracks. I drive past it every day. It was impressive to see yet again the Army come to the rescue of Queensland and New South Wales at a serious time and at a time of need. It was a proud moment for me knowing that 600 personnel were deployed from Lavarack Barracks in

Townsville. I personally thank all the Army personnel who were deployed—and their families—to help during these distressing times, especially those from Lavarack Barracks in Townsville. They make our city proud. They are Australia's finest.

I would also like to acknowledge the North Queensland Cowboys, who are going to thrash the Canberra Raiders this weekend. The Canberra Raiders will no doubt struggle in the heat of the great North Queensland stadium.

### Queensland Floods

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.55 pm): The recent floods have been devastating. I am greatly encouraged by the incredible support that Queenslanders have offered each other in these difficult times—the Mud Army 2.0, the volunteers, the strangers who have come to help neighbours, the rural fire brigades. There are many who have come to help their fellow man during this period of time.

Floods this summer season have impacted communities like Dallarnil, Inglewood, Goondiwindi, Mungindi, Thallon, Gympie, Goodna, Ipswich, Maryborough—twice—and many other communities in between. The capital city, Brisbane, has been impacted only 11 years on from the last event.


While the government reflects on the tragedy that has unfolded, it must also reflect on how, after this event, the community is built back better to withstand the next event. Queensland is the most disaster prone state. This needs to change to make Queensland the most disaster resilient state. If history tells us anything, floods like we saw in the last few weeks will happen again. That is why it is vitally important we do not continue to build infrastructure back at the same location to the same standard and expect a different result at the next event.

These disasters take a real toll on people whose homes, businesses and livelihoods are lost. It is the state government's job, working in conjunction with our local councils, to make betterment projects and mitigation options an absolute priority. Unfortunately, we are not out of the flood season yet. I remind people that the Charleville 1990 flood was in April.

There are three distinct priorities when it comes to preparation for future flood events—that is, early warning, mitigation and betterment. Mitigation and betterment can be done. The LNP demonstrated that when it was in government. The LNP built levee banks in St George, Eulo and Wyandra. Working in partnership with council, they funded the Roma levee bank and drainage system that has been engaged a number of times and prevented flooding in that community. The diversion channel is quite impressive. It is impressive to see water flowing through that rather than flowing through the floorboards and yards of people's homes.

Mitigation and betterment projects make a massive difference to the lives of flood impacted people and the commerce of their communities and local councils. Gayndah is a very good example. The water treatment plant was raised higher. It safeguarded the town's water supply so they can have clean, fresh water. It saved the council having to scramble to find a temporary solution each time the pump was damaged. Betterment projects need to be kickstarted to make Queensland the most resilient state. It will also help drive down the costs of insurance which continue to rise after successive events.

### Drivelt

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.58 pm): When I came into this place I came in with a strong desire to see the rates of road trauma decrease in North Queensland. That is tied to my former career. I put a lot of time and effort into advocating for a special project. I want to update the House on Drivelt. I am a motorsport enthusiast. Over the years in Thuringowa we have lost our dragway, speedway and carting has been restricted due to growth in the area.

Drivelt is a driver education and motorsport precinct. It took years of advocacy. I know there are some ministers here who have been well and truly supporting me, and I want to thank them. All of them—be it the ministers for police, fire and main roads or the Premier and the Deputy Premier—got behind me. Our first funding of \$5 million was to upgrade the intersection at Woodstock. I thank transport minister Mark Bailey. That provided the site and the big slip lane. You cannot pull up people on the Flinders Highway to queue to go into an event. That was the first \$5 million done. That slip lane has been delivered.

A couple of months later in 2020 the Premier came up and announced \$10 million to build the drag strip. Some of that money, after my visit the other day, has gone towards the actual track. The track will be completed in May. We want to see that become a tourism and events precinct as well,

holding events like the masters and whoever else wants to come. North Queensland has a great motorsport following, as we have seen for years with the Townsville 400. Hundreds of thousands of people come up year after year to watch that event.

Importantly, the large vehicle manoeuvring area—it is a big skid pan—has been completed. I want to thank Pat Driscoll and the team. The police are already doing their driver training there. I will continue to have discussions. I want to see our Fire and Emergency Services and ambulance who would traditionally come to Gympie or Roadcraft trained at home in our own area and to see, again, the general public using it to reduce the rates of road trauma in North Queensland.

The Queensland government has got behind this. Because it sits beside the Lansdown industrial precinct, \$12 million was committed for that area. That will provide the infrastructure and internal roads funding as well. To Greg, to the entire team and to everyone behind it, thanks for your help to deliver Drivelt.


**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Some of the happiest if not loudest times of my youth were spent at those speedways and drag strips.

## LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Report, Motion to Take Note

Resumed from 24 February (see p. 275), on motion of Mr Russo—

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.

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (3.01 pm): The Queensland Family and Child Commission, or QFCC, as a statutory body has a vital role to play in family and child related matters throughout our communities relating to safety and security in the home and in other forms of care. As well, it is charged with improving the child protection system. This work is difficult and challenging, however; it is integral in working to keeping our youngest safe. The process leading to report No. 19 on the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's oversight of the QFCC has afforded the committee the opportunity to review the annual report 2020-21 and to directly question the principal commissioner and departmental representatives in relation to their activities.

In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the commission also believes that children and young people's views about their lives and issues that affect them need to be taken into account. This is reflected in a more participatory model of practice and service delivery. The commission has reached out to young people through a variety of mechanisms and to date has engaged directly with over 8,000 young Queenslanders who have been forthcoming with their views about their lives, the impacts of COVID and the other issues they deal with daily.

Highlighted as their top three concerns were mental health, education and the environment. We must all strive harder to work across our electorates to ensure that the services they rely on are available to them as needed. Within the Noosa electorate alone the waitlists for psychologists and psychiatrists are unacceptable, yet we have counsellors available who could assist. The current system of referrals does not facilitate access to this resource, with ongoing advocacy to the federal government for multiple sources so far unsuccessful.


The Child Death Review Board informs the work being done to improve the child protection system and youth justice systems reforms. In reviewing the protection of children with mental health issues, I encourage the continued push for services that connect young people with services to help them deal with complex health challenges, including targeted suicide prevention, and to continue the cross-departmental referencing and collaboration to prevent loss of life in our vulnerable young Queenslanders.

The commission is also committed to working closely with Police, Education, Health and, importantly, Housing. Housing continues to be a key stressor. With the commission becoming more involved with the Women's Justice and Safety Taskforce, it was important to use this opportunity to further analyse issues that impact women and children in domestic violence households and the obstacles they are confronted with. Again, within my own community local housing and emergency accommodation continues to be an issue and is one that could immediately be alleviated if the department of housing was able to review its assets. In Noosa shire alone we have 73 properties listed as underoccupied with at least two spare bedrooms in each.

Of note, the commission reiterated that children are often not seen or treated as primary victims of domestic violence and are therefore not necessarily included in calculations, supply of services and funding to best cater for their complex needs. I urge the continued push for reforms in this area so that their trauma is exposed, recognised and responded to in a timely and appropriate manner with the necessary resources. This includes funding models for refugees, about which I have spoken previously and is still not resolved.

Examining the role of First Nations elders and communities in providing a supportive framework and involving them in the process of setting accountability measures around services is ongoing, and I look forward to hearing about progress. It is understood that COVID has delayed the statutory review of the commission, recommendations from which will further inform the work of the commission with young people and families going forward. We look forward to seeing its outcome midyear.

Thank you to the representatives of the Queensland Family and Child Commission and the department for their ongoing work in one of the most difficult and at times heartbreaking realms. Thank you, as well, to our Legal Affairs and Safety Committee chair, my fellow committee members and our secretariat for the work they have undertaken during this review.

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.06 pm): I too rise as a former member of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee to address our report into the oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission. I think I have previously shared with the House the two reasons why I primarily decided to join a political party—the LNP. The first was that the community I lived in was then in the electorate of Nicklin. I think it was in the condolence motion of the former member Mr Gordon Simpson that I mentioned that it was to get rid of the then Speaker Mr Wellington.

The second was that I was actually an employee of the Department of Child Safety at the time. One of my biggest frustrations was watching the Labor government, the Beattie government of the day, try to implement the Forde inquiry and make all of those platitudes to the broader public that they knew there was a problem and they wanted to fix it. I was watching their so-called fix and it was actually making the lives of children in our care far worse. It was destroying families and children. I wanted to join a party and help write policies that would make a difference.

One of the biggest joys I had during our term of the LNP government between 2012 and 2015 was the focus we took not only on domestic violence but also child protection. We instituted the Carmody review. That was such a comprehensive document and it really picked up on many of the key themes that I had hoped we as a party and as a government could implement. We were well on track to doing that. We needed clearly one more term because the subsequent government, this government, even over seven years has dropped the ball. I will come back to that in a moment.

One of the things we were able to achieve was the passing of the Family and Child Commission Act 2014, which established the Queensland Family and Child Commission. As mentioned in the report, that commission has a number of functions: the oversight of the child protection system; the promotion and advocacy regarding the responsibilities of families to protect and care for, and the safety and wellbeing of, children and young people, particularly those in the child protection or youth justice system; to provide research, assistance, capacity building and leadership for agencies involved in the child protection system; to review, analyse and evaluate systemic policies and practices relevant to the child protection system; to inform and educate the community; and to report to the minister about matters relating to its functions.


It was good for us to again meet with Cheryl Vardon, former principal commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission, and Natalie Lewis, the commissioner, on 14 June last year and hear how they are going. I commend both of those ladies and their teams for the work they are doing. Keeping an eye on how government is implementing our child protection system and how we are working with families to keep our children and young people safe is vital work, so full credit to the commissioners and staff for what they are doing.

I do not want to address a number of concerns that we in the LNP continue to have. We were, and we always are, saddened to hear that a number of children pass away each year and that those children are known by Child Safety. As mentioned in our statement of reservation, the death of any child is one too many. We believe that there continue to be a number of systemic failings and gaps that need to be addressed. As I said, if we had been implementing the Carmody inquiry as per what we had intended, I believe those gaps would have been addressed.

What we are concerned about—and they are the concerns of the QFCC as well—is that there were nine deaths reported as sudden unexplained deaths. This is different from SIDS. It is a significant number. It does lead us to think that further investigation is warranted, and the commission agreed with that position. We would like to see the results of the research into the use of the red flag system,

particularly where this could make up for gaps in the system and in understanding how relevant officers get children who are in immediate danger out of the situation urgently. Representing the parts of the community that I do, I know that Child Safety staff do a fantastic job, but have they got the resources? Have they got the training? Do they have the ability to get to those kids, particularly when an urgent matter needs to be addressed straightaway?

The other matter we continue to be concerned about is the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system, again something that was a significant focus of the Carmody review. We had a range of activities that we, as a government, were looking to implement. Had they been implemented, had they been followed up with the rigour they deserved, I believe we would be in a far different place for kids in care, and I encourage the government to take up that baton.

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (3.12 pm): I rise as a member of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee which has oversight responsibilities for the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Having reviewed their annual report and having been briefed through public hearings on 14 June, it is my pleasure to update the House on the QFCC's activities and performance for this period. In the public hearings we indeed heard from former commissioner Cheryl Vardon and Commissioner Natalie Lewis, and I would like to extend my gratitude to them for attending and being very forthright in the information they provided to the committee. I think it is fair to say that the QFCC has achieved a lot within the reporting period despite the impact of COVID. There are a few areas that I think are worthy of highlighting.

The Growing up in Queensland project is a very important way for the QFCC to engage with children and young people and hear the voices of young people in Queensland, which we know is so important. During what was a really unusual year, we heard that the QFCC engaged with around about 8,000 young people right across Queensland from cities through to regional and remote communities who reported a range of things about their communities, about how they were feeling during the pandemic in particular, and what their big concerns were.

Overwhelmingly, the feedback we received from the QFCC was that children and young people still feel very hopeful, which is fantastic and a testament to their resilience. They hope for further education and employment. They did, however, have some concerns. We heard how young people particularly called for more action from leaders on mental health, education and the environment. The mental health of children and young people as we continue through and beyond this pandemic is something that I know we all deeply care about and ought to care about.

During the reporting period the QFCC also, as mentioned, took over the independent Child Death Review Board. The external Child Death Review Board puts out reviews following the death of a child known to the child protection system. It has a range of members on it who represent the departments of health, family law, social work, mental health, policing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health and wellbeing. As at the public hearings, the review board had considered the deaths of 55 children and young people known to the child protection system.

As has been widely acknowledged, of course the death of every child is an absolute tragedy. This review board plays such an important role in child death prevention work by identifying systemic opportunities for reform. We did hear there had been a reduction in deaths since 2004, with mortality rates decreasing by an average of three per cent each year. While that is heading in the right direction, the death of every child causes immense pain to their family and their community.

Two things stood out from the reviews: firstly, suicide is the leading cause of death for children and young people in the system, which is absolutely devastating to hear—that is work we need to continue to do; and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people continue to be over-represented in those statistics, which I know is something that we all care about. We all want to see some changes in that space.


One of the most critical issues that warrants urgent attention is the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the child protection system. I was really pleased when Natalie Lewis was appointed QFCC commissioner within this reporting period. I have had the opportunity to work with Natalie in another role. She is an incredible woman, a fierce advocate for her people, and I know she will play a huge role in the transformational work that is going on in the QFCC at the moment.

We heard from the commissioners that 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 and that there has been significant reform and investment, but until now there has been no clear mechanism of accountability or capacity to examine the impact of



those reforms at a local level. We heard that, through the powers to acquire data under section 35 of the legislation, the QFCC has been provided data relating to the entry, duration and exit of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children involved in the system, not only at a statewide level but regionally, and they can drill down into a local level. We heard that examining that disaggregated data and evaluating the standard of implementation of all five elements of the child placement principles will provide the commission with a clear indication of what is working well and what needs to be urgently improved.

I am looking forward to next briefing with the QFCC to hear of their progress. I thank my fellow parliamentarians, committee members and the secretariat for all of their hard work. I commend the report to the House.

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (3.17 pm): It is a privilege to serve this parliament and the broader Queensland community as the opposition's shadow minister for child protection. In that role I get to travel the state to engage with those who provide services to our most vulnerable. Through those meetings and discussions I have met with commissioners Cheryl Vardon and Natalie Lewis from the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Along with my parliamentary colleagues, I acknowledge the work of the Queensland Family and Child Commission. I agree it is very important work when we come to looking at Child Safety oversight. There are also challenges. We have seen a significant increase in trends around child deaths across this state.

Along with my colleagues who sit on this committee, I want to highlight and note in particular that we are very keen to see the University of Queensland's red flag project and the results that will come from this study, which will potentially highlight where gaps are currently failing children across the child protection system and their recommendations around how we can improve those. I look forward to seeing the government policy that will help implement that as well.

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in our system has already been highlighted. I do not think it can be highlighted enough. I note that in the statement of reservation my parliamentary colleagues raised concerns around this. When I travel the state, people refer to the work of the Carmody inquiry, its recommendations, and the practicality of how those recommendations have been implemented. It does need to be evaluated. There certainly are consistent systems failings when we see numbers increase, not decrease.

We need to have a very hard look at what is going on, where those failings are occurring and in practical terms recognise our different communities of interest. Whether it be Western Queensland, Far North Queensland, the Torres Strait or even down in parts of South-East Queensland, we need to acknowledge that our geography, communities of interest, leaders in our communities, non-government organisations and the way in which the government interacts and interfaces their child protection and youth justice services is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

What is very significant and concerning for me is the increasing rate of suicide in children, in particular around my own community. There is nothing more heartbreaking—just take a moment to acknowledge that a child is so desperate that they take their own life. I cannot fathom the loneliness of that child and what is going through their mind to come to that conclusion. It is upon all of us on all sides of the House to do everything we can to prevent child deaths through suicide.

I point to the statistics of my own Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday, which sadly sits at 4.2 suicides per 100,000, which is the highest in the state. Cairns is at four per 100,000 and Outback Queensland is at 3.5 per 100,000—all significant numbers. It is the regional areas where we are seeing an increase in child death by suicide. As a member of the Mental Health Select Committee, I look forward to some of the key recommendations out of that committee over the next few months. In particular, we need to address regional and rural equities with regard to mental health support and services.

It is also important that we note the work of the Child Death Review Board, which is made up of an incredible panel of individuals who are very passionate about preventing death. It is important that both side of politics work in a bipartisan way in the interests of children. This goes to the work of the commission and the reports that they develop as well as the other groups that put forward reports. I urge the Attorney-General and the minister to table reports as soon as they are finalised by the commission. They should be publicly available, because every month that passes where those key recommendations are ignored we are putting children at risk. I urge the minister to table those reports as soon as possible in the interests of transparency and continuous improvement. It should not take months. I thank the committee for their oversight and continued work along with the commission. We will continue to watch this brief.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND CORRUPTION COMMITTEE

### Report, Motion to Take Note



**Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (3.22 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee Report No. 108, 57th Parliament, *Inquiry into the Crime and Corruption Commission's investigation of former councillors of Logan City Council; and related matters*, tabled on 2 December 2021.

I want to start by thanking the members of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee for their work in the inquiry that we undertook last year. That includes the current members and also those who were on the committee for just a short time during the inquiry. I also thank the secretariat and everyone who worked on the inquiry, including the counsel assisting, Dr Jonathan Horton QC and Mr Ben McMillan, who assisted the committee to get to the nub of all of the issues raised in this inquiry.

The report made a number of very serious findings. The findings that were made by the committee in relation to a lack of impartiality and independence on the part of the CCC in that Logan matter were probably amongst the most important. The other one that springs to mind in terms of prominence is the finding that the decision to charge those former Logan city councillors was affected by a desire to help the former CEO of Logan City Council get her job back—not that that was the only motivation, but that it was a motivation, a desire, in the charging process.

The CCC has great powers, and trust is given to it by this parliament to exercise those powers appropriately. When that does not occur, confidence in the CCC is damaged and undermined—and not just about Logan, not just about that investigation, but potentially many of the other investigations it undertakes as well.

The report certainly speaks for itself, as I said in this House on 2 December 2021. Indeed, details in the report that were not part of any specific finding are just as serious as some of the findings. For example, on page 30 of the report there is an indication that the CCC were willing to consider providing telecommunications intercept material—that is, intercepted phone call evidence—to a party in an industrial relations matter. TI powers are extremely far-reaching. The CCC did not acquire them for many years after their inception, as I understand it, but this proposed use of that power and that evidence in an IR matter is, in my view, simply outrageous. They did not do it, but internally there was a very strong consideration about it.

If that were to be normalised on a general basis, it would really raise the question about when does the CCC decide to use it and when does it not in particular matters. It raises the prospect of CCC intervention or nonintervention being decisive in matters that fall outside its primary functions—that is, to fight corruption and major crime—and that is extremely concerning for all of us. It is extremely concerning for parties in civil matters that simply would not countenance the possibility that that sort of evidence could be thrown into those matters. This is but one of the concerning issues set out in the report.

Finally, I note that earlier this year the government replied to some of the recommendations of the five-year review which was tabled on 30 June last year. In particular, they rejected the recommendation that would ensure that appointments to the CCC—the commissioners, chairperson, deputy chairperson and the CEO—are truly made in a bipartisan manner. At present it can be done otherwise, and we saw that in 2015 with the use of a crossbench substitute member to move an appointment through the committee.

To enhance confidence in the true independence and impartiality of the CCC, in my view the government should revisit the decision to reject that recommendation. They cannot have it both ways—declaring to be champions of integrity, while retaining that last little thread of control and the final decision-making over the appointments to that body. Those appointments should be truly bipartisan and should always have the support of both the government and the opposition in this House. As the act stands at the moment that is not the case, and the government should revisit the decision to reject that recommendation.



**Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (3.27 pm): I rise to take note of report No. 108 of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee. Mr Deputy Speaker Martin, I start by wishing you and all members of the House a happy St Patrick's Day.

As the House is aware, the report was tabled in December last year. Can I suggest, as comprehensive as it was, that the report speaks for itself. The report is close to 200 pages. It was tabled in the chamber last year and is available for members of the public on our parliamentary website. I should point out that, in addition to the report itself, the parliament's committee website also contains

publicly available additional documents—again, some 200-odd pages—of additional information that the committee decided to publish, including submissions from counsel assisting, the CCC and other research and supporting materials. On top of that, many submissions from interested parties have been published on the committee inquiry site either in part or in full. There are also the *Hansard* transcripts of the nine or 10 days of public hearings that were conducted last year.

My point is that, unlike most of the work of the PCCC—to which legislation attaches strict confidentiality provisions, as it rightly should—there is ample public material available for people to consider on this matter. This matter was a complaint about a specific case handled by the CCC, which was the matter surrounding the Logan City Council. The inquiry was extensive and I think the report speaks for itself.

I would like to extend my deep thanks to all of those people behind the scenes. Thank you to the secretariat staff for an extraordinary amount of work. This was not just a regular inquiry, in my view. I thank the PCCC secretariat staff for their efforts, as well as those other parliamentary officers who were seconded or allocated to assist during that inquiry. I thank all of them for their efforts in preparing us for the hearings and managing the logistics—all within the confines of confidentiality requirements of the content matter. If we think back to that time, the proceedings were held within the context of an up and down COVID management scheme. A lot of effort went on behind the scenes, and I thank them for it.


I would like to, if you could indulge me, Mr Deputy Speaker, give a particular thanks to Erin Jameson, the committee secretary at the time. It would not have been an easy job balancing both the demands of the public inquiry and the continuing work of the committee which, in itself, is an extensive workload. I wish her well in her future endeavours, and I am sure I speak on behalf of all members of the committee in that regard.

I would like to thank counsel assisting for their efforts, both in their excellent own work throughout the complaint hearings and in the support that they provided to us as MPs. To Dr Jonathon Horton QC and Ben McMillan: thank you both.

It was also a time of transition for parliamentary commissioners, so I extend thanks to both Karen Carmody and Michael Woodford, and their experienced support crew, for the advice and support they provided as the successive parliamentary commissioners.

I would also like to thank parliamentary staff beyond the secretariat. To the Speaker and the Clerk, to attendants, Hansard, IT, and everyone involved: it was a bit of a moving feast balancing the public inquiry with the ongoing work of the parliament, including the demands of sitting days and other committee work. Given the extent of the inquiry, it really was almost like a moving estimates process in terms of the red chamber, so I thank them all for that extensive work and support. Thinking back to those inquiry days, I really do need to personally thank the baristas of Parliament House for their invaluable contribution to my sanity.

Thanks to all members of the committee. As the chair mentioned, I should also like to acknowledge the work of colleagues who participated in some parts of the inquiry, especially those regional members. To the members for Rockhampton and Hervey Bay: I would like to give particular thanks to you because of the extensive travel and time away from your constituents that you sacrificed, being regional MPs, but you did so because of your dedication and commitment to this parliament and the committee work. Again, I think the report speaks for itself, and I thank all of those involved who helped throughout the process.

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (3.32 pm): I rise to make a contribution to report No. 108 of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, titled *Inquiry into the Crime and Corruption Commission's investigation of former councillors of Logan City Council; and related matters*. This inquiry and the report that resulted from it is the most significant piece of work undertaken by the PCCC in my time as a member of the committee. It was thorough and all-encompassing, and the final report was bipartisan and unanimously supported by all members. I note that all recommendations were accepted by the government.

I turn now to some observations I made emanating from the process. Firstly, I note that during questioning there was a high number of instances where words to the effect 'I do not recall' were used in answer by witnesses to questions posed by counsel or members of the committee. Troublingly, this is a similar response that was provided around 60 times each by both DS Francis and the then chair of the CCC, Alan MacSporran QC.

On the material we have seen and the evidence given by witnesses, any reasonable person would come to the same conclusion that I have. Simply put, the CCC were wrong to go down the pathway they went. The CCC should not have charged the seven councillors with fraud and forced the sacking of the Logan City Council.

There were some inconsistencies in answers to some questions. For example, in his evidence, DS Francis insisted it was he who decided to lay the charge of fraud against each of the seven councillors. Later we discovered that it was indeed Mr MacSporran and Mr Alsbury who did that. Interestingly, that charge came as a surprise to other police officers.

Regarding the charge of fraud, Mr MacSporran had quite a bit to say about the DPP supporting the CCC decision to charge because the DPP took the matter to court. My observation on this is that, given what had happened, the Logan City Council being sacked and the administrator appointed, the DPP had little choice. If they had abandoned the case without taking the next step, they would have been pilloried.

After nine days of testing the evidence, the judge and the DPP agreed that abandoning the case was the right thing to do. In fact, His Honour in the court transcript said in response to the DPP's decision not to proceed—

I will be careful with my language—but from what I saw and heard in those two weeks in November I think that's a—that is a proper decision.

So, too, the QIRC adjudicator came to the same conclusions following the QIRC hearings.

In my view, the reality was that the investigating officer was not an independent officer looking at the case after the investigation was complete, looking at all of the evidence for and against. He was too close to the case to form an independent and unbiased view. The case should have been reviewed independently by the DPP or someone external to the CCC.

In many respects, it looks like these seven councillors were the unfortunate target of a CCC chairperson bent on nailing a few elected local government representatives with a serious charge. Mr MacSporran's press release spoke to that, saying that the charges from Operation Front are a stark reminder of the problems in the local government sector in Queensland. It turned out that there were only two local government people that had been imprisoned from 2015 through to today. However, it does seem to reflect some of the aspirations that Mr MacSporran had.

I will make some comments now regarding transcripts during the hearing. Mr Heaton QC made the strong point—

What might appear to have persuasive strength in written form and in a statement taken by police officers, does not always reflect how the evidence comes across when given orally.

I would add: particularly when it is biased and one-sided the way this was.

I note I am running out of time, so I will conclude by saying that the internal actions of the CCC officers, including the chair, police officers and lawyers involved in the case, were corrupted. The consequences of corruption accumulate. Failure to react to errors or corruption in the data when they occur incrementally causes the error to be stored up, compounding across time.

I wish all of the councillors well for their future and hope that this action taken by us has, in some way, given them some sense of natural justice being achieved. I will finish with a quote from the Bible that sums it up—John 8:32: 'The truth will set you free.'



**Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (3.37 pm): I rise to speak on report No. 108, titled *Inquiry into the Crime and Corruption Commission's investigation of former councillors of Logan City Council; and related matters*. This report and the inquiry which informed the report was managed by the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee of which I am now a very proud member.

The genesis of the report was a complaint referred to the committee by the LGAQ on 5 May 2021. The nature of that complaint is publicly available. Broadly, it raised concerns with the manner in which the CCC investigated allegations of corruption within Logan City Council.

On 28 May 2021, the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee resolved to investigate the issues raised by the LGAQ in its correspondence to the committee and to publicly inquire into and report on the CCC's investigation of former councillors of Logan City Council which led to the former councillors being charged with fraud; to report on the decision and considerations of the CCC to charge these former councillors; the evidence and submissions and other relevant documentation provided to the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions by the CCC in support of those charges; the communications from the ODPP to the CCC with respect to the charges; the CCC's involvement in related civil matters including those which were brought before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and the Queensland Industrial Court, including the CCC's interaction with former councillors, the former CEO of Logan City Council and any other relevant Logan City Council officers at relevant times; the CCC's use of coercive powers and matters relating to the dissemination of

information obtained under coercion to parties in non-criminal proceedings; the process by which the CCC considers and determines whether to refer matters to the DPP; the CCC's interaction with the DPP more broadly; and any other related matters.


The committee called for submissions and held public hearings over 10 days. Witnesses included officers from the CCC, former councillors, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the former interim administrator of Logan City Council.

The committee also served a summons on the CCC requiring the production of material relevant to the inquiry's terms of reference. The committee was assisted, as others have stated, during the inquiry by two independent legal counsel, Dr Jonathan Horton QC and Mr Ben McMillan, who were engaged to act as counsel assisting. I am sure we would all agree they were phenomenal in their approach. It is the appropriate place to acknowledge and thank them both for their work on what was a very complex inquiry and their level of technical expertise and the independence that they brought to the process was very much valued.

The report outlines quite significant findings about the CCC and its actions. The committee came to 14 findings and made six recommendations that we believe will collectively help to clarify the CCC's role in the investigation of major crime and corruption including its role in civil proceedings within the QIRC. The findings and recommendations were made on a bipartisan basis, and I would like to thank and acknowledge the other committee members. In particular I speak of the chair, the member for Scenic Rim; and the deputy chair, the member for Stafford; as well as all other committee members who engaged in a very thoughtful and cooperative manner.

Queensland needs an effective, impartial and independent watchdog on public sector corruption and major crime. Queenslanders must have confidence in the CCC and its use of the extraordinary powers that have been entrusted to it, in particular, that these powers will be used impartially, independently, fairly and with regard to the public interest at all times and in all places. This inquiry was about the Logan matter. However, the findings and recommendations of the committee will have a general and positive impact on the Crime and Corruption Commission framework within Queensland.

I conclude by thanking the committee secretariat and those seconded to it during this inquiry for their work. I would also like to acknowledge the former parliamentary commissioner, Karen Carmody, who was involved initially in the process, and the current Parliamentary Commissioner, Michael Woodford, who concluded the process with us. I would like to thank Hansard and the Parliamentary Service's team for their assistance over the 10 days of public hearings. I commend the report to the House.

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.40 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee's report titled *Inquiry into the Crime and Corruption Commission's investigation of former councillors of the Logan City Council; and related matters*. I want to thank the chair of the parliamentary committee, the member for Scenic Rim, for the work he and his committee members have done to bring this report forward. I have no doubt it will have an important place in history; it certainly already has in local government history.

The inquiry was into the inappropriate intervention in a local government employment matter by the dismissal of the Logan City Council chief executive officer and the inappropriate laying of fraud charges against the local government councillors. That has now been well explored by this report. It is disappointing that this Labor government had to have their agencies and the behaviour of these agencies brought to the attention of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee via a significant complaint from the Local Government Association of Queensland. It says a lot about the incompetence of the state Labor government and the then minister for local government.

I said in the House—


It is important to place on the record that the situation that has occurred at Logan is somewhat different to the earlier situation we saw at Ipswich and it is not as a result of systemic corruption.

This report clearly shows the dismissal at Logan exposed the failure of the impartiality, the independence, the fairness and the regard to the public interest when it came to the conduct of the Crime and Corruption Commission in this matter. I do believe that there should be an impartial and independent watchdog for public sector corruption and major crime. I also believe that the local government sector want to have confidence in the CCC in carrying out this role. The CCC should fulfil that function. However, they should do so with fairness and objectivity within the legislation that governs them. It is up to the current state Labor government to make sure that this happens on their watch.

This report is about the Logan matter. However, to quote the chair, the findings and recommendations of the committee should be seen as a starting point to ensuring that the events about which the committee makes serious findings are never repeated. Unfortunately, it is not only the Logan councillors who have had their reputations and livelihoods ruined. Alf Lacey, the former mayor of Palm Island, was charged in 2020 by the Crime and Corruption Commission in a fraud case which was dismissed by the magistrate in November 2021 due to lack of evidence. Andrew Antoniolli, former mayor of the Ipswich City Council, was charged in 2019 by the CCC. That case was dismissed in November 2021. Edric Walden, former mayor of Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council, was charged in 2016 with misconduct of public office and forgery. Those charges were dropped in September 2020.

In December 2019 Allan Sutherland, former mayor of Moreton Bay Regional Council, was charged by the CCC. Those charges were dropped in January 2020. Bob Manning, Mayor of Cairns and, as I read recently, Councillor Adrian Raedel also had their charges dropped. There are many more. Alison Smith from the Local Government Association of Queensland said that her organisation knew of 15 matters that were brought before the court by the CCC and had been cleared in the last 12 months. This report was needed. The cultural change is needed even more.

There has been an inappropriate pursuit of local government elected members and this has happened at a time when the government has its own integrity crisis. When we look at the integrity crisis of this Labor government, the issues surrounding the Integrity Commissioner and the State Archivist, complaints regarding doctored annual reports, the Legal Services Commissioner's complaints and the complaints from ministerial staff, it is pretty clear where the integrity cancer lies, and that is with the state Labor government.

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.45 pm): I rise today to speak to the report titled *Inquiry into the Crime and Corruption Commission's investigation of former councillors of Logan City Council; and related matters*. As a member of the committee I was really proud to be involved in the writing of this report. There are many findings and many recommendations canvassed in this report, and I do not propose to summarise those in five minutes because I simply cannot. I do not know that anybody could, not even our brilliant counsel assisting, who assisted us with the process.

The report is a good one and I certainly encourage members interested to learn more to read that report in its totality. I will be focusing my contribution today on a few specific recommendations. Before I do so, I want to thank some key people who worked so very hard on this inquiry. In doing so, I acknowledge that the member for Cooper and I came to this inquiry halfway through. We joined the committee on the same day. I think we both very much felt the weight of the work that had already been done and were keen to contribute as best we could.

I thank the former members of the committee whose places we took, the members for Hervey Bay and Rockhampton. Of course, we joined the members for Stafford and Macalister, and I also recognise the efforts of the members for Scenic Rim, Oodgeroo and Coomera, who made up our committee. Without revealing the private business of our committee, I say that I really enjoyed working as a part of this group. I think we all appreciated the gravity of what it was we were working on.

I also thank our amazing QCs, Jonathan and Ben, from whom I learned so much; I was really in awe of them. They really assisted me in clarifying my thoughts. I thank the committee secretariat, who did such a mighty job, and all of the parliamentary staff who assisted, including our much loved barista—and three cheers for Andrew, who always makes my coffee just right.

**An honourable member:** The unsung hero of parliament.


**Ms PUGH:** That is right, although he is not unsung to me. The findings we made related to the issues that were identified. However, today I want to focus my contribution on the changes that will be made in order to continue to uphold public confidence in the all-important CCC. It goes without saying that the CCC is a vital institution in Queensland. Since the days of the Fitzgerald inquiry, Queenslanders have put their trust and their faith in this body. We in this House want to make sure that that trust remains strong.

As I said, I came to this committee in the middle of the inquiry. I really appreciated the guidance of other committee members on both sides of the House in helping me to come to grips with the voluminous material we needed to consider to reach the conclusions we did. I note the government have accepted the recommendations that are relevant to the government. The recommendation I want to focus on today is recommendation 4, which states—

The committee recommends that the Crime and Corruption Commission engage in reform of culture (including seeking external advice) to assist in creating a best practice organisational culture that aligns with the purpose, functions and goals of the Crime and Corruption Commission under the Crime and Corruption Act 2001, and to enhance public confidence in the organisation.

This recommendation is particularly important, in my opinion, because if a culture is entrenched you cannot change it by just changing a leader or changing staff. The hard work needs to be done internally, to look inward and reflect on what change is to be made. This work can be difficult for a number of reasons. That is why it is important that the CCC will be engaging external help, to provide an outside set of eyes to help conduct this work.

Similarly, recommendation 5 looks at the tenure of senior officers within the CCC with a similar view to ensuring there is renewal and the culture does not necessarily become entrenched. When all is said and done, I cannot overstate the importance both of the CCC and of Queenslanders having confidence in the CCC. That is the key part of this report to me. These recommendations are all about the public being able to have clear-cut confidence, knowing that this organisation is well equipped to continue to root out corruption in all its forms.

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.50 pm): Firstly, I congratulate all members of the PCCC who have put forward this excellent report. I particularly thank the chairman, the member for Scenic Rim, who was steadfast in his direction on this particular issue. It is never easy, with such an intimidating body as the CCC, to go forward on a very comprehensive and critical report on the behaviour of the CCC. That is what report No. 108 has done.


The pursuit of Logan City Council by the CCC under the chairmanship of Mr MacSporran and the rejection by the courts of the accusations of the CCC under Mr MacSporran were an absolutely sad indictment on the independence of the CCC—a body we all hold high in terms of protecting the integrity of the political regimes in Queensland.

There has been a major focus by this CCC on local government. I mention the three investigations into the Gold Coast city council which have found nothing—no corruption whatsoever—with millions of dollars of taxpayers' money spent. The last report from the CCC ruined the career and livelihood of one particular member—over a staffing issue. Again in Logan the CCC sought to address a staffing issue—and we saw how the CCC sought to protect the CEO. As a consequence of that, the Logan city councillors had their lives and reputations ruined. From my history in local government I happen to know a few of them, in particular Russell Lutton, who was a councillor of the Labor persuasion—

**Mr Krause:** Thirty-four years.

**Mr STEVENS:** For 34 years, thank you. I have known Russell to be nothing but honest and true in the pursuit of his council duties. His life, his reputation and his work over those years was ruined by this particular vendetta, I would call it, from a zealot in chasing local government. I refer to the Moreton Bay mayor and the failed prosecutions mentioned earlier. We see a zealous pursuit of local government. Nothing, except for minor issues, has come to fruition from the CCC, so to justify its existence it has carried out many failed—'witch-hunt' is a good word that members opposite might be familiar with—witch-hunts in local government that have been their undoing. It has been a very sad period in the integrity of Queensland and of the CCC that this chairman's rule has led to this aberration in terms of the duties and responsibilities of the CCC.

We all hope that this is the last we see of problems with the CCC—no more local government investigations on a whim, particularly in the Gold Coast area, unless it gets some actual corruption issues to follow up on rather than staffing issues and wasting more taxpayers' funds on local government vendettas. I hope councillors right across Queensland can feel relieved by this report showing how innocent they were in all these matters. I hope they can get on with their lives. There is an old saying: good riddance to bad rubbish. I note the resignation of Mr Alan MacSporran following this report and others.

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.55 pm): It is always a pleasure to speak following the member for Mermaid Beach. It is great to see you here at work, Ray. We missed you this morning.

I rise to speak to the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee's report No. 108. I was a member of the PCCC for the duration of this inquiry. As a member who is a Logan City resident and who represents a Logan electorate, I can advise the House that in participating in this inquiry I sought advice from the Integrity Commissioner, and I tabled that written advice to the committee. None of the people mentioned in this report or who appeared before the inquiry were people I had anything other than a working relationship with in my capacity as a state member of parliament.

The events that occurred with respect to Logan City Council were worthy of an inquiry of this stature. Any instance where an elected body is removed, where the will of the constituency is overruled, with ultimately no tangible outcome, needs due consideration. Our democracy, no matter how messy, is a precious commodity.

I recognise the secretariat and staff who worked on this inquiry for several months. I acknowledge the work and expertise of the committee's appointed counsel assisting, Dr Jonathan Horton QC and Mr Ben McMillan. There were thousands and thousands of pages that were submitted to the inquiry from the CCC to assist us in our deliberations. There were 10 days of public hearings. This was and will be one of the most critical inquiries that this parliament has conducted.

The inquiry's recommendations have been acknowledged in this House and canvassed at length by some in the media, and I would like to commend the Palaszczuk government's response in the appointment of Tony Fitzgerald QC to follow through on some of those recommendations. I have the utmost faith in the work he will do. I know that it will be ultimately to the betterment of the CCC.


I fully support the Crime and Corruption Commission and the work it does. I believe it is amongst the best—if not the best—corruption detection and investigation bodies in this country. I say that as a former police officer. There has certainly been no love lost between myself and the toecutters from time to time. However, from the four years that I have been a member of the PCCC I have a brand new appreciation for the work the organisation, its staff and its seconded officers do—something I certainly never had before stepping into this House. It is a necessary organisation and it has my full support. Imagine what it would have been like to have at the federal level such an effective organisation that doggedly pursued corruption allegations, regardless of whether or not the subject was an elected official. The member for Warrego wants to talk about a government integrity crisis. I suggest she looks to Canberra. This does not mean that the CCC as an organisation and as individuals cannot do and be better. At the end of the day, that is what the inquiry was about.

The inquiry was not to relitigate the accusations made against the former Logan City councillors. It was not to test the evidence or sufficiency of it. If the member for Mermaid Beach had actually read the report he would know that the report does not make any conclusion about the innocence or otherwise of those former councillors. That was not the role of the inquiry. Rather, it was to examine the processes that led to the charges that were laid and why they were ultimately withdrawn. As the member for Mount Ommaney pointed out, it is a voluminous report of many pages. There are several recommendations and the member for—

Debate, on motion of Mrs McMahon, adjourned.

## COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

### Portfolio Committees, Reporting Dates; Referral of Auditor-General's Report


 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (4.00 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 136, that the Transport and Resources Committee report on the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill by 6 May 2022 and the Economics and Governance Committee report on the State Penalties Enforcement (Modernisation) Amendment Bill by 6 May 2022. The committee has also resolved that, pursuant to standing order 194B, the Auditor-General's Report No. 13 of 2021-22 titled *State finances 2021* be referred to the Economics and Governance Committee.

## SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 551, on motion of Ms Farmer—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (4.01 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill. I emphasise to the House that the ALP will always be a champion of small business in this state because that is part of our values. Ordinary working Queenslanders have always wanted a decent job and have the dream of being their own boss one day. That is a key part of our aspirations as working Queenslanders—that is, having your own business and supporting small businesses. That is why supporting small business is one of the cores of our values and is very dear to the hearts of those on this side of the House.



The Small Business Commissioner package is another measure from the Palaszczuk government to support small business within Queensland. We have supported small business throughout the pandemic with our COVID-19 economic recovery plan which has small business at its heart, and that plan is underpinned by more than \$14.5 billion in recovery initiatives to support the COVID-19 response. That initiative is continuing to deliver jobs and deliver to communities throughout the state. There are three parts of this initiative which relate to the bill—\$1 billion worth of job support loans for 7,000 businesses, \$950 million in payroll and land relief tax and electricity bill relief, and \$320 million of joint funding for business support grants which went to 35,000 small businesses in Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government has committed more than \$2.5 billion in business support since March 2020. Let us contrast that to the LNP's record. The LNP had failed to deliver a dedicated small business policy during the election and its last policy was from May 2019—well before COVID hit. It was missing in action when it was really needed by small business. I remind the House once again that it was the LNP that abolished the Queensland Small Business Commissioner previously, so there was no dedicated advocacy role for Queensland small businesses at a time when they really needed it. We will restore that position cut by the Newman government.

The Small Business Commissioner will help small businesses as they take on those larger corporate landlords and absent landlords. As the member for Bancroft, I have seen some of the struggles with landlords—expensive rent or they are located in a shopping centre where they are not supplying enough security for their business, or sometimes they faced indifference from landlords during the 2020 pandemic.

I will give the House an example of my friend Adam Gibb from White Brick Brewing which was formerly in North Lakes. His landlord did not enter into any negotiations about the rent during the height of the 2020 pandemic. When the time came for them to wrap up, the landlord even refused to release their equipment from the rented premises. That is obviously a terrible blow to a business in that stage of its existence. I am happy to report that Adam is now setting up a new venture at Brendale, Hip Hops Brewers. Later this year I look forward to being a part of that. He is being backed by other small businesses which saw his product and believed in it and invested in him starting again in a new venture, and that is what small businesses do in our state. That is just one example of what some of our small businesses faced during the pandemic and why they need the Small Business Commissioner.

I also want to speak about how the Small Business Commissioner can help out franchisees in our communities. We are probably aware that people who buy franchises in order to open a small business do face a tough time. Some of them struggle, but not all of them. Some have very good arrangements, but there are a few who do struggle. Some of them pay enormous franchise fees that include marketing fees. Some of them have complained that they get very little marketing or advertising back for that. Some of them that I have spoken to say they do not feel they get the support that they were originally promised when they bought into that particular franchise arrangement. The Small Business Commissioner will be in a great position to help those small businesses that traditionally have felt that they do not have very many places to turn for assistance.

I would also love to see the Small Business Commissioner working with our local chambers of commerce, and I want to pay tribute to the re-emerging chambers of commerce in our area. I speak of the North Lakes Chamber of Commerce. It had a meeting this week at the North Lakes Hotel—another great local business—and I look forward to attending future meetings that are not held during sitting weeks. It has once again become a very active chamber. I also pay tribute to the Greater Caboolture Chamber of Commerce, which relaunched on 3 February and is off to a great start. Once again it is very active and advertising quite widely. It follows on from the great work that was done many years ago by Commerce Caboolture, and the member for Morayfield knows the great work that it has done previously.

I again reiterate that supporting small business by having things like the Small Business Commissioner is a key part of Labor values because we support ordinary working people in their endeavours to get a great job and in their endeavours to become their own boss, which is the aspiration of so many working people. That is why we hold small business so dear to our hearts on the Labor side. I want to pay tribute to some of the great small businesses in my area: Ng at Michel's at Deception Bay; Rob Brodie, who has a great tobacco business; Chris at Fort Specialty Coffee at North Lakes; Jaz N Gaz mobile coffee from Burpengary East; and IB Town Planning, which is not one that people often talk about but IB Town Planning is a great small business based in North Lakes. I could go on and on about these great small businesses because they are the heart of our economy and our community, but I look forward to them utilising in the best way they can the services of the Small Business Commissioner. I commend the bill to the House.



**Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (4.08 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. From the outset I acknowledge that I support any initiative that supports small business in Queensland. Like so many on this side of the House, I came from a small business background before politics and continue to support those small businesses in my electorate because it is those small businesses that make the world go round. They employ our kids and other people and ensure that regional Queensland centres can continue to provide not only produce but also services.

I remember with fondness my time as the secretary of the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce & Industry. I spent many a year doing that and advocating on behalf of small businesses in and around the South Burnett region. While talking about the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce, I want to give a very special shout-out to the current president of the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce, Mr Damien Martoo, who heads up the Martoo Review. Hopefully by saying that in the Queensland parliament I will feature, Damo, on the Martoo Review.

It is people like Damo and Jacqui Trace from Bill Hull, along with many other local Kingaroy businesses, who not only help support and encourage people in small business in and around our local towns but also have stepped into the mental health space. The reason why I want to talk about this whilst I am talking about the Small Business Commissioner bill is because over the last couple of years in so many of our regions across Queensland, people, in particular small business owners, have struggled through what has been an horrific couple of years because of the pandemic.

**A government member:** It would have been a lot worse if we'd opened the borders when you wanted.

**Mrs Gerber:** They did open the borders. What they didn't do is support small businesses.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I take the interjection. The Premier opened the borders.

**A government member:** On the health advice.

**An opposition member:** Will you publish the health advice?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I will take the interjection. Exactly.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Martin): Order, members!

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** While I am talking about the serious issue of the mental health of people in our small businesses, the Labor members continue to perpetrate absolute falsehoods. Electorally they think it is doing them good. I was not going to say this, but I will say it now: local businesses have got together because of the sheer lack of support from the Palaszczuk government in the mental health space. My local Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce have had to set up Operation Smile to assist people locally in the mental health space because the Palaszczuk government has forgotten about regional Queensland when it comes to mental health. I see your puzzled face, Mr Deputy Speaker. We have a brand new hospital and we do not have any more mental health beds.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Nanango, resume your seat. I will caution you on relevance and bring you back to the bill at hand.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am more than happy to talk to the bill at hand. It is about small businesses. It is about establishing a Small Business Commissioner. My local businesses have set up a group called the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce, and because of the lack of mental health services they have set up Operation Smile to assist local businesses when their staff take their lives.

**A government member:** Smile.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Again, the arrogance.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Nanango, if you could, as you said, come back to the bill. We would appreciate the debate continuing.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Many of my colleagues on this side of the House support small business. I give a shout-out to the shadow minister for small business, who is bringing in sensible amendments to this bill. The member for Buderim understands and supports local businesses. Every other member in this House has been allowed to talk about the great work of their chambers of commerce. I am going

to talk about mine, because the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce does everything possible to support local businesses. It is not just the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce; it is also the Murgon Chamber of Commerce, the Kilcoy Chamber of Commerce, the Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation—BIEDO—the Nanango Tourism and Development Association—NaTDA—and, of course, how could we forget the Yarraman Progress Association. All these organisations support local businesses. I have heard every member in this House stand up and talk about their local coffee shop or their local Thai shop. We should be supporting them. What I am doing is talking about the chambers of commerce who represent those local businesses. It is really important that we do that.


The amendments foreshadowed by the member for Buderim are sensible. This bill misses a huge opportunity to properly serve the interests of small businesses. Labor has given us a Small Business Commissioner with a very limited scope. It could have been so much more. I urge the House to support the amendments put forward by the shadow minister. The bill as it reads will only allow the Small Business Commissioner to deal with dispute resolution functions relating to residential tenancy disputes, which are very important, and mediation for commercial leasing and small business franchise disputes.

The bill has missed the opportunity to bring in further protections for other small businesses. It could have provided a mechanism for small business to deal with business-to-business disputes, such as payment disputes involving a small business and a larger business, but the bill does not go that far. The amendments by the shadow minister are sensible. I encourage the Labor members to listen to them and vote in support of the shadow minister.

There are flow-on effects to small businesses of cancelled events in our small regional towns. Disappointingly, the Goomeri Pumpkin Festival will not be held this year. It is important that I let the House know that the Goomeri Pumpkin Festival has been cancelled. Last year the member for Bancroft represented the government and came out to open it, but he did not do the pumpkin roll. I was going to challenge him this year. Unfortunately, he will not be able to come out to the Goomeri Pumpkin Festival, a wonderful festival. The cancelation of the festival has a flow-on effect to all of our local businesses, whether that is the Goomeri Bakery, the bookshop or the local pub. I would encourage everyone to head out to Goomeri. They have suffered through the last two floods. As a local member, it is difficult to pick a bakery in your local electorate. You should not do it. It is like judging a baby competition. But I will say the Goomeri Bakery, a French patisserie, is in my top bakeries in my electorate.

**An opposition member:** What about the Blackbutt Bakery? They will be upset.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I will take that interjection. The Blackbutt Bakery cuts all their own vegetables and makes everything. It is fantastic. Kilcoy curry pies are brilliant as well. There are so many. As it is important that we talk about the bill at hand, I say again that everyone in the House is supportive of small business. It is important that we continue to buy local, shop local and support local businesses, because the people who run small businesses make our communities tick.

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (4.18 pm): I rise to speak in support of the bill to establish the office of Small Business Commissioner. This is a commitment we took to the election, and I am very pleased that our state's 450,000 small businesses will continue to have the dedicated support and advocacy that the Small Business Commissioner provides.

Establishing a permanent commissioner will bring Queensland into line with other Australian states and territories that already have a permanent commissioner for small business. The Palaszczuk government has always put small businesses front and centre because we know just how valuable they are to our communities and local economies. They employ nearly a million Queenslanders and are critical to our state's economic growth.

In May 2020 we established a temporary Small Business Commissioner under the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act to provide advocacy and one-on-one dispute mediation services for small businesses impacted by COVID. We had so many calls in our office from people who were in a dire situation with their landlord. The Small Business Commissioner was a very sound appointment.

Maree Adshead was appointed as the temporary Small Business Commissioner and she has been an outstanding advocate for small businesses ever since. The one-on-one support provided by the commissioner not only has been critical in helping small business owners avoid costly legal fees but also has given them back precious time to run their businesses. Since May 2020, the Small Business Commissioner has carried out more than 6,000 activities for small businesses, commercial tenants and landlords. So far, more than two-thirds of leasing disputes have been successfully resolved by either informal resolution or mediation, thanks to the commissioner's office. This bill will not only

establish a permanent small business commissioner for Queensland but also provide a legislative basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions relating to retail shop leasing disputes under the Retail Shop Leases Act and other small business leasing and franchising disputes on an opt-in basis

As I say every time I get the chance to speak here about small businesses, they are the heart and soul of our communities. They are our family members, our friends, our neighbours and our employers. In my electorate of Ipswich, small businesses make up over 97 per cent of all businesses. The more we can do to support them to grow and create jobs in Ipswich, the better. The small business community in Ipswich is dynamic, agile and resilient and we have seen that after the floods. Importantly, they have many loyal supporters in the community who will get behind them when times are tough. Having the support of the Small Business Commissioner has been essential for my local businesses.

I want to share a story about how important that community support is, although this is not COVID related. In November last year, very early in the morning, I woke up to see several missed calls and messages on my phone from small business owners whose businesses were located in one of the beautiful old buildings in Ellenborough Street, at the top of Ipswich town. That morning they had arrived at work to find that the premises were locked. They were completely locked out of the building. There was just a sign telling them that the landlord was in arrears and they could not go in. All of their equipment—their mobile phones, their laptops, everything—was inside the building, but they could not get in. About six or seven businesses were involved. The possession notices were posted on the doors. No-one had any warning. All the locks were changed. There was a security guard standing there. They were locked out of their businesses.

I immediately phoned our wonderful small business minister and asked for her advice. She followed the protocols and set the ball rolling for the Small Business Commissioner to intervene, which she did. Even though the businesses were absolutely devastated, within hours they were back in the building and they knew what side of the law they were on. We cannot just think about these people as collateral damage in a bigger dispute, which is why the Small Business Commissioner is so pivotal. As distressing as it was, our community really pulled together. It was great to see the council, the Ipswich Chamber of Commerce and others banding together to support those businesses. That was really fitting for a town that takes pride in supporting its small business community.

The Small Business Commissioner has been working really hard to strengthen localised engagement in the small business space by establishing small business friendly charters that commit city councils to nurturing and empowering their small business communities. In October 2020, Ipswich City Council was the first council in Queensland to sign up to the state's first small business friendly council charter, with Commissioner Adshead and both the Ipswich and Greater Springfield chambers of commerce co-signing. In our community, it is so important that we support this role.

I know that I am speaking on behalf of all of the small businesses in my area when I outline just how important the role of the Small Business Commissioner has been. The position was created during COVID and I thank the Attorney-General, who was the former small business minister, for that. I also thank the current small business minister. She has come to my area several times and spoken to our small businesses. She is incredibly engaged. I have heard from many members in the chamber about just how engaged our small business minister is. It makes a big difference to people, particularly in the last couple of years with COVID and now the recent floods, that they can have confidence in a minister who listens and who takes the time to hear about the needs of our small business communities and who meets those needs right across Queensland. I am very proud to support this bill. I commend it to the House.



**Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (4.24 pm): I rise to speak on the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, which aims to give effect to the permanency of a Queensland small business commissioner and a supporting office in order to provide tailored support for small businesses in Queensland, reduce the time and costs associated with dispute resolution involving leasing and franchise issues, provide initial advice and information to small businesses about any type of dispute, and connect them to assistance and support.

As part of Queensland's approach to implementing the national cabinet's national code, the Queensland COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020 made provisions for a temporary small business commissioner to be established. The temporary commissioner was appointed to deliver advocacy and dispute resolution functions for Queensland small businesses, including assisting small businesses to reach an informal resolution for disputes relating to leases and administering a mediation process prescribed by regulation for responding to the COVID-19 emergency in relation to small business tenancy disputes.

According to the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, during 2020 and 2021 the temporary Office of the Small Business Commissioner has carried out over 4½ thousand activities for small business, including inquiries, disputes, outreach and advocacy activities.

While there is a clear purpose for these functions to be performed and for which I am confident many businesses felt grateful, the tangible support required by small businesses since the pandemic began, and a need that will remain for months during the aftermath, extends far beyond the realm. In fact, in Queensland thousands of small and family businesses have been consistently screaming out for a government support package that would help them simply keep their doors open. If Victoria, the home of the most locked down city in the world, can come up with a \$200 million small business investment package to roll out next month then surely the Queensland government could come up with a better voucher scheme.

Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many things, the most unfortunate of which is to be fearful of things that we previously took for granted—fearful of infection, fearful for our futures and fearful for our jobs, our families, our communities and our economy—and forever cognisant of the alarming risk to our very existence. This Labor government continues to pass the buck. They are always blaming someone else or something else for a problem for which they refuse to take responsibility. Most recently, they were blaming supply chain interruptions when, in many cases, small businesses could have stepped in to meet demand if they had been adequately supported. Big supermarkets and their staff were buffered, but not small business that had no fat bottom lines nor a plentiful workforce to call upon. It was clear in all jurisdictions, here and around the world, that without support from governments small businesses would fail and, sadly, many did and continue to do so.

The harsh reality is that neither the Small Business Commissioner nor the minister have given the sector what they have been asking for time and time again—what they need the most in order to survive. It is little wonder that business confidence in Queensland is at an all-time low. Queensland is home to more than 438,000 small businesses, which are at the core of every industry sector. For over 20 years the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland has been measuring Queensland business confidence and expectations through its pulse survey. It is unchallenged in terms of being the most authoritative, timely and comprehensive snapshot of Queensland business sentiment, providing critical insights into the opinions of business owners across the state. The most recent survey results have been published and the statistics paint a bleak picture. The results show that business confidence is down 16.7 per cent, which is the lowest rate since September 2020. Sales and revenue are down 6.9 per cent on the last quarter and are still falling. Concerningly, 63 per cent of business staff reported being impacted by poor mental health, demonstrating the severe toll that a lack of certainty and support from the Queensland government in the form of stimulus has taken.

What we are certain of is that revenue has been slashed, keeping business owners awake at night and their staff lining up for Centrelink, despite two years of fighting for their livelihoods in the trenches. Small businesses in my electorate have shared with me how a desperate lack of hope is exhausting them and the absence of a support package from the state government leaves them with a sense of desperation and crippling uncertainty. It is not just about the bottom line; it is about their staff and families as they struggle to live with the devastating impacts of COVID.

While there are merits and general support for the existence of a permanent small business commissioner, it is important not to be misled by what is essentially a very narrow role that is not designed or equipped to provide the kinds of support necessary to keep small business afloat. The government must provide that support in other forms, yet refuses to do so. When introducing the bill, the minister stated that one of its main objectives is to enhance the operating environment for small business in Queensland. I fail to see how the bill will achieve that because, quite simply, the operational environment is defined by a business's ability to operate at all.

The Queensland Treasurer has repeatedly ignored the pleas of small and family business owners for support. This government was dragged kicking and screaming to the rescue table late last year, long after other states had delivered life support to their struggling sectors. While other states were dishing out payroll schemes, commercial rent relief and hardship grants, Queensland's Premier told Queenslanders to stay at home to stop the spread of the virus, sounding the death knell for many local small businesses.


As published by the ABC last week, the Australian Retailers Association reports that January of this year has been the toughest month for retailers. A Sunshine Coast mortgage broker says that small businesses are applying for loans at record levels this quarter. One local business owner said that he

sold his car in an attempt to pay the rent for his shop. The Australian Retailers Association also says that many small retailers and cafes are having to refinance their home in order to keep their operations alive as a direct result of reduced foot traffic. My colleague the shadow minister for small and family business, Brent Mickelberg, told of heartbreaking stories in Central Queensland. In Rockhampton alone almost 300 small businesses had closed, with small business owners spending tens of thousands of dollars of their life savings to keep their business afloat. This crisis will affect generations to come.

The Hon. Bruce Billson, Australian Small Business and Family Ombudsman, has noted that the commissioner should have power to publicise when a party does not follow recommendations to enter a dispute resolution process. It appears clear from the outset that this bill does not provide the commissioner with sufficient powers to properly serve the interests of small businesses in Queensland. An independent small business commissioner empowered to conduct investigations, report to parliament and publicly advocate for and defend small businesses in Queensland is essential. This bill falls well short of these expectations. It does not contain an obligation to act in good faith, which exists in the current framework—a clause that has been urged for inclusion by mediators to ensure that parties to mediation engage in a constructive manner. It also misses valuable opportunities to bring further protections for small businesses to deal with business-to-business disputes, for example payment disputes involving a small and large business.

The independence of the commissioner is non-existent, as the bill provides for the minister to give the commissioner a written direction about a matter and a written statement about the minister's expectations for the performance of the commissioner's functions. This ministerial direction, clause 17, conveys a potential for the role to be highly dependent on government and subject to operational instructions and should be omitted. A number of submitters noted that the ministerial direction power might be used to guide the commissioner away from subject matter that might be awkward or difficult for the government of the day.

In summary, small businesses are collectively the biggest employer in Queensland and a powerhouse of our economy. Overwhelmingly, their owners are mums and dads who work very hard. They have taken a chance to invest, without guaranteed outcomes, in order to employ themselves and their staff and to create and supply the goods and services that Queensland needs. Importantly, the tax revenue derived from these businesses, their owners and their employees pays a large proportion of the cost of government services, infrastructure and social security measures in our state and nation. The LNP understands this, which is why our shadow minister will be moving sensible amendments to this bill. We are committed to giving small businesses a voice. We want the Small Business Commissioner to have the resources, powers and independence necessary to make the Queensland government treat small businesses fairly and to listen to and respond to their concerns. I support the bill with the amendments to be moved by the shadow minister.

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (4.33 pm): I am pleased to speak to the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 in support of the establishment of a permanent small business commissioner for Queensland. Our state has over 450,000 small business operators. Our small business operators have a wide variety of trade: hospitality, retail, food, manufacturing, small engineering workshops and mechanical workshops. Their types of trade are varied, but the pressure of keeping the doors open and staff employed is a similar problem for traders. I send a shout-out to the Mackay Region Chamber of Commerce for its ongoing and successful 'buy local' campaign. This campaign encourages locals to keep money in our community. It also encourages money to be kept in local businesses that employ local families. This is keeping our local families in work.

Mackay has many small businesses that are special to our regions. We have the famous Sorbellos Italian restaurant—

**Mr Harper:** Good restaurant.

**Mrs GILBERT:** It is; everybody has been there—Roshni's, Church on Palmer, The Dispensary, the Grazing Goat Cafe and Coolmango. These are just a few of our great eating places. I highlight Gypsy and the Bowerbird homewares, Let the Children Play toy store, Carroll's newsagency, Man About Menswear, McGuire Air & Refrigeration, Barcam Electrical, Roy Sturdy Plumbing, the very special Cliffies Butcher Shop on George Street, Slade Point Butcher, Sinclair Meats, Klippitz Hair & Beauty and many other wonderful hairdressers in Mackay. We have numerous locally owned and managed family businesses in Mackay.

The commissioner position will be an extension of the temporary commissioner position established to support small businesses navigate the uncertainty and change that they faced when COVID affected their trading during lockdowns. We know that the temporary commissioner assisted

many small businesses in getting back to trading. They carried out over 4,500 activities for these small businesses including inquiries, disputes, outreach and advocacy activities and played a crucial role in supporting Queensland businesses to avoid lengthy and costly leasing disputes during the pandemic, with early and necessary information and advice. There was also advice on how to access mediation.

The success of the temporary office in addressing the previous gap in small business support relative to other states is why this government has committed to appoint a permanent Queensland Small Business Commissioner and establish the supporting office. We want to enhance the operating environment for small business. The permanent commissioner will support the office, will improve the tailored support and advice to Queensland small businesses and will provide timely and affordable access to justice through the permanent commissioner's dispute resolutions function.

During the national COVID lockdown I had many conversations with small business operators about the health of their business. The fear for their financial viability was palpable. Business owners were weighing up losing their home, keeping their business afloat or maybe just walking away from their business. As business support packages rolled out, they were able to apply for the type of support that best suited their need. During lockdown I bought lots of takeaway coffees—actually every day—from many of the cafes in Mackay. I wanted to keep in contact with the small businesses in my electorate. I was also able to encourage locals to ring ahead to their favourite cafe or restaurant and order their takeaway, just to keep the money flowing into our local small businesses, mainly owned by families and employing many locals.

One cafe owner, whose business I will not name, was struggling with his rent and paying his franchise fees. He was paying staff. His No. 1 goal was to keep the family home. With a QRIDA loan he was able to have some breathing space and to get back on his feet post lockdown. One thing that resonated with me was that, although he could run a fantastic cafe and make a mean coffee, he needed assistance when it came to accessing financial support in that the process was different from sitting down with his bank manager. He did not really have his head around state and federal government departments, so we worked through this together. I recently had contact with this small business not just for a coffee but for more advice. I was able to connect him with the temporary Small Business Commissioner. He was happy with the advice and the information that he sought. He was able to put some of the pieces of the business puzzle together for his personal way forward.

With the ongoing uncertainty around COVID in the community and people thinking about their own safety and taking action to stay away from crowds during peak times of outbreaks, business is not as predictable as it was pre COVID. COVID has shone a spotlight on the need for small business support. It is vital that a commissioner dedicated to supporting small business is established after those opposite—the LNP—abolished the Small Business Commissioner. It is only a Labor government that has the best interests of future viability of our 450,000 small businesses in mind.


During the first COVID shutdown local businesses realised that they would need to pivot quickly to stay viable. COVID adaptation grants were applied for and used well to grow the health of our local businesses in Mackay. Carmel and Maddie of Saige & Sohl clothing and fashion store used their COVID adaptation grant to build their online presence. During lockdown some people were cashed up and still wanted to continue to buy fashion. Carmel and Maddie were able to go from just being a local store to being a national store—selling their clothing and shoes to local people who were able to collect their parcels but also to people in Melbourne and other major cities.

Ocean International went online through the use of a COVID adaptation grant. While their accommodation was empty, Hannah and her team were able to keep their catering staff employed by producing high-quality restaurant meals packaged for takeaway. They put their menu online so ordering and payment was easy. The takeaway was easy to collect with limited contact with the public. There are so many fabulous businesses in my region.

McCarthy Panel Works is a recent recipient of a growth grant. This local family has been in the business of smash repairs and panel works since 1971. Their \$50,000 grant will enable their business to move into the repair of electrical vehicles. There will be lots of those after the announcements this week. E-vehicles are aluminium, unlike traditional cars which are made of steel. The two metals do not mix. They need new equipment and workshop space. Andrea and Craig McCarthy are getting on with building the new side of their business. They employ many locals and they are continually taking on young apprentices. They are training the tradies of the future.

We also have many local businesses that are recipients of the second-round Business Basic Grants. I will outline a few of these. Becker Project Solutions is a newly established business providing development process management and civil engineering consultancy services to the local government

and private urban development sector. Active Blends is a superfood bar in Mackay. It is a Mackay based cafe that specialises in juices, smoothies and coffees. Primal Coffee Roasters is an amazing business that purchases green coffee beans which they specially roast. They roast them locally and deliver to our restaurants and cafes. Mackay is a great place for business.

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (4.43 pm): When we are talking about small business, if the past two years have demonstrated anything, it is just how crucial strong advocacy is for our small and family businesses. The LNP is unapologetic in its support for small and family businesses. These businesses are the cornerstone of our communities. They employ countless Queenslanders and invest directly into their local neighbourhoods, sponsoring community sport, donating to fundraisers and supporting charitable drives, including rallying to support flood victims right now as we speak.

Small businesses are the very backbone of the Queensland economy and they give back significantly to our communities. Time and time again during the pandemic it was the LNP that led the charge advocating for our small businesses and their staff. It was the LNP that called for financial assistance when the state government imposed restrictions without adequately supporting businesses and their staff.

This bill, the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, seeks to permanently establish a Queensland Small Business Commissioner. The legislation will also provide a statutory basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions. The LNP will not be opposing the bill. We will be proposing two amendments to help ensure the Small Business Commissioner has the necessary power and independence so that all small businesses are treated fairly by the Queensland government.

Those in this chamber know that I have spent much of the past two years talking about small and family businesses. I will never apologise for standing up for the people who make up the fabric of our vibrant Currumbin electorate, especially after the struggles they have faced over the past two years. My community will never forget the burden they shouldered during the border closures so that the Palaszczuk government could say they kept Queenslanders safe.

We are a border community—we are one of the largest in Australia. Our small and family businesses, even in suburbs not directly on the border, rely on New South Wales residents for staff and patronage yet these businesses were cut off from this important part of our community for the better part of two years. Families were forced to choose sides, business owners camped out in their shops—unable to return home but desperate to remain open—and children were passed over orange border barricades just to go to school.

I shared many stories from my community in this chamber and, as a result, I hope the state government realises the immense burden that our border business community shouldered as a result of state government decisions. Unfortunately, the Queensland government's handling of the border gave my local business owners and their staff plenty of reasons to despair—from the bungled border checkpoints, including delays stretching hours, meaning staff were unable to get to their jobs to hardworking hospital staff and teachers being deemed not essential.

There were border reopening strategies that failed to take into account our border community and small businesses, and when we did reopen the state government told our community that they would have to stump up \$150 for a PCR test every 72 hours to cross the border. This would have crippled small businesses. So we started a campaign to ensure this border toll was rejected. Thankfully, common sense prevailed and our border community was exempt.

Small businesses were dismayed with the Premier's attempt to promote the Gold Coast play money vouchers for Queensland businesses because she showcased a New South Wales beach instead of a Queensland destination. The icing on an already stale cake: who could forget the Premier's fake visit to small businesses on the border. She took her spin doctors to take a photo but did not take the time to talk with these businesses. These small and family businesses were desperate for the state government to listen to them, for the Premier to listen to them, but it did not happen. I hope that the Small Business Commissioner will be in a position to listen to them.

While our small and family businesses have been battling to stay open for two years, the recent weather events only added to their struggles—closing roads, leaving communities without power and, of course, homes and businesses flooded. I wish to take a moment to recognise our amazing community that rallied to support those affected through the creation of our very own local Mud Army. Residents from across the Gold Coast came out in force, pitching in to help immediately.

As our community has been coming together to help with the flood recovery, it is imperative that our community receives the government support needed to recover from the floods. We must build back better. It is my hope that the Small Business Commissioner will be able to support and strongly



advocate for our flood-affected businesses. If we can better support small businesses with advice and better support tenants and landlords to access fast and fair mediation through the permanent establishment of the Small Business Commissioner, then that is a good thing.

We would seek to protect the independence of the office by adding a power to obtain information clause. This will allow the commissioner to acquire information from government agencies and entities that would enable the resolution of issues. Indeed, feedback from industry stakeholders during the committee process indicated broad support for the Small Business Commissioner with some caveats, most notably arguing for the independence of the office to be protected from undue influence from the minister.

At a time when the state Labor government finds itself engulfed by the Queensland integrity crisis, it is telling that stakeholders also raised concerns about the influence of ministers on the role of the Small Business Commissioner. It is paramount that small businesses can trust the commissioner. For this to occur, the office must be free from any suggestion of departmental or ministerial influence.

I echo the concerns highlighted by my colleagues in their statement of reservation during the committee process that a conspicuously independent Small Business Commissioner empowered to conduct investigations report to parliament and publicly advocate for and defend small businesses in Queensland is essential.

I also wish to take this opportunity to implore those opposite to reflect on the unique situation of our Queensland cross-border communities and their businesses and the need for a cross-border commissioner. Businesses in my electorate often found themselves approaching the Small Business Commissioner during the pandemic to help with highly specific cross-border issues. This is because Queensland does not have a cross-border commissioner.

The New South Wales Cross-Border Commissioner is tasked with providing equitable access and opportunities and seamless service delivery for people and businesses in the New South Wales cross-border communities. The New South Wales Cross-Border Commissioner works closely with local, state and federal governments to identify, analyse and resolve issues for their New South Wales cross-border community. This is something I am passionate about for our Queensland cross-border communities. It is something that our Queensland cross-border communities are desperately crying out for. Industry representatives like the Southern Gold Coast Chamber of Commerce remarked to me during the border closures—

Currently the Small Business Commissioner has been doing a quasi-role of it, however that dilutes its power as it's not an actual position. It's something that Covid has shown we really need.


I would be pleased to work with the Queensland government in a bipartisan manner to see this role become a reality for our community. I urge the Premier and her government to commit to this vital role which would serve to champion our Queensland cross-border community. It would also alleviate pressure from the Small Business Commissioner, who does not have the resources or the scope in her role to identify, analyse and resolve issues for our Queensland cross-border community and their businesses.

Throughout the course of the debate on this bill we have heard members on both sides of the House talk about the foundational importance of small businesses in our community. This is indisputable. They are the very heart of our community. They are the backbone. They are our children's employers. Small businesses deserve the support of this government. I commend them for making the office of the Small Business Commissioner a permanent position. I implore the government to look at the amendments to be moved by the shadow small business minister, because it is imperative that we do not stop there. We must ensure that the office of the Small Business Commissioner receives proper funding and support from this government.

After two years of watching the businesses in our Queensland border communities suffer, I urge the government to accept the LNP's proposed amendments to this bill. The office of the Small Business Commissioner must be independent and must be able to hold the government to account. Our businesses have been failed time and time again by this state Labor government, especially throughout the continuous and unrelenting hard border closures.

No amount of spin can cover up what our business community and our border community went through during the border closures. No amount of spin can take away from the burden that they had to bear so that this Palaszczuk Labor government could say they kept Queensland safe. No amount of spin will let our community forget what they had to bear during those two years when we had border closures and small businesses lost their staff, small businesses had to close their doors and small businesses did not get the support they needed until the LNP went into bat for them.

I call on this Palaszczuk Labor government to look at the amendments moved by the LNP, to ensure that the Small Business Commissioner has the funding it needs and the independence it needs to properly support our small businesses throughout Queensland.

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (4.53 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. While I am on my feet, I wish everyone a happy St Patrick's Day. This is a very important day for my family, particularly the lines that came from Ireland, from the counties of Roscommon, Kildare and Limerick. They arrived in Queensland in the 1860s—probably the same time as your family arrived Deputy Speaker Kelly. It is also an important day for my family because it is my brother's birthday—Dennis Patrick Madden, who clearly was named in honour of his date of birth.

This bill is of particular interest to me because I am a small business owner. When I came into politics I owned two businesses. One I had to relinquish because of my position as a member of parliament but the other one I have continued to own. I have a particular interest in small business. Twice now I have met the Small Business Commissioner and we have discussed various things.

This bill proposes to establish the position of Small Business Commissioner and a supporting office on a permanent basis. The commissioner and the supporting office will be responsible for providing tailored support and advice to small businesses like my own in Queensland. The proposed legislation will 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 only.

The commissioner will also work with the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction to continue to deliver small business regulatory reform in Queensland. A further objective of the bill is to cease the operation of the temporary commissioner on commencement of the permanent commissioner. As part of this, it is intended to transition the temporary commissioner role from its previous arrangements primarily focused on managing and responding to COVID-19 impacts to a role with a much wider application to support small businesses.

As detailed in the explanatory notes, the bill will provide the power to appoint a commissioner; a mediation process for the commissioner to mediate disputes relating to retail tenancy disputes, other small business lease disputes and small business franchise disputes; regulation-making powers to, among other objectives, prescribe fees and the practices and procedures of the mediation process the commissioner will administer; and other miscellaneous provisions to support the operation of the act.

Subsequent to the bill being tabled by the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development on 12 October 2021, the bill was referred to the Education, Employment and Training Committee. The chair of the committee, the member for Redlands, tabled report No. 14 of the 57th Parliament in November 2021. In its report the committee made only one recommendation, and that was that the bill be passed.

The position of the temporary Queensland Small Business Commissioner arose from a meeting of the national cabinet in April 2020 where the national cabinet endorsed the *Mandatory Code of Conduct SME Commercial Leasing Principles during COVID-19*. The national code applied to all tenancies that were suffering financial stress or hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as defined by their eligibility for the Commonwealth government's JobKeeper program.

As part of Queensland's approach to implementing the national code, provision was made for a temporary Small Business Commissioner to be established pursuant to the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020. This role was to provide support to small businesses impacted by COVID-19. This included developing mediation processes for eligible COVID-19 affected leasing disputes.

Maree Adshead was appointed as the inaugural Small Business Commissioner to support the unique needs of Queensland's small business community. Ms Adshead was formerly the Queensland Small Business Champion. The Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 will establish the position of the Small Business Commissioner as a permanent position supporting the 450,000-plus small businesses in Queensland. It will amend the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020 and the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994.

By introducing this bill, those 450,000-plus businesses, including my business at Lowood, will have the benefit of having access to the Small Business Commissioner. As the minister said in her introductory speech—

We know that the temporary Queensland Small Business Commissioner and supporting office, established as part of the Queensland government's response to the impacts of COVID-19, have helped many small businesses get back to doing business. In 2020-21, the temporary commissioner's office carried out over 4,500 activities for small business, including enquiries, disputes, outreach and advocacy activities, playing a critical role in supporting Queensland businesses to avoid lengthy and costly leasing disputes during the pandemic ...

In her speech the minister also outlined the success of her Small Business Roadshow. She said—

Earlier this year, I consulted with over 2,500 small business owners and industry representatives across Queensland through the Small Business Roadshow. The roadshow included a series of face-to-face and virtual forums and an online survey on the Business Queensland website. The message received from small business and industry is clear. 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 explanatory notes went on to say—

The policy objective of the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 (the Bill) is to give effect to the Queensland Government's commitments to permanently establish a Queensland Small Business Commissioner (commissioner) and a supporting office ... 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 only ... cease the operation of the temporary commissioner on commencement of the permanent commissioner. As part of this, it is intended to transition the temporary commissioner role from its previous arrangements focused primarily on managing and responding to COVID-19 impacts to a role with wider application to support small businesses.

In its preparation of the bill from late May to mid-June 2021 the government consulted with a wide range of peak bodies. New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia all have permanent small business commissioners already, while the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman operates on a federal level.

This bill also amends the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 so that the commission will take on the role previously undertaken by the chief executive of the department in administering the mediation process for retail tenancy disputes. The bill provides for an advocacy role for the commissioner on behalf of small business to the state, the Commonwealth, another state or local government or any other entity involved in administering a matter relevant to small businesses. In effect, she will be the advocate for those 450,000 small businesses in Queensland.

While all submitters support the bill's objective to permanently establish the position of Small Business Commissioner, there were issues raised by stakeholders in the development of the bill that mirrored the concerns of submitters to the committee. These issues related to: the independence of the commissioner; the lack of definition of small business in the bill; the functions of the commissioner; the scope of disputes for which the commissioner should provide mediation; and the cost of mediation fees. In its report the committee noted the points raised by submitters and the department's rationale for not including a definition of small business in the bill. In the absence of a legislated definition, the committee encourages the commissioner to publish an operational definition of small business to aid businesses that are considering seeking the assistance of the commissioner. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.03 pm): In my contribution I want to focus on a recent meeting in Bundaberg and Childers with small business owners. The intent of the meeting was to hear from the small business owners. I will talk more about the results more later. I acknowledge the organisers and use their material in my contribution, which is mainly in the form of the contents of a letter that has been sent to the Premier.

On 10 March 2022, over 30 business owners in the Childers and Bundaberg area met to discuss lagging business confidence and the mental health challenges facing business owners in the region. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic business owners have been required by the Queensland government to help the government deliver their pandemic response by implementing and enforcing some of the following: lockdowns, social distancing, venue restrictions on customers, QR check-ins, vaccination mandate on owners in select industries; vaccination passports for customers in select industries; testing requirements on owners and staff; isolation requirements on owners and staff; and mask mandates on owners, staff and customers. These obligations have been in addition to the broad range of other regulations which businesses are already subject to. In addition, many in the service or technical industries have had to adhere to the varied and often complicated COVID policies of businesses and government bodies that businesses visit or service.

The financial, physical and emotional toll of complying with the COVID-19 response requirements cannot be overstated. There is no denying that the business community is suffering. Recent Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland pulse survey data shows business confidence in the next 12 months is at the lowest point since the start of the COVID economic crisis in March 2020. Business sales have dropped significantly in many industries, and many business owners are dipping into their savings to survive. According to the CCIQ, Queensland is seeing a perfect storm of uncertainty

combined with poor consumer confidence and labour market shortages clashing to create a difficult business environment in Queensland. What is more concerning, according to the CCIQ, is that mental health challenges due to COVID impacts have affected over 60 per cent of Queensland business owners along with their staff. The financial and emotional impacts of business restrictions, mandates, low consumer confidence, supply chain disruptions and staff availability mean businesses have little optimism to see them through.

The businesses that attended these meetings last week, along with hundreds of other businesses in our region, have kept up their end of the bargain. We have implemented the COVID response policies as requested and businesses are hurting as a result. Now business is asking for something in return: a new era of COVID management. They ask for the removal of the onerous requirements that make it difficult for our businesses to function. They ask for greater certainty for our staff so they can plan for their futures. They ask for consistent and long-term strategies so that businesses can operate and plan for expansion without the fear of new rules being implemented. Most importantly, they ask for positive messages to be shared with the people of Queensland.

The meeting agreed and supported the Queensland government's tourism advertising campaign in Victoria and New South Wales—and I acknowledged the minister in the crowd when we were at a function earlier this week where he was very warmly welcomed—and they ask that that same message of positivity and safety be shared with everyday Queenslanders via daily messages on Queensland government Facebook pages, daily conferences, media releases and the like. We need to be positive as we come out of COVID-19, and Queenslanders need to be reassured that it is safe for them to get out and about in their communities, just as it is safe for interstate and international visitors to visit Queensland.

On behalf of the organisers and everyone who was at that meeting, I want to read out a list of points. Without repeating myself, I do want to say: consistent messaging between government advertising campaigns—and we are Good to Go, aren't we, Minister—and messaging to the general Queensland population would improve consumer confidence; Queensland residents being told to stay home so they are not spending in local businesses; consistent messaging on government websites regarding COVID guidelines et cetera; there are too many pages on different websites, it is slow and it needs to be updated as businesses do not have time to search through mountains of webpages to find what they need; messaging can be conflicting; the government hotline is often not up to date, with changes announced in daily press conferences with the Premier, Deputy Premier or Chief Health Officer; isolation policies are putting pressure on staff and business owners; owners end up working in the business, not on the business, because they are filling staffing gaps; more flexible working arrangements for staff in any sector who are considered a close contact but are well and have no symptoms, similar to the announcement made in January for critical workers.

Constant changes to rules are distressing and confusing for business owners. These constant changes are steadily eroding the community's confidence in the government. Many business owners asked when unvaccinated customers will be allowed back into businesses which currently have restrictions. I guess that is an issue for the Chief Health Officer, but I want to put on record that that is what small business owners have asked me to articulate here tonight. Staff shortages in many industries are at a crisis point. It is fortuitous that the minister for employment is here and acutely understands the challenges that Queensland faces. Many of these businesses are unable to employ suitably qualified staff who are unvaccinated. It is a major limitation.

Business owners support the CCIQ's call for the mandates to be reviewed and removed. Businesses which serve alcohol are concerned about the rise in violence, alcoholism and mental health challenges arising from unvaccinated patrons and their friends drinking at home, rather than at licensed premises. The counselling community is concerned about a rise in depression, suicide and mental health challenges amongst the broader community as a result of shortages in mental health counsellors, which has been worsened by the vaccine mandate being applied to counsellors. Counsellors are reporting an increase in the number of people not able to access mental health support due to a shortage of vaccinated counsellors. They are calling for unvaccinated counsellors to be able to offer this vital service again.

I want to finish with an actual example of a pub in Childers. They wanted me to highlight the struggles they have had over this period. This is a busy family owned and operated pub in my electorate of Burnett. It is a very successful business which has been owned by the current owners for decades, employing 12 staff currently. Through no fault of their own, their business sales have been stifled by a

government policy they have no control over. It is virtually impossible to plan for the future because they do not know when restrictions will be lifted or what new restrictions may be enforced in the future. Four staff have lost their jobs due to the mandates. The uncertainty about the pub's future makes it difficult for staff to have any certainty for their futures—some of them have car loans and house loans and are constantly anxious about their job security.

Not only have the owners seen a significant drop in trade but also they have been accused by regular customers of 'not standing up for them' because they are enforcing the conditions of the mandate as set out by the Queensland government. The owners have watched other pubs in Queensland which have stood up to the mandates being pressured by police, and ultimately arrested, for allowing unvaccinated patrons to enter their premises and they do not wish to suffer the same fate. The owners are concerned about the rise in violence, alcoholism and mental health challenges arising from an increase in patrons drinking at home rather than in the protection of licensed premises, which are subject to strict liquor licensing laws and practises. If not for their bottle shop sales, they would be out of business by now. A lot of the suppliers they use are also suffering because their kitchen has been affected so the suppliers are missing out on meat and produce orders and the like. They feel there is a big disconnect between government policymakers and small business.

In closing, I want to do a shout-out to those people in my community who come together and have these discussions. It is important we are able to articulate the thoughts and aspirations of small businesses on the ground of what coming out of COVID looks like. I want to stress that they want to see more consistent and better messaging and, more importantly, we want to make sure our small businesses have a secure platform, which means being considered when COVID laws are in place.



**Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (5.12 pm): I rise to make a contribution in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. I acknowledge the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, Di Farmer, the Education, Employment and Training Committee chair and member for Redlands, Kim Richards, the committee members, the committee secretariat and Hansard for their work to bring this very important legislative reform to parliament.

Small businesses are the backbone of our communities. They do so much to foster local economies, keep money close to home and provide ongoing support for local organisations and community initiatives. Small businesses such as the Hungry Pug at Mareeba—and I will give them a shout-out because they do so much in my electorate—and Mossman Custom Kitchens are absolute champions when it comes to giving back to the community. Whether it is supplying emergency school lunches for kids who miss out on lunch on a daily basis, raising funds to support community initiatives or refurbishing an old canteen to support junior rugby league, they highlight just how lucky we are to have small businesses in our communities. They give generously and selflessly to make a difference in communities.

I want to give a special shout-out to all the small businesses in my electorate from the Torres Strait to Cape York, Mareeba to the Douglas shire, which are establishing themselves as a true lifeblood of our communities, creating opportunities and supporting local jobs. These small businesses are our cafes, retail, beauty salons, mechanics, ferry operators, barbers, hairdressers, tourism operators—and the list goes on. I have had the wonderful opportunity to meet with some of the small business operators in my electorate to not only learn about what they do but to gain a better understanding of how this sector thrives in a vast electorate such as Cook.

I also want to acknowledge the small business sector right across Queensland which did it tough and is still doing it tough not just through the global pandemic but through the most recent floods that affected the business community across South-East Queensland. The impact of the global pandemic and the recent South-East Queensland floods highlights to us how vulnerable small businesses truly are. Any hardships or challenges that we go through also show our strength and resilience to overcome and be better and stronger.

COVID-19 resulted in fewer people visiting our region and communities in my electorate and Far North Queensland. I recall the federal government Biosecurity Act, which was enforced to safeguard communities. It locked in many of the small, discrete communities in Cape York and Torres Strait, but as a result it had a negative impact on businesses throughout the region. I want to acknowledge all the local councils and the chamber of commerce for working with government through this very challenging time. They not only highlighted issues for businesses in communities in my electorate but also worked with government to look at solutions and ways that we could better support small businesses going through this economic downfall.

I have heard contributions from others in this House, and we would all agree that what we are going through means this is not the best time for anyone at the moment. I think that is acknowledged on both sides of the chamber. I have heard from many small businesses expressing feelings of helplessness and frustration with the situation at hand. This is something that is out of all of our control and my heart goes out to all the small businesses which did it tough.

I will mention the tourism sector in Far North Queensland. These businesses depend on people visiting our regions. The numbers we were seeing in Far North Queensland had a huge impact on the ability of these businesses to operate at their full capacity. The realisation set in that suddenly they were running at a loss of revenue. I acknowledge the huge impact this had on people's mental health, physical health and emotional health. I have heard stories of the challenges they have faced of paying rent on time, putting food on the table, paying school fees or sending kids to school without lunch. The challenges that families faced across the board—especially those with a small business—had a flow-on effect to all different areas of their lives. Sometimes we take things for granted. When things are well and the economy is going well, we all celebrate but, unfortunately, going through these very challenging events puts a lot of pressure on people. I think this is also a good reminder to all of us to never take anything for granted.

I want to focus on some of the significant steps that the Palaszczuk government took to foster support for small businesses in Queensland. In April the national cabinet endorsed the mandatory code of conduct SME commercial leasing principles. As a result, the Queensland government implemented the national code and provisions were made for a temporary Small Business Commissioner to be established under the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act. This was a really good step forward for businesses in my electorate so they could have that single point of contact where they could access advice and guidance on different things. I listened to some of the contributions from those opposite who said that this does not spread wide enough with supporting businesses. Having that central point of contact would make a lot of difference to businesses—knowing that there is an agency there to work with them and to listen to their challenges. It gives the government a better understanding of the types of challenges that businesses experience right across the electorate.

I want to acknowledge and thank so much Minister Di Farmer for visiting Port Douglas, where we had a small business workshop. It was an opportunity for the minister to come in and engage with the chamber of commerce and local businesses to hear of some of the challenges. I think it is a good reflection of this government's work to closely support businesses. It also shows that we have a minister who cares and works in the best interests of small businesses here in Queensland, no matter where people live. I thank Minister Farmer for her time.

I want to acknowledge the support provided by the COVID-19 adaptation grant program. There were many businesses in my electorate that benefited from the grants, which went to paying their rent or helped alleviate some of the financial challenges that businesses were facing. The \$500 electricity rebate for small to medium businesses was also a really good initiative that made a lot of difference to businesses in my electorate. All in all, there was good collaboration across the board, where everyone was talking at the table. We acknowledged and listened to all of the concerns that were expressed, especially to me in my electorate. It was important to have that opportunity to relay those challenges back to government and to make sure that businesses in my electorate were listened to.

This is a fantastic bill. I think it will create opportunity for businesses to engage better and to know that they will be supported and that there is that single point of contact to support them in their time of need. I commend the bill to House.



**Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.22 pm): Small businesses are collectively the biggest employer in Queensland, and Noosa has a significant vested interest in ensuring they are adequately represented, with approximately 7,400 businesses in the tourism, hospitality, retail and construction sectors driving our local economy. These are mainly small or micro businesses, the owners of which are overwhelmingly mums and dads. They are our friends and neighbours who employ us and our children or parents, contributing to the economic, social and environmental fabric of our community. I send a call out to every single one of them.

Since the pandemic some businesses in Noosa and across the state have thrived, with growth of over six per cent in 2021. However, with Noosa dependent on the tourism and related sectors, these small businesses in the majority suffered incredible hardship and continue to through the mandates that see them unable to operate without financial assistance or compensation, leading to closures, lost jobs and a frightening decline in mental wellbeing.

It was really good to hear the members for Burnett and Cook articulate the vast issues being faced, yet their pleas at the moment are being ignored. It again shows how out of touch those decision-makers sitting on salaries are—not really understanding what they are going through. As well, current offers of loans go nowhere to help when they have already been taking loans and they cannot even afford those.

The Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 permanently establishes a Queensland Small Business Commissioner and supporting office, provides a statutory base for dispute resolution functions relating to retail tenancy disputes and enables mediation for commercial leasing and small business franchise disputes on an opt-in basis only.

The legislation transitions the temporary commissioner role from its previous arrangements, focused primarily on managing and responding to COVID-19 impacts, to a role with wider application to support small businesses. Maree Adshead, who has filled this role, has been invaluable to the Noosa community during the enormous hardships of this time, as has the staff. She sat on our COVID business round table, which I believe was one of a kind in Queensland, and advocated on the many urgencies during the past two years. I also want to send a call out to all of those who sit on that round table, including the Noosa Chamber of Commerce, the Cooroy, Pomona and Cooran chambers, Hastings Street Association, Peregrin and Sunshine Beach associations, the Noosaville Business Association, Tewantin Traders Association—so many—as well as all of our online business organisations and groups. What an awesome job they have done. It has just been fantastic.

The permanency of this commissioner role is vital for many reasons, including improving support and advice to Queensland small business owners and operators, and providing timely and affordable access to justice through a dispute resolution function.

While all submitters supported the bill's objective, some reported concerns relating to the lack of definition of 'small business'—and rightly so, given the commissioner's functions refer to 'small businesses'. The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines a small business as employing fewer than 20 people. The ATO defines small business as having revenue of up to \$40 million. ASIC, which administers the Corporations Act 2001, defines a small proprietary company as one that has a consolidated revenue less than \$50 million, consolidated gross assets less than \$25 million and fewer than 100 employees. Given this inconsistency across government legislation or programs in Australia, the bill allows some flexibility and discretion for the commissioner to support businesses that are small in nature but may sit outside a definition based on full-time-equivalent or maximum turnover. However, by not defining 'small business' in the bill, submitters such as the Queensland Law Society state it will create uncertainty about seeking adviser assistance from the commissioner, and I hope that is not the case. The committee is right in its encouragement of the permanent commissioner to publish an operational definition of 'small business' to aid businesses that are considering seeking the assistance of the commissioner.

Turning to the independence of the commissioner, the bill provides for the minister to give a written direction about a matter relevant to the performance, clause 17, and functions, clause 18, of the commissioner. A number of submitters commented that it is likely to be a challenge for the commissioner to truly advocate on behalf of small business, given that it is a body that reports to the minister. In order to mitigate the risk of conveying a potential for the role to be highly dependent on the government of the day, and subject to operational instruction, the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman states that clause 17 should be omitted. In response to submitters' concerns about the independence of the role, the department advised that the power for the minister to issue directions is not intended to undermine the commissioner's independence but rather to increase the commissioner's responsiveness to emerging issues as needed to support Queensland's small businesses. The bill also requires under clause 17(3) that the commissioner include details in its annual report of any ministerial directions during the financial year and the actions taken by the commissioner as a result of the direction. This will provide transparency and accountability.


The bill prescribes the requirements and processes associated with the commissioner's mediation function, which is to provide informal dispute resolution assistance and administer a voluntary mediation process for small business disputes. A number of submitters, including Master Electricians Australia, were concerned that allowing the commissioner to administer mediation only for lease disputes and franchise disputes will limit the effectiveness of the commissioner in achieving the stated goal of reducing red tape for small business. The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman recommended that the commissioner be empowered to assist with a broader range of disputes, specifically business-to-business disputes and business-to-government disputes. The QLS

submitted that the bill be amended to provide for the right of each party to a small business dispute to be legally represented at a mediation conference and that the bill creates an imbalance between parties involved in the mediation business.

Small business owners and operators are integral to a local circular economy. They take many chances without guaranteed outcomes to provide themselves and others a job. They create and supply the goods and services that Queensland needs and, importantly, the tax revenue derived from these businesses, their owners and their employees pays a large proportion of the cost of government services, infrastructure and social security measures in our state and nation.

This bill may not provide the commissioner with sufficient powers, it may not provide the necessary independence and it may not provide the balance needed in mediation. However, any and all assistance is needed for our small businesses to ensure their voices are heard. Permanency of the commissioner can provide that along with assistance with what can be frustrating, hard to deal with and sometimes unresolvable matters.

I thank the committee, the minister and departmental staff, submitters and attendees of the public hearing and public briefing for their work. Most of all, I thank our small businesses who have borne the brunt during the pandemic and who even in the toughest moments, including closures, did everything in their power to keep afloat and their staff in jobs. They deserve so much more than what we at times deliver. I ask again that government provide certainty through guaranteed funding assistance for when they must close due to any mandates or directives they may face in the future.

 **Mr WALKER** (Mundingburra—ALP) (5.29 pm): I rise to talk in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. This is an important piece of legislation which has been introduced to the Queensland parliament to help small businesses, which are the backbone of our economy and no more so than in regional areas like Townsville. There are hundreds of small businesses in Townsville who employ thousands of locals and they are what help make our community.

Small businesses are where people—and mainly young people—get their first job. Along with this comes other opportunities like training, promotion or even the opportunity to own their own business. It is with a thriving small business environment that confidence improves, more jobs are created and the economy grows. As we heard earlier today from the Treasurer, Queensland is the powerhouse of the economy of Australia, with an unemployment rate of 4.3 per cent. This is only achieved by having a COVID economic recovery plan and a plan to help small businesses here in Queensland.

Small businesses are the very fabric of our communities. They back and sponsor our local sporting clubs, they are problem solvers and they have day-to-day, face-to-face contact with our communities. We just witnessed small businesses come to the rescue during the floods right here in Brisbane and surrounding communities. They provided emergency food, coffee, machinery and many other important supplies. Like I said earlier, they are the very glue that holds many little communities together and some have very long family histories.

Making the Small Business Commissioner permanent is an election commitment of the Palaszczuk Labor government. However, it is more than that. It is about supporting our local businesses and it is the right thing to do. We know that throughout this global pandemic our small businesses were hit incredibly hard and had to adapt quickly to an ever-evolving situation and operating environment. I know the Small Business Commissioner was important in providing advice and support to our local Townsville businesses during these very testing times. That is why this legislation is important, because it will provide the support that Queensland businesses need and deserve by providing a central point of contact for matters affecting small businesses. In Townsville I have attended forums with some of our business leaders, and this was the feedback from many people in the room.

As a government, we listen to our business owners because we know they have a wealth of knowledge about what they need in order to provide a high level of service and to do their work safely. Like I said earlier, with a thriving small business sector we have reduced unemployment rates and improved confidence and, in turn, we get more investment. They have said that they want a single point of contact, which is why this legislation that will make the Small Business Commissioner permanent is very important. I have seen directly how important it is for small businesses to have a single point of contact during natural disasters.

It is amazing how much benefit there is for our businesses to be able to cut through the red tape, and that is what the Small Business Commissioner is in place to do. The commission will be a vital tool to help small businesses navigate the complex environment which now exists. It will help enhance the



operating environment for small businesses to thrive right here in Queensland. The commissioner will help provide a strong voice for our small businesses and help cut red tape to support the Palaszczuk government's ongoing small business regulatory reform agenda.

Already, the temporary commissioner has been actively supporting small businesses, particularly in regional areas through the Small Business Friendly Councils initiative. In fact, Townsville City Council officially became a small business friendly council in October last year. I had the pleasure of representing the Minister for Employment and Small Business, Di Farmer, at this event. To take part in the Small Business Friendly Councils initiative, councils sign a charter which demonstrates their commitment to their local small business community. Being a former councillor, I know how extremely important it is for councils to support small businesses and that is why it was great to have the Townsville City Council sign up to such an initiative. It is vital that local councils across the state and all levels of government support small businesses to adapt, survive and thrive.

The Palaszczuk government has a long history of working with Queensland's local governments. The Small Business Friendly Councils initiative continues the tradition of collaboration as we work together to bounce back better from the impacts of COVID-19. The Small Business Friendly Councils initiative formally cements the commitment to champion the small businesses within their communities during the COVID economic recovery. This is just one of the many important things the Small Business Commissioner has already done and the Townsville City Council is one of just 25 councils around the state.

One thing that small business owners are short of is time, which is why the bill before the House is so important. One of the main objectives of the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 is to reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small business. Under this legislation, the commissioner will be a central contact for matters affecting small business and will be able to provide information and advisory services to the public about matters relating to small businesses. This will be an important function of the Small Business Commissioner and it is something I have heard from business owners across Townsville.

As a former small business owner, operator and regional MP, I will always back our small businesses and, as I said earlier, we know they always back our regions. Small businesses are the heart and hub of our local communities. They are our families, our friends and our neighbours. As a government, we will back them every day of the week. We know the global pandemic has been difficult for them and they have been asked to do a lot. That is why it is important that as a government we continue to support them.

This legislation is an important part of helping small business to grow and prosper right here in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.



**Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (5.36 pm): The small businesses of Queensland have been through an awful lot over the last two years and this week we are marking the two-year anniversary of an incredibly difficult time for us all. On Saturday, 14 March 2020 Prime Minister Scott Morrison went to the football. By Sunday, 15 March it was clear we were heading towards our first COVID-19 lockdown. On 17 March 2020, exactly two years ago today, the state government announced loans to businesses to keep people in work and a payroll tax deferral in response to the reality that life as we knew it had changed overnight.

My electorate of South Brisbane went from being a bustling hub to a ghost town. As Queenslanders valiantly locked down in the name of flattening the curve, small businesses suffered greatly. People left their houses to get groceries and to get outdoor exercise and that was it. As the rest of the country stayed home, the red tape was completely cut for large multinational corporations. For the mining and construction sector in Queensland there was no lockdown. Work continued at sites at a massive pace, prompting many locals in my electorate to ask, 'Why do these sites seem completely unaffected by these lockdowns?' It seems that making pots of money ensured that their operations were considered essential.

We have come a long way since then and continual lockdowns combined with the COVID-19 vaccine rollout means that cafes, bars, restaurants, gyms, live music venues, art galleries, non-essential retail and other small businesses hit so hard by the pandemic can now continue under their own terms. They have had to make huge adjustments over time, dealing with snap lockdowns, the overwhelmed and often underused check-in system and enforcing things like masks and vaccine mandates. It has been incredibly hard for anyone working in small business and incredibly hard on those running them. From time to time there has been very good government support for this sector, but it has been nowhere near enough and nowhere near consistent enough. To be clear, this particular bill falls well short of the support that our small business sector really needs.

Providing a statutory basis for the Small Business Commissioner's dispute resolution functions is important and a great step, but what is the point of dispute resolution if you have to close your business because the impacts of the pandemic have finally taken their toll? Small business is crying out for help. February this year was a particularly tough time in my electorate, with a number of much loved local businesses closing in the space of just one week. In the week before the floods we farewelled the Three Monkeys cafe, the Rumpus Room and the Happy Cabin. The Three Monkeys was an iconic local institution which predated the arrival of cafe culture in West End. It was also an amazing place to wile away an afternoon with board games or work on assignments. It has been a real loss to West End.

Local retailer the Happy Cabin had to close its doors in the same week as the impacts of the pandemic finally claimed their toll. I dropped in there a few days before it closed its doors. The community had responded with sadness to its closure and the shelves were nearly empty. One of the staff there said, 'COVID has killed us.' The Rumpus Room was one of the most boisterous and inclusive night-life venues in my electorate and the scene of many a big night out. As the floodwaters rose on 26 February, people partied into the night to say farewell to this beloved institution. This is a stark reminder of how devastating the pandemic has been for so many. These businesses have been there for years providing local jobs and supporting West End's vibrant community culture.

In 2020 we had things like JobKeeper, the doubling of JobSeeker and grants for small businesses. In 2022 small businesses, like individuals, have been largely on their own, and that is not okay. At the big end of town there have been some businesses that have made a killing during the pandemic. The big banks have made huge profits off the housing boom. Coles, Woolies and their liquor chains have been popping up everywhere as they became the hottest destinations of 2020 and 2021 but now with vastly inflated prices. Mining billionaires have just gotten richer while tech companies and private pharmaceutical companies have cashed in.

Five years ago Pfizer was just the figurehead of big pharma; now its name is synonymous with the vaccine. Previous federal government decisions to sell off the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, leaving us with no state capacity to manufacture vaccines, has been shown to be a huge mistake. To be clear, Queensland is a wealthy state. Queensland is a wealthy state and the only resource we lack is the political will to make the big end of town and billionaires pay their fair share to support individuals, families and small businesses.

The Greens welcome a Small Business Commissioner, as do most of the organisations that made submissions on this bill. However, along with my colleague the member for Maiwar, we have been calling for more substantial support for small business and individuals. We have been calling for the small business emergency support to be reopened. Last sitting week I asked the Minister for Employment and Small Business when applications for the COVID-19 business support grants will be opened. We are yet to get a reply.


It is not good enough to say that you have a grants program when the program is not open, when it is open for a tiny time frame or when the money is exhausted almost instantly. So many small businesses that I have spoken to have been calling out for meaningful support with the things that they tell us that they need. To fund this we need a levy on the big banks. A modest levy on the five biggest banks in Queensland would raise a billion dollars per year that could be invested back into the community.

We have been calling for new licences for small bars to be able to sell takeaway liquor. It was a real boon for many small bars in my electorate to be able to do this during the pandemic, and there is no justification for putting them at such a huge disadvantage to big retailers like Dan Murphy's and First Choice in addition to the challenges that they are already facing. We have been calling for a phasing out of payroll tax. Some big companies are already exempt from payroll tax and in 2020 and 2021 the government offered payroll tax relief measures to businesses. Overall, payroll tax is an inefficient tax that unfairly hampers small business in particular. At the very least we could follow the example of WA and implement a progressive payroll tax that would alleviate pressures on small business and stop taxing the exact thing that we want to be encouraging—jobs and higher wages.

We need things like free public transport, which would not only help folks get around but also provide an easy way for people to access small business across the state. We have seen how successful free off-peak travel for seniors has been here in Brisbane. Let us make it free for everyone. Of course, we want to see JobSeeker doubled as it was in 2020. The stories from folks on JobSeeker about how they could finally afford to eat well and live without severe financial stress told us everything we need to know about our income support system. People are living in poverty simply because of a lack of political will at the federal level. Beyond that, we know that in hard times stimulus payments like

this help to keep money circulating through the local economy and allow people to make use of local small businesses. Better income support means more customers for our local small businesses. In flood-affected areas increasing state government relief payments or at least matching the more generous federal payments would also have a flow-on effect for our local businesses.

The pandemic is not yet over, as members of this chamber would well know. We are still dealing with COVID-19 and we are heading towards winter. Queensland still has some of the highest rates of unemployment in the country. Underemployment, where people do not have enough hours to get by, is at over seven per cent. Small businesses are shutting their doors and people are struggling through a housing crisis that has been made worse and more severe by the floods. It is time for the government to step up.

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (5.45 pm): I rise to support the Small Business Commissioner Bill before the House and congratulate the minister for bringing it forward. Previous COVID emergency legislation introduced a temporary Queensland Small Business Commissioner and this bill makes a Small Business Commissioner permanent.

There have been some good things that have come out of COVID, and this would have to be one of them. We put this commissioner in place because we saw the impacts that COVID had on many businesses not only in Queensland but also throughout the rest of Australia. In 2021 the temporary commissioner's office carried out over 4,500 activities in terms of small business inquiries, disputes, outreach and advocacy. It was the right thing to introduce at the right time. We have seen its success. It has played a pivotal role in supporting Queensland businesses to avoid lengthy, costly leasing disputes during the pandemic by providing information, advice and access to mediation services. That is often what small businesses need. It is often very difficult for them to negotiate with landlords or owners of shopping centres in terms of where they are located, and the Small Business Commissioner has certainly assisted them with dispute resolution. Small businesses have welcomed this and, given its success, tonight we are debating legislation to make the position a permanent one.

I always look at the objectives of the bill in terms of what we want the commissioner to do—that is, to enhance the operating environment for small businesses in Queensland and to reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses. This is a key initiative under the Big Plans for Small Business strategy, and the commissioner will also work with the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction to continue to deliver small business regulatory reform in Queensland. Those four issues are key to the reason we are here tonight supporting this legislation. The minister did an incredible roadshow and engaged with thousands—about 2½ thousand—of small businesses, and that truly is a monumental effort. The feedback was that this position was greatly welcomed and the clear message is one we support—that is, an easy to identify commissioner small businesses can access who can help them with their issues and disputes. This is part of the Palaszczuk government's backing of small business.

I really do not care what anyone else in this House has to say about this, but I have the best small businesses in my electorate of McConnel than anybody else in this House. Whether we are talking about cafes or coffee shops—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** Listen to them all. They do not like the truth. You can't handle the truth!

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** I take the interjection from the member for Nanango: there is a pretty darn good butcher in Kingaroy and I did buy some fantastic meat from there, but I have a better one in McConnel! These are the small businesses that we support—the cafes, the restaurants, the retailers. Has anyone been to James Street in my electorate lately? It would have some of the best retail, fashion, food and restaurants—

**Mr Mellish:** It's not cheap but!

**Ms GRACE:** Who cares if it is not cheap? It is quality, and those businesses are doing extremely well.

**An opposition member:** She is a minister; she can afford it!

**Ms GRACE:** I will take that interjection as well. I only wish it were true. There are about 450,000 businesses throughout Queensland and they do an amazing job. We support them. There are some excellent small businesses in my community. When you have 18 of the top 20 restaurants in Queensland in your electorate, you know that you are on a good wicket. No matter how good you are,


there are things that come around that make it difficult to survive. COVID would have to be one of those. The ones that did well, boy did they adapt. They used funding from this minister to adapt and adopt and pivot, to do takeaways when people were not able to come in. Some of the best takeaways I have ever tasted in my life came out of restaurants who had never done it before. Nightlife venues adapted the way people could go in and enjoy them. There was funding to support these businesses. The minister should be very proud of what we provided to these venues.

I have been in Brisbane all my life. I have lived in my electorate all my life. I have never lived anywhere else than the seat of McConnell. I grew up in Spring Hill and now live in the Fortitude Valley-New Farm area. I have seen small businesses come and go. They will continue to come and go. No matter how much government support there is, there are those who will stay and those, let us be realistic, who are going to go. There is a bit of a joke I have with Peter, my driver. If we have not been down a street in my electorate for a week we notice that something has changed. We have a joke where I go, 'Pete, I can't keep up'. There is a lot of change that comes with small businesses. A commissioner role is a crucial pivotal point that can sometimes help that small business to survive if they find that they are in dispute and they need someone to mediate.

When I travel around Queensland I see that all electorates have great small businesses. Member for Nanango, I agree that that butcher in Kingaroy is pretty good. I was driving back from Maryborough the other day and there is a butcher in Tiaro on the main highway. I stopped there and bought the best pork chops and the best cattleman's cut rib fillet that Michael and I have had, member for Gympie, for a while. It was pretty darn good. Let me say, though, that if you have not been to New Farm Deli and met Maria and Vince Anello you have not been to a decent deli here in Queensland. It would have to be the No. 1, best Italian deli. Coffee at Maria and Vince's is fantastic. That is one of the small businesses in my area that adapted. They had takeaway lunch bags to go in and collect. The Premier and I ordered one, went in together and picked it up. It was a beautiful lunch. They had tables of them. They adapted and adopted to COVID. I congratulate Maria and Vince. I know they had a heartache when the fire hit their deli, but they rebuilt in it record time with the assistance of the Sorbello family that runs the Merthyr Village and they were up and running before you missed them. The community supported them in the same way that I know we all here do.

If you have not eaten chocolate from New Farm Confectionery then you have not eaten chocolate. Jodie Neilson does a fantastic job. She started her business in her kitchen in James Street, New Farm and now has a fantastic business. I always give it as a raffle donation. People love winning it. She is now located in Newstead and was impacted by the floods and is very grateful for the funds that are available through the grants process that this minister has put together. Go and do yourself a favour and buy chocolate from New Farm Confectionery. It is absolutely fantastic.

Last, but certainly not least—and there is not enough time for me to go through all the fabulous small businesses in my electorate—Joedy Kyle opened up Joedy's Cafe, believe it or not, in Sydney Street in New Farm in March on the day that COVID-19 hit. In spite of that he is still open today. He got flooded in the floods in Sydney Street; he opened straightaway. We even had a stand-up at Joedy's with the CHO and the health minister. He was still operating. What a fantastic small business it is. If you want good coffee, go to Joedy's. People were asking me where to go. New Farm Deli, Joedy's—there are so many I cannot list them all. These are just some of the topnotch small businesses I have in my electorate who will welcome this legislation. Support the bill.

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (5.55 pm): I rise in support of making the Small Business Commissioner permanent and to support the shadow minister's amendments to give this important role more authority. Let us do this properly. I am proud to have, on the latest data I could find, around 5,600 businesses in Bonney in precincts along Brisbane Road and Olsen Avenue, in Harbour Town and, of course, my beloved Chirn Park. Around 94 per cent of those businesses have a turnover of less than \$2 million a year and 79 per cent have a turnover of less than half a million a year, which makes them all very small. I clearly cannot list them all like the member for McConnell did, or even highlight a few regulars of mine for fear of getting in trouble, but I can say the impacts of the last couple of years have been felt by everyone in my part of the Gold Coast, particularly our hospitality industry.

Last night we had a couple of the hardest hit businesses in my electorate visit parliament. They are in the events and live music industry. We hosted Jamie and the boys from EVENTelec, who run the electrical infrastructure for every major event in the country—when they are on—from Splendour to the GC600 to Groovin the Moo, and Steve Cummins from HCC Entertainment who is a great local guy who, on top of leading the longest running Neil Diamond tribute show, also helps run many of our local events like carols, multicultural festivals and New Year's. They were here for the launch of the Parliamentary Friends of the Music Industry. This was a joint initiative of myself, the member for Kurwongbah and the incredible team at QMusic led by CEO Kris Stewart.

I want to place on record my appreciation to our two artists who played that very special gig last night on the parliament deck. We had Sahara Beck from the Sunshine Coast, with an incredible and unique voice, and a very talented emerging artist, Jem Cassar-Daley. I am sure all members who were there would agree that they were brilliant and this whole precinct is perfect for loud live music—it has a very good echo—and it certainly sounded fantastic. We thank these artists for playing in the shadow of our beautiful parliament.

**Ms Pease:** And thanks to Shane King, the member for Kurwongbah.

**Mr O'CONNOR:** I mentioned him, thank you.

**A government member:** Not enough.

**Mr O'CONNOR:** You can check *Hansard*. I did.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Order, members!

**Mr O'CONNOR:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The member for Lytton needs to get her hearing checked.

**Ms PEASE:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence at that. It is also unparliamentary to be critical of another person in such a manner and question them on what might be a disability.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member has taken offence. I ask that you withdraw.

**Mr O'CONNOR:** I withdraw. I am very happy to check *Hansard* for the shout-out to the member for Kurwongbah in there. There is no better way to showcase the talented artists Queensland has and to remind us all why our music industry is worth backing. We tried to do this in a bipartisan manner. We hope to make this an annual event, so stay tuned for next year's details.

Providing support for people in difficult times when there is a crisis is so important to get right. What I have seen over the last couple of years is many of my small businesses let down repeatedly by this government. That is not just from the uncertainties and inconsistencies with restrictions and regulations. The big issue was the lack of grants available when those snap decisions were made. It was always a struggle to get anything out of this government. It was never an easy process. Even when it was finally agreed to, generally with the help of the federal government, it took far too long for the state government to figure out how to roll out the support. We have proudly and continuously called for the government to improve communication and transparency around COVID restrictions and health directives for small businesses.

We have been constructive, putting suggestions on the table for support packages with measures such as targeted grants, payroll tax relief and sick-leave cover. This bill will retain something from COVID that worked well by permanently establishing the Small Business Commissioner and the supporting office. It will provide a statutory basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions regarding retail tenancy disputes and allow mediation for commercial leasing and small business franchise disputes on an opt-in basis only.

Debate, on motion of Mr O'Connor, adjourned.

## ADJOURNMENT

### Surfers Paradise Electorate, Youth Crime



**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (6.00 pm): This evening I rise to talk about an issue that is consistently affecting my Surfers Paradise community. Since my first speech in this place in 2004, 18 years ago yesterday, I have repeatedly raised issues pertaining to the rising rates of crime.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Exactly. None of you have as much experience as I do, so just listen. Locals still remember when, in 2013 and 2014, the LNP sorted out the bkie issue. Crime diminished under the LNP government, but now crime rates are rising again. It continues to be an ever-growing concern in my community—one that has been allowed to grow and fester due to a failing on the government's part to appropriately resource and support our excellent and hardworking police men and women.

Just over a year ago, the Youth Justice Taskforce began operations. Since then, on the Gold Coast youth crime has significantly worsened. In fact, recent data from the Queensland Police Service shows 2,602 unlawful use of motor vehicle offences on the Gold Coast, which is a yearly increase of


10.3 per cent, and 2,358 car thefts were also reported during the same period. One message is resoundingly clear: Brisbane Labor is losing control of youth crime in Queensland. Young criminals need to know that there are consequences for their actions. That is why we on this side of the House have consistently called for breach of bail to be reintroduced as an offence for young offenders.

Just last week, a bunch of young criminals allegedly broke and entered a series of properties throughout the Isle of Capri and Sorrento, in my electorate. They were clothed in all black, hidden by bandanna face masks and protected by gloves. Those brazen young criminals broke into a home where the lights were on and the people were home. They do not care if they are caught on camera or reported to the police because they know that, under a Labor government that is weak on crime, they can get away with it. I table 12 images from the incidents that I am speaking about.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of photographs depicting a break and enter [323].

Youth crime is not the only issue facing our police right now. Hooning continues to be a concern for our community, and the Surfers Paradise electorate is not alone in this concern. We have all heard members on this side of the House raise these issues before. In 2002 the former minister, Tony McGrady, introduced vehicle confiscation laws, yet this current government is seemingly ignoring the legislative opportunity to enforce hooning laws. Chapter 4 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 sets out the motor vehicle impounding and forfeiture powers of police officers for prescribed offences. They can impound a motor vehicle for up to 90 days and even confiscate the vehicle. Despite more than 1,600 vehicle impounds, immobilisations and forfeitures being reported in the south-eastern police region in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 financial years, the July to October completed reporting period for the 2021-22 financial year is sitting at a count of merely 300. That amount is down nearly 50 per cent; however, hooning is not down in our community. Get tough on crime.

### Queensland Floods, Flagstone

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (6.03 pm): Whilst my community of Flagstone fortunately did not see inundation of homes, the community was isolated for three days when a section of Teviot Road flooded near the Flagstone Creek. That isolation was compounded by a loss of power for around 520 households as well as a loss of internet, which made communication difficult. With both the local councillor and myself unable to access the community, we were reliant on some of our incredible locals to help us with updates on the situation and what was needed.

Susan Hawke, at the Flagstone community centre, established a drop-in centre where people could recharge devices, have hot showers, a meal and a cuppa. I cannot thank Susan and UnitingCare enough for their invaluable work. I thank Kareen Duncan from Peet. We are so fortunate that Kareen has previously worked for Logan City Council and has been part of the disaster recovery team. She brought with her a wealth of knowledge and was able to help direct coordination efforts in the community.

Dom and Jonathan—two absolute legends—used a dingy to transport people and some supplies over the flooded section of Teviot Road. They helped get police officers over as well as Andy, our local pharmacist at Watson's Pharmacy—who I know lives in the Springfield area—so that he could open his pharmacy for people needing urgent medications. I cannot thank him enough. Jodie, a local paramedic, provided first aid and medical care. Again, a frontline officer stepped up to help our community.

In 2017, when the community was isolated after Cyclone Debbie flooding, there was one food store in Flagstone. Since then we have seen the opening of Coles and Woolworths in the area. Unfortunately, Woolworths was impacted by the loss of power and was unable to open. I am troubled by the fact that a major supermarket did not have access to a proper generator, which would have allowed them to open the store. That is something that I will be raising with them and the local shopping centre. It led to significant food supply shortages that I believe could have been avoided.


Currently Flagstone has only one road in and out: via Homestead Drive and Teviot Road. Since my election in late 2017, I have been strongly advocating for a second access road for the community. Last year I was very pleased that the Palaszczuk government confirmed \$31 million in catalyst funding to extend New Beith Road, providing the community with this much needed second access road. Construction on the road is expected to begin this year. It is a big project and it will not be built overnight, but it is getting built. It is important to understand, however, that even with a second road the amount of flooding experienced in this part of Logan would still have isolated Flagstone.

The lack of preparedness by the Local Disaster Coordination Committee in relation to isolated communities does concern me greatly. I attended a community meeting last week with the Flagstone Community Association. It was a practical and productive meeting. Coincidentally, it was all women at

the meeting. We have determined that we will use the recent weather event to develop a strong and Flagstone-specific emergency plan for the community. This will aid coordination, communication and support for our Flagstone community. I have pledged my commitment and financial support to see this plan developed as quickly as possible.

Finally, I also offer my condolences to the family of Stanley Obi. Along with local neighbours, we gathered on Sunday to remember Stanley. I want to thank those who went to the aid of this family.

### Warrego Highway, Glenore Grove


 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (6.06 pm): Tonight I raise a very important issue for the people of the Lockyer Valley: the Warrego Highway. Many times in this House I have spoken about the safety issues for my community in crossing the Warrego Highway. Tonight I place on the record the importance of this issue as highlighted by the recent flooding. The Warrego Highway at Glenore Grove is the first place to go under and it is the last place to be reopened, yet it is a vitally important section of road. If we keep investing in the road without making any changes to it, we are not going to get a better outcome. That freight route is used by about 30,000 vehicles a day, which is a significant amount of traffic. It is a major freight route to the west, the Northern Territory, New South Wales and Victoria. I call on the minister to invest in an overpass at that location. Only an overpass will make the road safer for our community and also stop the flooding at that location.

In 2011, when the road was last closed for a long period, I was the officer in charge. I can tell the House about the heartfelt sadness that we feel for those who have lost their lives or suffered from terrible injuries due to accidents that have occurred at that location. Aside from the fundamental safety concerns, the flooding has really highlighted the need for improvement. This is not just about the locals anymore; it is about improving the whole situation for South-East Queensland and the nation. The word 'betterment' is repeated over and over, but you could not find a better place for investment in betterment than that section of road. I call on the minister to invest in that section of the road because if we do not, more lives will be lost and there will be more times when the road will be closed.

There are some businesses and locals who live around that area. I call on the minister to make sure we provide adequate compensation to the people who will be affected. It is really fortunate that there has been a planning study for a corridor through this area. That has put lines on a map so my community knows that a motorway will be there at some point in time. The planning study into the corridor has already been done. We just need the dollars to build the overpass.

Anybody who uses that road to Toowoomba will know about the benefits that have come with the Blacksoil interchange project. We know that there are other problems on this road, and I call for safety improvements such as improved acceleration and deceleration lanes. However, nowhere on the Warrego Highway to the west of Brisbane do we need more investment than at Glenore Grove. I have the full support of the council and I have the full support of our federal member, Scotty Buchholz. We just need the state government to get on board.

### Queensland Floods, Aspley Electorate

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (6.10 pm): Just over a fortnight ago, a community on the north side came together to help each other out. I was frustrated that, while talking to locals in Carseldine and Aspley in particular, where many homes were completely unlivable due to the one or two feet of water that went through them, I learned that council did not actually nominate these suburbs as affected suburbs in order for them to be eligible for flood assistance, largely through the state's personal hardship grants. I did not make a big political fight about this. I was not taking any cheap shots. I just inquired with council if it could add the affected suburbs of Aspley, Carseldine, Bald Hills, McDowall, Chermside West and Bridgeman Downs. You would think that would have been done quickly. Instead, all I got from council was a defensive letter from the local councillor, which I table.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 2 March 2022, from the councillor for McDowall Ward, Tracy Davis, to the member for Aspley, Mr Bart Mellish MP, regarding eligibility for state government assistance for flood damage [\[324\]](#).

Notably, the letter, after bagging the state and going on a bit, concludes that council could go back and amend its earlier advised suburbs to include all those affected in our area. I do thank the Deputy Premier and Minister Enoch for helping to sort this out at the back end via QRA and the department of communities after council did not initially nominate the suburbs.

My only intention here was to fight for flood-affected locals so they could receive these state emergency hardship grants as soon as possible, and we were successful in getting them. It was very disappointing that all I saw from the LNP council was obfuscation and finger-pointing rather than them

wanting to help locals. I do not blame the councillor for McDowall ward—I actually work reasonably well with Tracy at times, as I try to do with all local councillors—but it is clear that someone in the Schinner LNP administration is playing politics and not giving the right advice to their own councillors. That is disappointing.

It is also very disappointing that, after three days sitting and three question times—there would have been 20 or 30 questions—we did not hear a single question from the opposition about the floods. Many of their communities would have been heavily affected. We did not hear a single question. They did not want to hear any more information from the government about how their residents could get assistance or about how they could recover better—not a single question.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr MELLISH:** There were no further inquiries from the opposition. It is very disappointing. We did hear a question from the Greens about the floods, but we did not hear a single question about the floods in three question times. On a positive note, I commend my colleagues—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Pause the clock. Members, I cannot hear what the member for Aspley is saying. I ask everyone to please be silent so that we can get through his speech.

**Mr MELLISH:** I would like to end on a positive note and congratulate my colleagues nearby who provided flood assistance. The opposition continue to carry on. They should have made more noise in question time and asked about flood issues. Apparently they did not want to hear about that—the worst floods in a generation in many areas. There was not a single question from the opposition. It is beyond disappointing.

### Bundaberg Hospital



**Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.13 pm): Earlier this month the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service welcomed its first cohort of regional medical pathway students into the Bundaberg region. This collaboration among CQU, UQ, Central Queensland Health and JCU will train doctors locally from start to finish. In the Burnett, the Bundaberg hospital and health service suffers ongoing shortages for specialists and registrars. Training local students right where they live will hopefully attract and retain them at home in rural and regional Queensland.

This is a great initiative, but the reality at Bundaberg Hospital tells a different story. These eager and excited medical students should rightfully be trained by experienced medical professors once on placement. I have already mentioned in this place the failure of the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service to meet its own goal of a full-blown medical school. No medical school means no high-calibre, subspeciality physicians in Bundaberg and no professorships allocated to the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service. Locally, the burden is going to fall on our already overworked senior doctors. This effectively will take 30 per cent of their productive time, and waiting lists will increase even further.

Bundaberg Hospital currently does not have one free hospital bed—not one. Surgical waiting lists are blowing out even further, and the emergency department is jammed full of people who cannot be admitted. Earlier this week, Wayne Thompson from Woodgate in my electorate experienced the shortages at Bundaberg Hospital firsthand. His wife, Robyn, was taken in an ambulance to the emergency department in urgent need of help. She waited outside in the ambulance for two hours. I would call that ambulance ramping at its worst! It is a great example of how bad things are. The ambulance had to leave for another urgent call, so Robyn was left on a trolley in the corridor with no one to offer her water or a trip to the bathroom. She waited three more hours, along with 35 other people, in the emergency department waiting room. I again call that staff and bed shortages at their worst!

At this point, Wayne made the decision to take her home and try to get the help she needed elsewhere. As a self-sufficient, self-employed man who has never really relied on anyone but himself and has faithfully paid his taxes and Medicare levy, Wayne rightly feels excluded from the service that should have been made available for his wife in good time and by experienced and well-trained medical professionals. They should not have had to give up and go home after a five-hour wait.

How can people like Wayne and Robyn—and many others in Burnett with similar experiences—trust this government to keep its election promises? It seems that this government has tossed out Queensland Health's Clinical Services Capability Framework by claiming that the new Bundaberg Hospital will not be a level 5 hospital but a level 5 'service proposition'. I would call that trying to make



a silk purse out of a sow's ear. It is important that I refer to those documents. I table both the 2017 AMA position statement in relation to how we train our young doctors and the Clinical Services Capability Framework to highlight the failures.

*Tabled paper:* Document, undated, titled 'AMA Position Statement: Building Capacity for Clinical Supervision in the Medical Workforce' [325].


*Tabled paper:* Document, undated, titled 'Clinical services capability framework v3.2' [326].

I will read from the position statement. At 4.1 it states—

... a public hospital senior clinician's time should be set aside for clinical support work.

*(Time expired)*

### Hervey Bay Electorate

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (6.16 pm): Recently I was with the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services when we announced that the Palaszczuk government will be building a brand new, state-of-the-art fire and rescue station in Hervey Bay, with the first stage of the project underway to identify through consultation the appropriate location to place the station. This announcement is a great win for the electorate of Hervey Bay, particularly as the electorate grows substantially above predicted growth targets. The government acknowledges this growth and plans to ensure that the required public services and infrastructure are available to the community on time and when needed. Anyone who has been to Hervey Bay recently—and the cabinet saw that firsthand last year—is surprised at the rapid growth of the electorate and the city of Hervey Bay. To have a new fire station being planned and built at this time ensures the potential fire and risk requirements in Hervey Bay are acknowledged and minimised.


The risk profile of Hervey Bay city is changing, given that we now have many high-rise buildings. Current facilities need to be upgraded to ensure that we can adequately cover the risk that might come from fire and emergency events. That is a great decision for the people of Hervey Bay. I thank the minister for listening not only to me as the local member but also to local firefighters. I give a shout-out to those crews that helped with the recent Maryborough floods, the firefighters union and the local community who have advocated to replace the current fire station on Torquay Terrace as it was getting close to its use-by date.

I look forward to the process of getting the new fire station built. It will be state-of-the-art for its time. It will represent a huge commitment by the Palaszczuk government towards the electorate of Hervey Bay, ensuring that we keep safe from fires and emergency events well into the future. This is a government that puts community safety front and centre as a priority on all occasions, and I thank the minister again.

I also quickly touch on the resilience of my community. I was recently informed that Hervey Bay, as a part of the Fraser Coast local government area, has hit 99 per cent of people first-dose vaccinated, one of the largest vaccination rates in Queensland. I congratulate the people of Hervey Bay for taking up the call from the Chief Health Officer to get vaccinated and for making sure that we as a community are all adequately vaccinated, given the vulnerabilities of our demographic. Whilst vaccination may be at the back of people's minds a little now given the events of recent times, the virus is still prevalent. We must all be vigilant, so I ask people to make sure that when the time comes they get their second and booster vaccination on time and continue to get tested if they have symptoms so that we all can limit the harm of the virus within the community. I congratulate again the Hervey Bay community and the Fraser Coast for responding to this public health threat and ensuring by their actions that they keep each other safe.

Lastly, I wish a happy St Patrick's Day to all Irish cousins in Hervey Bay and across the state. I thank the member for Greenslopes and the Mental Health Select Committee for coming to Hervey Bay recently to listen to people with regard to mental health concerns. I am waiting for the report to be tabled. It will be excellent to read it.

### Coronavirus, Vaccination Mandate

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (6.19 pm): On 30 November last year, just 10 days before the school year ended, the Premier announced a mandate for all school and childcare centre employees. There was no warning, no prior consultation and not a single risk assessment done to justify such a policy. Workers who went to their union were turned away after a lifetime of membership fees. The QTU, I am told, even refused to help staff negotiate the terms of their suspension or termination.

Unions, however, were not the only ones guilty of breaching their duty of care to these workers. The education department's role has been just as reprehensible. Low-skilled or casual workers were simply terminated and sent packing. Many experienced and qualified teachers were dealt with the same way. The rest were suspended without pay until June 2022. That is six months with no income and forbidden from finding another job without the department's say-so. This is all while under threat from the department that if they speak out, they could face additional disciplinary action. Most teachers were in shock and traumatised by what had happened to them that going public was the last thing any of them wanted to do.

These mandates should never have been introduced. All over regional and remote Queensland classes are being combined—often across differing subject and year levels—principals, deputies and other administration staff are being called on to teach in classrooms again; teachers who remain are working at an unsustainable level, with many now routinely teaching classes outside their subject area; and university students are being installed across multiples schools to cover for qualified staff.

Then there is what is happening to teachers and other education staff who hold valid medical exemptions approved by Medicare. They were told, 'Regardless of your exemption status, the director-general of education's directive 01/21 still applies and you are not to enter a school or early childhood education high-risk setting.' These teachers were sent an authority to release medical information form and told to sign it. The authority allows the office of Organisational Safety and Wellbeing to review all relevant medical records and question their doctor. If they are not satisfied, the team could overrule the exemption. On at least one occasion this was done. These teachers have to wear a face mask at all times, undergo daily testing, are banned from certain events and functions, have to eat their lunch and morning tea alone and separate and have to stay at least five feet away from their co-workers and students at all times.

Before World War II no other group, apart from the Indigenous, were more despised or segregated than us, the Kanakas. The press depicted us as disease ridden and to be shunned. Many Kanakas were forcibly detained and interned in camps under the most appalling conditions. Segregation is wrong. Whether it is done in the name of health or race, it is wrong and dangerous. I call on the Premier to immediately end mandates for all Queenslanders and let the state return to work.

### McDowall, Mr M



**Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (6.22 pm): Max McDowall was a young man who grew up in our community, not far from my house, not far in age from my kids, attending the same schools and no doubt enjoying our community in the way that my kids have. I never got the chance to know Max, and I regret this deeply. Max was studying at UQ, doing a degree in environmental science majoring in marine biology. After a false start in engineering, he switched to that course because he knew it would really make a difference in our world and it fitted with his values. Max was a doer, not a preacher.

When the students at Cav Road would turn on all the taps in the bathrooms as a joke, Max would enjoy the joke with his mates, but then sneak back to turn off the taps. He was a doer, not a preacher. He designed a rat-proof composting system for his house, because he did not want to trap and kill rats. Prevention is better than cure and it fitted his values. He was a doer, not a preacher.

He could have gotten lifts to many places. His loving parents would have driven him, but he was so concerned about fossil fuels that he chose to ride. He was a doer, not a preacher. That is what Max was doing the day he finished work as a teacher aide at Rochedale, working with kids with significant disabilities—something he had a real capacity and love of. Again, he was doer, not a preacher. He was riding his bike to his second job at QUT when he was hit by a bus and killed.


Our world lost someone special. We need a lot more doers. Max's family was devastated. They are strong and are working to heal. They will take kind words and prayers, but, like Max, they want action, not talk. They want nothing more than for every person to be safe and they believe Max's situation was avoidable and the intersection could be made safe for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists.

The coroner has determined not to hold an inquest. I have written to the Attorney-General respectfully requesting that an inquest be held. In that correspondence, I have outlined the reasons that I believe there are grounds to hold an inquest so I will not put them on record here. I repeat the respectful request to the Attorney-General here in this place on behalf of Max's family and our community.

Max's family are doers. As I was driving to the coast to visit my mum last weekend I saw them, near where the accident occurred, collecting signatures on petitions and trying to talk to cyclists and other pedestrians to get more data about this crossing. I have held off talking about this matter publicly while an investigation has been underway. Like Max's family, I think there are things the Brisbane City

Council can do immediately to make that crossing safer. I would call on the council to listen to Max's parents and immediately change the signalisation of that intersection. As the coroner pointed out, the signalisation is unusual and, in my opinion, very unsafe. It could be changed and that could save lives. I think Max would want that because he was a doer, not a preacher.

### Upper Coomera War Memorial

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (6.25 pm): I rise here tonight to speak about a topic that I have spoken about in the parliament many times—the Upper Coomera cenotaph. The Upper Coomera cenotaph has stood proudly for over 100 years in its current location. There have been many discussions between Main Roads, the Coomera Valley Rotary and Gold Coast City council about the relocation of this historically important and much loved monument. Due to the desperate need for a safety upgrade of the intersection of Charlies Crossing Road North and Tamborine Oxenford Road, Main Roads officers will need to move the cenotaph.

Coomera Valley Rotary Club, the custodians of the cenotaph, host the annual Anzac Day ceremony there and have done so for many decades. This ceremony attracts thousands of residents and is very dear to my local community. Many school students also participate in the service. It is seen as a symbol of pride for both students, parent and the ex-service men and women who attend. Coomera Valley Rotary members have valid concerns about the viability of future Anzac Day services if the cenotaph is placed in a location that hinders this important event. They are seeking assurances from the minister and the Department of Transport and Main Road that the new home of the cenotaph will allow Anzac Day services to continue around the cenotaph as they do at the moment. Equally important, they want to ensure that the cenotaph is easily seen by passing motorists.

The inscription on the cenotaph reads—


They gave their all.

Let you who pass, saluting here their names,

see that through you no slur, nor stain, nor shame falls on the land for which they gave their lives—Australia

It was the wish of local families over 100 years ago that the cenotaph and inscription be clearly visible from the road. Therefore, the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Gold Coast City council need to work together to ensure a suitable site, even if it requires resuming a small parcel of land. We have a wonderful opportunity to leave a lasting legacy for many generations to come. I ask the minister to please take heed of this and instruct his department to leave a legacy that he can be proud of. I invite all members of the chamber when travelling to Mount Tamborine via Tamborine Oxenford Road to look at the cenotaph. It is something that our local community is very proud of. It is just past the falling riverbank on the John Muntz Bridge. Members would then get to see two sites of the Theodore electorate.

### Rare Ovarian Cancer, Ride for Research

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (6.28 pm): Juvenile granulosa cell tumour, or JGCT, is a rare ovarian cancer that typically affects younger females. This insidious disease can affect women and girls of any age. In fact, Australia's youngest female diagnosed with JGCT, or rare ovarian cancer, was only 11 months old. The world's youngest person diagnosed was a little baby only four months old.

However, rare ovarian cancer is not age dependent. Women of all ages can sadly be diagnosed with this disease, including a very dear family friend of ours Claire Raeburn. Claire was 53 when she was diagnosed with JGCT. Claire is the oldest woman in the world to be diagnosed with JGCT. However, 94 per cent of patients are under 30 years of age when they are diagnosed.

Sadly, rare ovarian cancer is little heard of and receives little funding or research. There is no cure for rare ovarian cancer. There is little awareness of it nor is there research to understand the disease. Clinicians are prescribing treatments that are based on 'best guess' rather than facts. Funding for this vital research is needed.

That is why Peter Raeburn, or Rae, as we call him, with a band of volunteers including my husband, Peter Smith, have organised a ride to raise awareness and funds for research for rare ovarian cancer. Peter Smith and Rae are long-time friends. They first met in 1977 on the beach at Coolangatta while competing against each other in the Queensland Surf Life Saving titles. Over the years they have shared a house, surfed together, played rugby and touch football together and they gone to each other's weddings.

Rae, like my husband, is also a mad cyclist. When he asked my Peter to ride for rare ovarian cancer, of course my husband said yes. The ride is from Parliament House in Canberra to the Melbourne Cricket Ground from 30 April to 8 May. It has been postponed a few times due to COVID. However, everything is on track for April. That is nine days, 900 kilometres and 16 riders. That is a huge undertaking and it is really tough terrain because it is through the Snowy Mountains, Mount Kosciuszko et cetera.

To the two Peters and all the riders, I wish you all the best and I acknowledge all the training that you have done. I know my husband, Peter, is doing 100 kilometres on a regular basis and it is exhausting him. For everything that you are doing in preparation for this, I thank you. I thank all of the riders for everything they have done.

I would also particularly like to acknowledge the great sponsors because a lot of sponsors are coming out and supporting the two Peters, as well as all of the other riders, so I thank them very much. If you have any spare money please consider making a donation. You can go to [www.rocinc.org.au/ride-for-research/](http://www.rocinc.org.au/ride-for-research/) and make a donation. It is a charity, so any donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

The House adjourned at 6.31 pm.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Andrew, Bailey, Bates, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Camm, Crandon, Crawford, Crisafulli, 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, Leahy, Lister, Lui, MacMahon, Madden, Mander, Martin, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mullen, Nicholls, O'Connor, O'Rourke, Palaszcuk, Pease, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Rowan, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Skelton, Smith, Stevens, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Watts, Weir, Whiting