



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

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## TUESDAY, 29 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.

### ASSENT TO BILL



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

The Honourable C.W. Pitt MP

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Parliament House

George Street

BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

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

Date of Assent: 25 March 2022

A bill for an Act to amend the Oaths Act 1867, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Police Service Administration Act 1990, the Police Service Administration Regulation 2016 and the Weapons Act 1990, and to make a regulation under the Oaths Act 1867, for particular purposes

This bill is hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

Governor

25 March 2022

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 25 March 2022, from Her Excellency the Governor, to the Speaker advising of assent to a certain bill on 25 March 2022 [\[405\]](#).

### SPEAKER'S RULING

#### Same Question Rule



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have considered the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022 and the application of the same question rule. On the whole, most of the clauses in the bill are amendments to, or renewals of, sunset provisions. As such, and in accordance with my earlier ruling on 20 April 2021, these clauses do not enliven the same question rule. However, there are clauses in the bill which propose to amend provisions of acts already amended in this session and the commencement clauses of three pieces of legislation which have previously been agreed to by the House in this session. This is contrary to standing order 87 and therefore enlivens the same question rule. Accordingly, the same question rule is enlivened by clauses 14, 19, 20, 22, 31, 32, 34 and 35 and schedule 1 of the bill contrary to standing order 87. I seek leave to incorporate my full ruling circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

**SPEAKER'S RULING—APPLICATION OF SAME QUESTION RULE TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (EXTENSION OF EXPIRING PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL**

I have considered the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022 and the application of the same question rule.

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

On the whole, most of the clauses in the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill are amendments to, or renewals of, sunset provisions.

As I concluded in a ruling on 20 April this year, the same question rule is not enlivened by an amendment to a sunset provision or a new sunset provision where the question is whether to extend the sunset provision because the question posed is essentially a different expiry date to that originally fixed. It is substantially a new or different question (Speaker Pitt, Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2021, p. 898). Accordingly, the same question rule is not enlivened with respect to these provisions.

However, there are clauses in the Bill which propose to amend provisions of Acts already amended in this session and the commencement clauses of three pieces of legislation which have previously been agreed to by the House in this session. This enlivens the same question rule, contrary to Standing Order 87.

Accordingly I rule that the same question rule is enlivened by clauses 14, 19, 20, 22, 31, 32, 34, 35 and Schedule 1 of the bill contrary to Standing Order 87.

## **SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS**

### **Parliamentary Service, Questionnaire**



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I invite you to participate in the annual members questionnaire regarding the performance of the Parliamentary Service in supporting the various needs of members. I stress that this is not a reflection on the Speaker. The questionnaire provides an important opportunity for members to assess the performance of individual activity areas within the Parliamentary Service over the last year and make comment about how the Parliamentary Service might be improved in the future. The Parliamentary Service has a strong commitment to providing members with a high standard of service. In keeping with this commitment, management and staff strive to improve the quality of services they provide. The views expressed by members about the Parliamentary Service provide a valuable feedback tool to monitor recent performance and inform future planning.

Similar to last year, the 2022 questionnaire will be delivered via an online survey tool. This allows the questionnaire to be viewed and completed using a variety of IT devices, including smartphones, tablets or desktop computers. To access the online questionnaire, please follow the link provided in the email issued to all members by the Clerk of the parliament today. Please note that this questionnaire is intended for members only. Please do not ask electorate office staff to complete the questionnaire on your behalf.

You may, if you wish, choose to identify yourself by providing your name at the end of the questionnaire survey. This will allow me to follow up with you any specific concerns you may wish to raise in your response. Note that provision of your name is entirely optional. The questionnaire has been designed to take no more than five to 10 minutes to complete and includes simple questions relating to overall performance, individual service areas and performance against four key objectives set out in the strategic plan. I encourage all members to take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. It would be appreciated if members could do this by 14 April 2022.

### **School Group Tour**



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I wish to advise that we will be visited in the gallery this morning by students and teachers from Bray Park State School in the electorate of Pine Rivers.

## **PETITIONS**

The Clerk presented the following paper petition, lodged by the honourable member indicated—

### **Homeless United Program**

**Dr Robinson**, from 108 petitioners, requesting the House to do all in its power to cause the reinstatement of state government support which will enable the Homeless United program to continue its vital work in assisting vulnerable homeless [\[406\]](#).

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

**Pimpama-Ormeau-Coomera, PCYC**

**Mr Crandon**, from 1,139 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the construction of a PCYC in Pimpama-Ormeau-Coomera [\[407\]](#).

**Innes Park and Coral Cove Foreshore, Redevelopment**

**Mr Bennett**, from 250 petitioners, requesting the House to support the Bundaberg Regional Council to develop a staged master planned redevelopment of the Innes Park and Coral Cove foreshore [\[408\]](#).

**Bruce Highway, Five Mile Creek Road**

**Mr Dametto**, from 711 petitioners, requesting the House to cause the construction of a turning lane off the Bruce Highway to the Five Mile Creek swimming hole and Five Mile Creek Road and to increase road signage on this section of the Bruce Highway [\[409\]](#).

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

**Coronavirus, Vaccination Mandate**

1,854 petitioners, requesting the House to replace the vaccine mandate with a suitable regime of rapid antigen testing [\[410\]](#).

**Dogs, Electric Collars**

801 petitioners, requesting the House to remove any provisions in the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 that permit the use of an electric collar on a dog and implement legislation to prohibit the use of electric or e-collars [\[411\]](#).

**Dogs, Choke Collars**

618 petitioners, requesting the House to ban the use and sale of choke dog collars [\[412\]](#).

**Dogs, Prong Collars**

785 petitioners, requesting the House to ban the use of prong dog collars [\[413\]](#).

Petitions received.

## TABLED PAPERS

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

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

21 March 2022—

[327](#) Right to Information Act 2009 and Information Privacy Act 2009—Annual Report 2020-21

24 March 2022—

[328](#) Response from the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (Hon. Furner), to an ePetition (3638-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 2,305 petitioners, requesting the House to critically review and strengthen by a range of measures current legislation to stop puppy farms

[329](#) Response from the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (Hon. Furner), to an ePetition (3665-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 458 petitioners, requesting the House to instruct Queensland Fisheries to place a 2-year moratorium on any changes to the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery central and northern region harvest strategy assessments

[330](#) Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure (Hon. Dr Miles), to an ePetition (3669-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 277 petitioners, requesting the House to investigate options for flood mitigation of Inglewood and to table their report to the House for the information of our community

[331](#) Response from the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water (Hon. Butcher), to an ePetition (3640-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 466 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure that residents who discover a concealed leak on their properties can seek reimbursement from the state towards the cost of bulk water lost through the leak

[332](#) Response from the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs (Hon. Linard), to an ePetition (3643-21) sponsored by the member for Mermaid Beach, Mr Stevens, from 1,478 petitioners, requesting the House to consider breach of bail an offence in the youth justice system and to implement mandatory rehabilitation measures for repeat offenders

[333](#) Response from the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services (Hon. D'Ath), to an ePetition (3649-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 3,545 petitioners, requesting the House to explore a new plan that allows Queensland to move past vaccinations as the only plan and to explore options of personal responsibility and moving away from lockdowns

[334](#) Response from the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services (Hon. D'Ath), to an ePetition (3658-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 5,344 petitioners, requesting the House to investigate other ways to treat COVID-19 other than vaccinations, segregation and lockdowns

- [335](#) Response from the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services (Hon. D'Ath), to an ePetition (3668-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 13,168 petitioners, requesting the House to remove all COVID mandates
- [336](#) Response from the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services (Hon. D'Ath), to an ePetition (3675-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 5,153 petitioners, requesting the House to cease all vaccinations in Queensland and to publicly thank those who have not been vaccinated for their effort to stop the mutation of the virus
- [337](#) Response from the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts (Hon. Enoch), to an ePetition (3691-22) sponsored by the member for Kawana, Mr Bleijie, from 169 petitioners, requesting the House to transfer the management of the public housing unit complex located in Boorook Street Buddina to a community housing provider that will ensure community safety matters are dealt with swiftly, tenants are held responsible for their behaviour and wrap around services are provided to tenants if necessary and to install an onsite manager
- [338](#) Response from the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs (Hon. Scanlon), to an ePetition (3594-21) sponsored by the member for Maiwar, Mr Berkman, from 4,842 petitioners, requesting the House to oppose and disallow all plans for the proposed development of the Cooloola Great Walk within the Cooloola Recreation Area of the Great Sandy National Park
- [339](#) Transport and Resources Committee: Report No. 12, 57th Parliament—Inquiry into vehicle safety, standards and technology, including engine immobiliser technology, government response
- [340](#) Response from the Premier and Minister for the Olympics (Hon. Palaszczuk), to an ePetition (3641-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 829 petitioners, requesting the House to make a public registrar of all social media sites, excluding private personal sites, operated by elected officials and government staff, including a full list of “closed group” sites which are being run from electorate offices, by members of parliament and by the state government
- [341](#) Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure (Hon. Dr Miles), to an ePetition (3679-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 655 petitioners, requesting the House to reject the Gold Coast City Council's proposed high density rezoning of Biggera Waters, Labrador and Southport West
- [342](#) Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure (Hon. Dr Miles), to an ePetition (3635-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 991 petitioners, requesting the House to oppose the Chalumbin Wind Farm development proposal 15km south west of Ravenshoe

25 March 2022—

- [343](#) Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure (Hon. Dr Miles), to an ePetition (3637-21) sponsored by the member for Mirani, Mr Andrew, from 1,364 petitioners, requesting the House to provide for local and memorial swimming pools to remain viable, stop downgrading local 50 metre swimming pools to 25 metre pools; and to recognise the benefits of 50 metre swimming pools in local communities
- [344](#) Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure (Hon. Dr Miles), to an ePetition (3666-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 772 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the appointment of a financial controller to the Cassowary Coast Regional Council pursuant to section 118(2) of the Local Government Act Queensland 2009
- [345](#) Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure (Hon. Dr Miles), to an ePetition (3672-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 154 petitioners, requesting the House to legislate that developers' contribution paid to local government for downstream catchment improvements be spent in that catchment and that all prior local developer's contribution since 1992 be redirected back to the catchment of Hemmant Creek, Lindum Creek and Bulimba Creek and those drainage works paid for by developers be undertaken without further delay
- [346](#) Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure (Hon. Dr Miles), to a paper petition (3706-22) presented by the member for Hill, Mr Knuth, and an ePetition (3645-21) sponsored by the member for Hill, Mr Knuth, from 64 and 1,071 petitioners respectively, requesting the House to block the proposed wind farm development at Ravenshoe
- [347](#) District Court of Queensland—Annual Report 2020-21
- [348](#) Supreme Court of Queensland—Annual Report 2020-21
- [349](#) Community Support and Services Committee: Report No. 17, 57th Parliament—Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022
- [350](#) Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—Annual Report 2020-21
- [351](#) Magistrates Courts of Queensland—Annual Report 2020-21
- [352](#) Director of Child Protection Litigation—Annual Report 2020-21
- [353](#) Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure (Hon. Dr Miles), to an ePetition (3702-22) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 1,523 petitioners, requesting the House to halt the demolition plans of Sutton Beach Pavilion at Redcliffe
- [354](#) Response from the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts (Hon. Enoch), to an ePetition (3670-21) sponsored by the member for Oodgeroo, Dr Robinson, from 833 petitioners, requesting the House to do all in its power to cause the reinstatement of state government support which will enable the Homeless United program to continue its vital work in assisting vulnerable homeless



- [355](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Hon. Bailey), to an ePetition (3663-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 349 petitioners, requesting the House to use the existing rail corridor between Kuraby and Wembley Road until such time to allow for proper community awareness and the conduct of an independent assessment on the proposed new rail corridor at Trinder Park

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- [356](#) Response from the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services (Hon. D'Ath), to an ePetition (3684-22) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 2,922 petitioners, requesting the House to remove the mandatory use of the Queensland check-in app
- [357](#) State Development and Regional Industries Committee: Report No. 18, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 12 October and 16 November 2021
- [358](#) Queensland Theatre Company—Annual Report 2021
- [359](#) Response from the Premier and Minister for the Olympics (Hon. Palaszczuk), to an ePetition (3676-21) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 5,358 petitioners, requesting the House to provide the people of Queensland an explanation as to why MPs and high-ranking police officers are exempt from the COVID-19 vaccinations; under what "Exemption Circumstance" are they exempted; and if exempted personnel be treated as vaccinated Queenslanders
- [360](#) Board of Examiners—Annual Report 2020-2021
- [361](#) Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee—Annual Report 2020-21
- [362](#) Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee—Annual Report 2020-21

#### TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

#### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Planning and Environment Court Act 2016:

- [363](#) Planning and Environment Court (Expert Evidence) Amendment Rule 2022, No. 18
- [364](#) Planning and Environment Court (Expert Evidence) Amendment Rule 2022, No. 18, explanatory notes
- [365](#) Planning and Environment Court (Expert Evidence) Amendment Rule 2022, No. 18, human rights certificate

Public Health Act 2005:

- [366](#) Public Health (Further Extension of Declared Public Health Emergency—COVID-19) Regulation 2022, No. 19
- [367](#) Public Health (Further Extension of Declared Public Health Emergency—COVID-19) Regulation 2022, No. 19, explanatory notes
- [368](#) Public Health (Further Extension of Declared Public Health Emergency—COVID-19) Regulation 2022, No. 19, human rights certificate

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994, Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995:

- [369](#) Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation 2022, No. 20
- [370](#) Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation 2022, No. 20, explanatory notes
- [371](#) Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation 2022, No. 20, human rights certificate

Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2021:

- [372](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 21,
- [373](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 21, explanatory notes

Land Court Act 2000:

- [374](#) Land Court Rules 2022, No. 22
- [375](#) Land Court Rules 2022, No. 22, explanatory notes
- [376](#) Land Court Rules 2022, No. 22, human rights certificate

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991:

- [377](#) Uniform Civil Procedure (Expert Evidence) Amendment Rule 2022, No. 23
- [378](#) Uniform Civil Procedure (Expert Evidence) Amendment Rule 2022, No. 23, explanatory notes
- [379](#) Uniform Civil Procedure (Expert Evidence) Amendment Rule 2022, No. 23, human rights certificate

Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991:

- [380](#) Uniform Civil Procedure (Access to Exhibits) Amendment Rule 2022, No. 24
- [381](#) Uniform Civil Procedure (Access to Exhibits) Amendment Rule 2022, No. 24, explanatory notes
- [382](#) Uniform Civil Procedure (Access to Exhibits) Amendment Rule 2022, No. 24, human rights certificate

Disaster Management Act 2003:

- [383](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2022, No. 25
- [384](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2022, No. 25, explanatory notes
- [385](#) Disaster Management (Further Extension of Disaster Situation—COVID-19) Regulation 2022, No. 25, human rights certificate

Environmental Protection Act 1994:

- [386](#) Environmental Protection (ERA Standards) Amendment Regulation 2022, No. 26
- [387](#) Environmental Protection (ERA Standards) Amendment Regulation 2022, No. 26, explanatory notes
- [388](#) Environmental Protection (ERA Standards) Amendment Regulation 2022, No. 26, human rights certificate

Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993:

- [389](#) Wet Tropics (Rainforest Area) Amendment Management Plan 2022, No. 27
- [390](#) Wet Tropics (Rainforest Area) Amendment Management Plan 2022, No. 27, explanatory notes
- [391](#) Wet Tropics (Rainforest Area) Amendment Management Plan 2022, No. 27, human rights certificate

Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011:

- [392](#) Queensland Reconstruction Authority Regulation 2022, No. 28
- [393](#) Queensland Reconstruction Authority Regulation 2022, No. 28, explanatory notes
- [394](#) Queensland Reconstruction Authority Regulation 2022, No. 28, human rights certificate

Education (General Provisions) Act 2006:

- [395](#) Education (General Provisions) (Winton State School) Amendment Regulation 2022, No. 29
- [396](#) Education (General Provisions) (Winton State School) Amendment Regulation 2022, No. 29, explanatory notes
- [397](#) Education (General Provisions) (Winton State School) Amendment Regulation 2022, No. 29, human rights certificate

Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) Act 2017:

- [398](#) Proclamation repealing previous proclamation [SL No. 159 of 2020], No. 30
- [399](#) Proclamation repealing previous proclamation [SL No. 159 of 2020], No. 30, explanatory notes
- [400](#) Proclamation repealing previous proclamation [SL No. 159 of 2020], No. 30, human rights certificate

Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) Act 2017:

- [401](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 31
- [402](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 31, explanatory notes
- [403](#) Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 31, human rights certificate

#### MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Resources (Hon. Stewart)—

- [404](#) Commissioner for Resources Safety & Health—Annual Report 2020-21

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Southern Queensland, Weather Event




**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.37 am): Once again, a vast area of our state has been lashed by wild weather. I am advised heavy rain continued to be a risk around the Gold Coast and Scenic Rim this morning. Multiple locations on the Gold Coast recorded more than 200 millimetres of rain since 9 am yesterday: Tallebudgera received 347 millimetres; Burleigh Waters, 296 millimetres; South Stradbroke, 293 millimetres; Gold Coast Seaway, 292 millimetres; North Stradbroke Island, 266 millimetres; Coolangatta, 232 millimetres; and Binna Burra, 120 millimetres.

Emergency alerts were issued for some of these areas. They have since been cancelled but the warning remains to be alert for flash flooding. As of this morning, an emergency alert remained current for residents around Myall Creek at Dalby, where water has risen to 3.6 metres. This is below 2011 levels but four houses have been inundated and the occupants taken to the Dalby evacuation centre. I am advised that another 2,000 homes may have had water through their yards. Tragically, one person has lost his life.

Four schools are still closed, and many roads around South-East Queensland remain treacherous and some impassable. It saddens me that the message is still not getting through: if it's flooded, forget it. Swiftwater rescue crews responded to 14 calls for help in the past 24 hours. These teams risk their lives to save others and always will, but we owe it to them to minimise that risk by staying out of harm's way. The State Emergency Service has responded to 240 calls for help in the past 24 hours. That number is rising. I am advised the rain system is moving south and evacuations have been ordered again in Lismore.

Coming so soon after the devastating floods of late February, there would be many families who heard the heavy rain on their roof overnight and feared a repeat. I hope the federal government agrees to our request to help fund our resilience package that will provide comfort to those Queenslanders by making their homes more flood resilient or, in many cases, buying them back allowing them to rebuild their lives in a new home away from the risk of floods.

### Federal Budget

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.39 am): I have always said that we work best when we work together. I will cooperate with anyone, I will work with anyone, but I will not let this state be short-changed or taken for granted by anyone ever. I have provided the Prime Minister with a list of priority projects that are vital for Queensland's future. The top of that list is flood resilience.

I am all for saving for a rainy day, but I urge the Prime Minister to look at Queensland. We have never seen so much rain. My government has provided emergency grants to 84,000 people following the February floods. Those are 84,000 Queenslanders in the most desperate need. Many of those would have heard the rain last night and thought, 'Not again.' I welcome the federal government's support in providing the disaster relief it has, but the package we have asked for would provide a permanent relief to many of these families.

Our \$771 million resilience package is essential, is necessary and deserves to be funded here in Queensland. Our share, \$350 million, is ready on the table. It is in addition to the \$279.25 million already spent. A matching contribution of \$350 million from the federal government in tonight's budget is not a lot, especially compared with the billions announced in the past few days.

Queenslanders pay their taxes, and I am asking for some of this to come back to Queensland. Along with every other state government, we are asking for a 50 per cent contribution from the federal government to help meet the health and hospital needs of our growing population. This is also backed in by the AMA. President Dr Chris Perry this week said that the funding increase would stop a shortage of hospital beds.

We are doing our share building three new hospitals and seven satellite hospitals, adding 1,056 new beds by 2026. We are doing this by not cutting doctors, nor cutting nurses. We value our frontline health services.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Don't worry, member for Nanango, next week the minister and I are out there opening the new refurbished Kingaroy Hospital. This government is delivering for Kingaroy—not the LNP; this government.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

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

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Our other priorities include funding for CopperString, an 80 per cent funding guarantee for infrastructure projects like the Bruce Highway, the Inland Freight Route, and Logan to Gold Coast faster rail—

**Mr Watts:** Toowoomba Hospital?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:**—\$11 million in matched funding for the Coomera Connector Future Stages business case—

**Mr Watts:** I'm waiting.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:**—funding across the forward estimates for the NDIS. Well, pick up the phone to your federal counterparts.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, it would assist the House if you were to not direct your comments at other members directly.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** A commitment to develop a national plan for women's economic security; funding to extend the national partnerships on family, domestic and sexual violence; more funding to support the National Skills Agreement; real dollars to address housing affordability; and a commitment to jointly fund projects under Queensland's nation-leading renewable energy and hydrogen jobs initiative. This is what Queensland needs in tonight's budget.

Queensland does more than its fair share. When the federal government turned its back on us, we funded Cross River Rail on our own to the tune of \$5.4 billion with a detailed business case. That far-sighted decision helped us to win the Olympics by demonstrating an integrated transport system already under construction.

Each year our state generates 18.2 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product. Queensland does not just want its fair share, Queensland deserves our fair share. Billions announced this week include projects for which there is no business case. Bitter experience teaches us that the federal government can announce funding that will not be delivered until the budget after the budget after the budget, after the next budget. Queensland deserves its fair share now, and I will always fight for Queensland's fair share.

### 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.43 am): In 3,769 days, Queensland will host the opening ceremony of the 2032 Olympic Games. It will be followed by the Paralympic Games. These will be the biggest single transformational events in our state ever.

Just last week I signed an agreement with the federal and local governments on a city deal triggering \$1.8 billion worth of investment in key infrastructure across the south-east. It is important to emphasise that none of it is built for the games; it is built in time for them. 2032 is a deadline all levels of government are working towards, moving projects off the drawing board and into our lives sooner.

It is estimated that winning the games will generate more than \$8 billion in social and economic benefits for Queensland. Mapping the next 10 years, while exciting, will not be easy. The 22 members of the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games Board have a big job ahead of them. That is why I am pleased to announce my nominees of Natalie Cook and Patrick Johnson. Nat and Pat are Queenslanders to the core, having been born and lived some of their lives in regional Queensland. Nat won gold in beach volleyball at the Sydney Olympics. Patrick holds the record as the fastest Indigenous Australian man to run the 100-metre sprint. Both were born in North Queensland. Both were recommended as part of a worldwide search. They join myself and the Deputy Premier on the board to ensure the commitments I made to the IOC are delivered. Five more directors will be selected from that worldwide search and they will be agreed to by myself and the Prime Minister.

The first meeting of the board will be held next month in April. As part of the powerful legacy committee which will draw from people right across Queensland, I have nominated that the Minister for Sport, Minister Hinchliffe, will chair this very important body which will see some of the best and brightest in our state on that board. These nominations—

**Mr Bleijie:** Good having a doctor on the board, too, I think—Dr Miles.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, you may find your interjections entertaining; I am not.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** These nominations bring us that much closer to the opening ceremony and a games that all of Queensland can be proud of.

### Barty, Ms A



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.46 am): From West Brisbane to Wimbledon, from Richlands to Roland Garros, from Ipswich to the Australian Open, three times champion Ash Barty has held up a grand slam trophy. She is 15 times a championship winner in singles, and one of only five women to have been world No. 1 three years in a row.


Through it all, Ash's demeanour, her perspective on victory and fame, has been perhaps her greatest attribute of all. We always applaud our homegrown successes; it is even better we can admire them. With Ash Barty, we can do both. The fact that she does not seek our esteem demonstrates her level-headed approach. She modestly deflects our tributes, but she is our reigning Queensland Sports Star of the Year, jointly with Emma McKeon.

Little did we know on that night just four months ago that this chapter of Ash's life was ending. It is her career, it is her decision, and it is her timing on her terms.

Today, as we mark her retirement from tennis, we thank her for the quality of her play, for the enjoyment she brought to fans of the game, and for her behaviour on and off the court which impressed her competitors and inspired young girls and boys picking up racquets for the first time.

We thank Ash's family and her parents, Robert and Josie, who share the credit. We thank her coaches and her support team all throughout her career. Of course, a special mention goes to Jim Joyce at the West Brisbane Tennis Centre in Richlands who first spotted her talent all those many years ago, I am proud to say, in the electorate of Inala. We wish Ash Barty well for whatever comes next.

### Queensland Floods, Recovery

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure) (9.47 am): The recent flood emergency saw parts of the south-east suffer disastrous damage not experienced since 2011. Of the more than 16,500 assessments undertaken on homes and commercial buildings, nearly half were impacted. Over 1,800 homes and businesses were severely damaged, and more than 6,000 had moderate or minor levels of damage. Many properties have suffered costly water damage from flooding as well as from roof leaks that developed during the heavy, sustained rainfall. While some of these properties will be repaired quickly, others may not be inhabitable for months, if not longer.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, the Palaszczuk government secured an initial \$558.5 million funding package to provide support to communities in need. Grants of up to \$75,000 for primary producers, up to \$50,000 for affected small businesses and not-for-profit organisations, and \$20,000 for sporting and community clubs and associations were made available. Some \$1 million was provided for each of the 19 affected councils to assist with urgent clean-up works, and \$24 million of recovery funds have been advanced to the 14 most affected councils.

We then got to work, assessing the overall damage wrought upon communities, to ensure the next round of funding made available would ensure South-East Queensland could not just recover but build back better. We worked around the clock to develop the largest ever disaster recovery package in our history.


It has now been more than a week since the Premier wrote to the Prime Minister asking the federal government to fund half of a \$771 million package to help disaster affected Queenslanders clean up and improve household resilience. This package will help Queenslanders whose homes have been ravaged by floods. It includes a \$741 million Resilient Residential Recovery Package that will provide Queenslanders whose homes have been flooded with a range of options including retrofitting, house raising or the voluntary buyback of homes at high risk from future disastrous floods.

A \$30 million clean-up package will support councils and state agencies with the clean-up of flood related debris from recreational assets such as beaches, waterways and parks and from commercial properties and households. We will also lift the structural assistance grants from \$14,600 to up to \$50,000 for eligible Queensland households to assist those with significant structural damage to their homes. The current proposal has been with the Prime Minister for over a week and the clock is ticking. This is a program that has the potential to change the lives of the people who have been affected by these floods.

Queenslanders are resilient and Queensland families do not just want to patch over the damage caused by the floodwaters. They want to raise their homes, make them stronger and build their resilience to flooding in the long term. People who are right now trying to work out their next steps in repairing, rebuilding and moving back to their homes need to know if the Morrison government is going to support them.

The Palaszczuk government has committed to fund half of this extraordinary disaster funding package. We need tonight's federal budget to deliver the other half. It is time the Morrison government stopped short-changing Queensland and Queenslanders. We need the federal government to work with us to continue Queensland's recovery so we can build back better.

### Federal Budget, Infrastructure and Health

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (9.51 am): Queensland is the growth engine of the Australian economy. People across the nation look at Queensland and they like what they see. They like our nation-leading response to COVID-19 and the remarkable economic recovery that it has enabled. They like it so much they are moving here in droves.

In its October 2020 budget, the Morrison government predicted net interstate migration to Queensland would be 22,000 people across a 12-month period. At that time it seemed an extraordinary figure, but, according to ABS data released earlier this month, for the year to September 2021 net interstate migration to Queensland hit 40,000. That growth means that the needs of our state are growing faster than the rest of the country—the need for roads, for schools and for hospitals. Our government recognises those needs, which is why we are delivering our \$50 billion infrastructure guarantee over four years. Tonight we need the Morrison government to recognise the growing needs of Queensland and to finally give Queensland our fair share.

As our population grows and ages we need Scott Morrison to commit to a fifty-fifty funding split for health. That will help get aged-care and NDIS patients out of public hospitals and into the care in the community that they deserve. We need Scott Morrison to properly fund primary health care, the level of health care for which the Commonwealth is principally responsible, so GPs can be the first port of call for sick Queenslanders. With more and more Queenslanders looking for a suitable home every day, we need Scott Morrison to recommit funding to the National Rental Affordability Scheme.

Our First Nations people need Scott Morrison to reinstate \$10 million in annual funding for the remote Indigenous housing scheme. We need Queensland to get the same deal as the Liberal government in Tasmania: to get our historical social housing debt waved so we can get on with delivering more homes for Queenslanders.

With severe weather warnings in place across Queensland and accepted science showing we will have to deal with more natural disasters, we need Scott Morrison to match our natural disaster funding arrangements. This is not something to be delivered for the 2032 Olympics; it is not something to be promised for the federal election after this one. This is money needed urgently—today and tomorrow—to fix the homes of at-risk Queenslanders or to allow them to move somewhere else if the risk is too great.

Following our lead, we welcome the federal government's commitment of \$1.12 billion to get the Kuraby to Beenleigh faster rail project done. That is a rail project with a business case. We also need Canberra to get on board and back CopperString, the generational project that will connect our growing North West Minerals Province to the electricity grid and allow further growth for those regional communities out to Mount Isa for decades to come.

**Ms Simpson:** Why don't you support Maroochydhore rail?

**Mr DICK:** It didn't take long to get her off integrity.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Maroochydhore, you know that comments should be directed through the chair. You are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr DICK:** Tonight's budget will no doubt contain updated projections on Queensland's surging population growth. What it must contain is Scott Morrison's clear commitment to back growth in Queensland and to give Queensland our fair share.

**Ms Simpson** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Maroochydhore, you can leave the chamber for one hour under standing order 253A. I have simply given you a warning and you have completely disregarded it.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Maroochydhore withdrew from the chamber at 9.54 am.*

### Federal Budget, Education and Workers



**Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.55 am): The Palaszczuk government's priority will always be to invest in Queensland's schools, support students and staff, and ensure all workers have safe, secure jobs. A world-class education and the opportunity for secure, well-paid employment are things we want for every single Queenslanders. In tonight's budget Queensland deserves its fair share. I hope we see the investment and support Queensland schools and workers need and deserve from the Morrison government such as flood mitigation and infrastructure support, a strong commitment to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, funding to back up the respectful relationships curriculum, an investment in the mental health and wellbeing of our students, and improving wages and entitlements for low-paid workers.

We have seen some significant damage in the recent flood event. We want to rebuild and flood mitigate our schools. We welcome the money the Morrison government has committed to the independent and Catholic sectors for flood recovery. I would also welcome a commitment of additional funds in the budget to support our betterment and flood mitigation plan for affected Queensland state schools now.

We know that delivering a quality education is a key component to closing the gap and achieving equality for our First Nations students. That is why the Palaszczuk government continues to invest, to lift the educational outcomes for our more than 63,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In the budget we would like to see a commitment for ongoing partnerships with organisations like the Clontarf Foundation and Stars Foundation. We know First Nations languages are vital, and I welcome the federal opposition's announcement this morning to commit \$14 million to bring First Nations teachers and languages into schools. I call on the Morrison government to match this commitment in their budget today.

More broadly, our \$100 million Student Wellbeing Package is bringing GPs, psychologists and wellbeing professionals to students in their schools. I hope to see the Morrison government match the federal opposition's commitments of extra funding for schools to support student mental health and wellbeing as part of its \$440 million school bounce-back plan and \$77 million to support the delivery of the respectful relationships curriculum in our schools. Queensland students deserve no less.

As I said, it will always be a priority of this Palaszczuk Labor government to support Queensland's workers. We have led the nation on labour hire, wage theft, paid domestic and family violence leave, and industrial manslaughter. It is sad that after 10 years the Morrison government has delivered nothing for workers in these areas. Tonight's budget is an opportunity to address the low wages and entitlements of workers—namely, in industries like aged care and child care, with much needed additional funding. All stakeholders in this industry report concerns regarding attraction and retention of qualified workers and only federal additional funding will assist in addressing these real concerns.

We will always stand up for schools, students and workers. Let's see if the Morrison government will finally step up and do the same and deliver Queensland its fair share.

### Federal Budget, Health



**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.58 am): Tonight is an opportunity for the Morrison government to give us our fair share of health funding for Queensland. Every jurisdiction in Australia is reporting the same pressures on their hospitals from rising emergency and planned care demand. This exponential increase in demand has been exacerbated by the pressures associated with COVID-19, but they predate the pandemic. These pressures have been intensified by a sustained underinvestment by the Commonwealth in all facets of our healthcare system since 2013, whether it be primary care, hospital funding or investment in our mental health services.

The measure of success for tonight's budget is whether it addresses this entrenched underinvestment. It is long past time that the long-agreed and long-delayed commitment to deliver a fifty-fifty split on health activity was honoured. When he stands up tonight, that commitment to our national health system should be Josh Frydenberg's top priority.

I am also calling on the Commonwealth government to lift its arbitrary imposition of a 6.5 per cent cap on its funding for health activity. There needs to be a genuine strategy to ensure that aged and disabled Queenslanders are getting access to accommodation rather than living in a hospital bed. This is not a partisan issue. Every single state and territory health minister has backed in this call. It is supported by the AMA, which insists that we do this to protect our universal public health system.


While an increase in funding to our hospital system is a prerequisite for this budget, it is not the only measure required. The chronic underinvestment in primary care by the coalition since 2013 has been the genesis of the unrelenting demand on our public health system. The inability of Australians to get a bulk-billing GP leads them straight to the doors of our public hospitals. The barriers to doctors becoming and remaining GPs have been commented on by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the AMA.

Tonight's budget should map out a plan to reverse the years of neglect shown by the coalition government. It could start by finalising and funding the Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan, along with an attraction and retention strategy for young GPs. The decision of the Morrison government to cut funding of the national partnership agreement on dental services by 30 per cent since 2015-16 has had a significant adverse impact on the ability of Queenslanders to access the dental care they need. Tonight's budget must include a commitment to reverse that cut, restore funding to the delivery of dental care and return to a longer term funding model beyond the yearly extensions currently in place.

A substantial proportion of the increase in demand in our emergency departments has been due to the increasing presentation of patients with mental health conditions. It is imperative that tonight's budget includes further investment in this vital area of health service delivery. When he gets to his feet

tonight, the federal Treasurer has the opportunity to recognise the challenges we face and deliver Queensland's fair share of health funding, even though it has taken so many years. Anything less will be a betrayal to Queenslanders.

### Federal Budget, Roads and Transport

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.01 am): The Palaszczuk Labor government believes in delivering better roads and transport infrastructure for Queensland's economic recovery. It is our record \$27½ billion road and transport plan that is supporting more than 27,000 quality jobs and providing a reliable pipeline of work for Queenslanders as we emerge from the pandemic and from the recent floods.

Since coming to office, thanks to our strong COVID and economic management, the Palaszczuk Labor government has helped create over 405,000 jobs. Our unemployment rate, at 4.3 per cent, is the lowest it has been in over 13 years. It is through major investment that we continue to support strong job creation.

On the eve of the federal budget, Queensland needs a real investment by the Morrison-Joyce government to be front of mind. Our state has the largest road network in Australia, yet we are often short-changed by Canberra. We have asked for an extra \$617 million for the Bruce Highway, Queensland's 1,600-kilometre economic artery. We have also requested an extra \$280 million per year for road maintenance, which is especially important given the impact of recent flooding.

The record of the Morrison-Joyce government on the Queensland floods is of ongoing concern. The Morrison-Joyce government provided New South Wales with \$362 million after the floods, meaning that residents in the Nationals held seat of Page received three times more disaster funding than Queensland flood victims received. Queensland is still waiting for a response from Canberra on the joint \$771 million extraordinary assistance package to help Queensland flood victims recover through buybacks, house lifting and building back better. Queensland deserves our fair share, yet all we have heard is silence from Canberra and from those opposite.


We have already seen Scott Morrison match our \$1.12 billion for the Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail project from February. This is a project with a business case, with a clear costing and with a detailed design that is ready to go. The federal LNP splashed some cash for the CAMCOS corridor on the Sunshine Coast. Just like the Hells Gates Dam, to which the Prime Minister committed \$5.4 billion, the CAMCOS corridor is yet to have a completed business case. In fact, there has not even been a preliminary evaluation, so the funding figure has been invented for the federal election. Geelong Fast Rail got a Scott Morrison election promise in 2019 of \$4 billion for a \$10 billion project.

**Ms Palaszczuk:** How is that going?

**Mr BAILEY:** I take the interjection from the Premier: how is that going and what happened there? There was not a shovel in the ground. The Morrison government descope the project after the election. The devil is always in the detail when it comes to Scott Morrison, who is loose with the truth. I want to see if and when this funding will actually flow through to Queensland.

We remember the 2019 election promise for a federal independent commission against corruption—reneged on. We remember their park-and-ride commitments—reneged on. They have form. It is the strong leadership of our Premier and this Labor government that is driving Queensland's economy and jobs growth. It is this leadership that saw Cross River Rail started in 2017 with zero dollars from the federal LNP. It is this strong leadership that saw the Smithfield Bypass built with zero dollars from Canberra. One thing Queenslanders can trust is that the Palaszczuk government will always stand up for Queensland and always fight for a fair deal in Canberra, unlike the Morrison cheer squad opposite. We will always deliver for Queensland.

### Federal Budget, Environment

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (10.05 am): Last week I travelled to Far North Queensland, home to the oldest ongoing living culture, the oldest rainforest and the largest coral reef in the world. During my visit one thing was clear: just how connected the local community is to the reef and to our environment. Mr Speaker, you know as well as anyone else that this is a community which is deeply committed to action on climate change, and that is what we are doing to support that community.

I visited the Barron Gorge Hydroelectric Power Station to see how Australia's first publicly owned renewable energy company is driving down emissions, supporting local jobs and creating cheaper energy prices. I announced climate action grants to help community groups and not-for-profit




organisations reduce their emissions and their power bills at the same time. I visited businesses like Cardzilla, where an ecoBiz partnership with CCIQ is helping small and medium businesses to do the same. I also visited Parramatta State School, which is part of our Advancing Clean Energy Schools program that has allowed them to install solar panels. It is one of 800 schools across Queensland. Our \$2 billion renewable energy fund is supporting significant projects like the Kaban wind farm, which will form part of the Northern Queensland Renewable Energy Zone.

I am proud to be a part of the Palaszczuk government, which is protecting the reef, its \$6 billion economy and the 60,000 jobs it supports. It is an investment that is not only helping to support more jobs in regional Queensland but also helping to address the biggest threat to the reef: climate change. With the World Heritage Committee set to make an important decision on our reef in just a few months, there has never been a more important time to show that we take that threat seriously.

Unfortunately, we have not seen nearly enough from the federal government on what it will do to address climate change. Scott Morrison has, once again, gone missing in action. He did not even mention the words 'climate change' when he visited Far North Queensland last week. In the federal budget tonight, will we see any investment or reform to make electric vehicles more affordable, or will we hear unhelpful remarks again that they will somehow destroy the weekend?

Will we see a commitment to renewables? We have been asking for months for the federal government to, at the very least, match our \$2 billion renewable energy fund. They collect the overwhelming majority of taxation revenue in this country. Queenslanders, especially those in Far North Queensland, will be watching to see if this decade-long government will finally come to the table and match our investment. Will Scott Morrison and his government turn their backs on them, like they have done time and time again—like they did when they vetoed funding for the Kaban wind farm, like they did when they refused to set a 2030 renewable energy target and like they did when they tried to repeal legislation for the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. This is a \$10 billion Labor government legacy which Angus Taylor now spruiks as somehow their action on climate. For the future of the reef, I hope that they come to their senses but I will not hold my breath.

### **Moranbah North Coalmine, Death**

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (10.08 am): I rise today with the sad duty of informing the House that on Friday night Mr Gavin Feltwell, a worker at Anglo American's Moranbah North underground coalmine, was fatally injured while at work. On behalf of the Palaszczuk government, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the family, the friends and the colleagues of Mr Feltwell.


Every worker—every worker—should expect to come home safe to their families after every shift. It is devastating for Mr Feltwell that this was not the case on Friday evening. All mining operations at Moranbah North have been suspended and officers from the Queensland Mines Inspectorate have been on site since Saturday morning investigating the nature and cause of the accident. Resources Safety & Health Queensland has published a safety alert regarding this incident and I am advised that further detail and recommendations to industry will follow.

This is the third time I have stood in this House to offer my sympathy to those who have lost loved ones on a mine site. That is three times too many. I must say that my sadness is compounded with frustration—frustration that not all resource sector workers are going home safe to their families at the end of their shift. Let me be clear: this is unacceptable. In 2021 a statewide safety reset took place across the resources sector with a theme of chronic unease—in other words, not using a set and forget mentality, not becoming complacent.

Today I urge every company in the sector to go back to that work and reconsider their position. How uneasy are they about their safety culture? What more can they do to stop these occurrences from happening? We are committed to protecting our workers and as minister I am determined to do everything that can be done to eliminate serious harms in resources workplaces. This work will not stop. Once again, I am sure that I can speak for every member in this House in passing on our condolences to the family, friends and co-workers of Mr Feltwell.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear.

### **Federal Budget, Agriculture**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.11 am): Tonight the eyes of rural Queensland will be on Canberra focusing on what will be delivered in the budget. The LNP has made big infrastructure

announcements already yet nothing on agriculture—except for yet another announcement about the ag visa. In a tweet yesterday, David Littleproud told us that Vietnam has signed up to the new scheme. I cannot wait to see those thousands of workers that he promised would be here by Christmas—Christmas 2021, that was—because this is what the LNP in Canberra does and it is what the people of Queensland expect: announcement after announcement, tweet after tweet but nothing to back it up. It talks the talk but does not walk the walk. On its watch threats to Queensland's agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors are coming via sea or sky—straight past the federal government's jurisdiction.

By failing to do anything but to announce things, it has failed to introduce policy that would protect the states and territories from biosecurity threats. The brown marmorated stink bug recently arrived on the Gold Coast via a federally governed port via a ship. It was a bit like the *Ruby Princess*—a ship full of biosecurity threats and a ship that the federal government failed to contain.

What the farmers of this state want to see from tonight's budget is real action, not another Oscar performance. They want more funding and more action for the Bureau of Meteorology. We need to get Queensland's fair share for agriculture in the budget. Producers the Premier and I have spoken to after recent flood events near Inglewood, Gympie and the Lockyer Valley say that they want to see the bureau properly resourced so that communities can get better advice on extreme weather events, and these extreme weather events are becoming more frequent. However, this is clearly not on this federal government's radar because it still has not come to terms with climate change.

In these unprecedented times we have had a federal government that continues to fail our farmers. The lack of engagement with the states and territories through Agmin clearly shows that the LNP and David Littleproud are more concerned about their own jobs than working for our producers. Here in Queensland the Palaszczuk government is getting on with delivering Queensland's economic recovery from COVID-19, working hand in hand with our farmers because, unlike David Littleproud, the Palaszczuk government actually cares about our farmers and every member of the Palaszczuk government is the farmers' friend.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### Member for Callide, Resignation



**Mr BOYCE** (Callide—LNP) (10.14 am): Mr Speaker, as I am sure you and members of the House are well aware, the LNP has nominated me to stand as the candidate for the federal seat of Flynn. As such, it is a requirement that I stand down as the member for Callide. I would like to take the opportunity to wish my fellow parliamentarians well. To my electorate of Callide, I thank it most earnestly for its support over the years. It has been an honour to serve as the member for Callide. Some view this as the end, but I view it as the beginning.

As you know, Mr Speaker, every journey starts with the first step and this morning my first steps on this new political journey that I am taking will be to walk the floor of this chamber and present to you my resignation, effective immediately.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Treasurer. Members to my right!

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Treasurer, you are warned under the standing orders.

*Whereupon Mr Boyce withdrew from the chamber at 10.16 am.*

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Please treat the resignation with the dignity it deserves.

## ETHICS COMMITTEE

### Report




**Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (10.16 am): I table report No. 209 of the Ethics Committee titled *Matter of privilege referred by the Registrar on 5 January 2022 relating to the alleged failure to register an interest in the Register of Members' Interests*.

*Tabled paper:* Ethics Committee: Report No. 209, 57th Parliament—Matter of privilege referred by the Registrar on 5 January 2022 relating to the alleged failure to register an interest in the Register of Members' Interests [\[414\]](#).

The committee has recommended that the House take no further action in relation to this matter and I commend the report to the House.

## LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Information Commissioner, Report

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (10.16 am): As chair of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, I lay upon the table of the House report No. 2 to the Queensland Legislative Assembly for 2021-22 from the Office of the Information Commissioner Queensland titled *Administrative access to information: how the Department of Education manages access to documents held in schools*.


*Tabled paper:* Information Commissioner Report 2: 2021-22—Administrative access to information: How the Department of Education manages access to documents held in schools [\[415\]](#).

The report outlines how the Department of Education manages its administrative access arrangements to documents held in schools. The report makes recommendations for improvement. I table the report in accordance with the requirement of section 184(5) of the Right to Information Act 2009. I commend the report to the House.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, question time will conclude today at 11.17 am.

### Health System

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (10.17 am): My question is to the Minister for Health. What steps has the minister taken to ensure the Queensland Health crisis is not costing patients their lives?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for the question. He has obviously been absent for some time from parliament because I have been talking about it for quite a lengthy period of time in terms of the investment that we are making in our health system to improve the pressures that we are seeing each and every day: the 9,475 additional frontline health workers who were committed to this term alone in addition to the thousands that we have already put on; the pipeline of projects that we have had that we have already opened, but I am very proud of the sod turning that we have done at Cairns to build a new mental health unit; the new Roma and Blackall hospitals; the new Kingaroy facilities that the Premier and I will be opening shortly; the expansion that is happening at Caboolture Hospital right now, as well as the Logan Hospital, the business case for the Redcliffe Hospital and the Springfield Hospital being built; the Coomera business plan currently in the works; extra mental health facilities on the Gold Coast; the co-responder model that we are committed to and which is seeing real improvements in diverting people who are having a mental health episode away from our emergency departments; and our improved emergency departments with dedicated paediatric areas and mental health areas so that those people are not sitting in the normal waiting room.

We have done all this while COVID is going on. It has been an extraordinary effort. Even though we have had to suspend elective surgery, we have managed to do tens of thousands of planned surgeries, seen millions—are the figures I have recently been given—of people. In fact, since January 2016, there have been 12½ million presentations in our emergency department, an increase of 37 per cent, which has just been extraordinary; a 30 per cent increase in patients arriving by ambulance; and a 33 per cent increase in category 1 to 3. That is why we continue to invest. However, we cannot control the number of people walking in the door.

What can make a difference is an investment in primary and allied health care. People being able to go to a GP, have a consistent GP, have one that is affordable and is readily available, takes pressure off our emergency departments. Planned care, where they can get their condition seen to earlier, hopefully results in them not needing to have surgery. Private health cover is not affordable. If they have got private health cover and they cannot get into a private healthcare facility if they do not have the services, if they cannot afford a specialist, if they cannot get mental health care in the community, people turn to the public health system. If there is one thing the opposition can do it is to call on the federal government to fund it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, I am going to ask something unusual. I am going to ask members to my left for a solid. It is hard to hear. I would appreciate the level of interjection being minimised today so that both Hansard and I can hear the response from the minister on their feet.

### Health System, Surgical Incident

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** My question is to the Minister for Health. The opposition can expose that the latest government services report reveals in 2019-20 a patient was seriously harmed or died after the wrong surgery was performed on the wrong patient. Queensland Health was the only health system in the country where this occurred. How was this allowed to happen in a First World health system?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for his question. I am certainly happy to look at the particular incident. It was a very general statement made on the particular incident that the member refers to, to give an accurate response to. That was a very general statement made.

**Mr Crisafulli:** A general statement?

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs D'ATH:** If those on the opposite side say that in a public health system that treats millions of people every year in presentations, emergency surgeries, that sadly there are not sometimes things that go wrong, serious adverse reactions that sometimes leads to the loss of life of an individual—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left! The question has been asked. I want to hear the answer from the Minister for Health.

**Mrs D'ATH:** As I say, if the member wants to provide me with the specific example of the one they are talking about I am happy to get a response from the health system in relation to that. I reiterate what I was saying before: this is a system that has seen 12½ million presentations in the last five years. We have seen 490,576 more patients within the clinically recommended time. We have had a 20 per cent increase in admissions through our emergency departments. Last year our public hospital systems reported 1.75 million admissions. Since January 2016—

**Mr Crisafulli:** Not just the wrong surgery, the wrong person. It is as serious as it gets.

**Mrs D'ATH:** It is a serious issue and maybe the Leader of the Opposition should listen to the answer.

**Mr Bleijie:** It is not much of an answer.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Our health system does an extraordinary job. I have already responded to the member's question. I am seeking to elaborate on the extraordinary volume of cases, surgeries and presentations that our health workers deal with every day.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba!

**Mrs D'ATH:** Every death is a sad situation and especially if that occurs because of an error. If that occurs at the hands of a clinician or a nurse doing wrong by that patient of course it is disturbing—of course it is absolutely disturbing—and my condolences go out to the family where that occurs.

*(Time expired)*

### Federal Budget, Health

**Mr KELLY:** My question is to the Premier and Minister for the Olympics. Will the Premier update the House on the Palaszczuk government's request for Queensland's fair share of health funding in tonight's federal budget?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for the question. As a nurse practitioner, the member for Greenslopes is acutely aware of how important it is for Queensland to get its fair share of health funding. This is a serious issue across the nation, it is not just an issue for Queensland, and it is one that all premiers of all political persuasions share and are united on. I want to make this point very clearly: at the end of last year when we were having our joint meeting with the Treasurers it was also an issue that the Treasurers across the country wanted addressed at National Cabinet—not only the health ministers, the Treasurers, but all of the premiers across the nation.

Why is it so critical? Because the pressures on health are not unique to one state. The pressures on health are across the nation. One only has to speak to any Premier or territory minister or the health ministers across the nation who share in this united view. The united view is clearly that more funding needs to go to health. After our call for more funding for the flood package, the next most critical issue is health. We acknowledge that and we demand that in tonight's budget the federal government addresses that.

Whilst we know the nation is growing and infrastructure is important, there is nothing more important to families than their health. The health of their families is absolutely fundamental. That is why we have continued to grow the doctors and the nurses in this state. That is why we do the business cases and we put in extra funding to grow bed numbers. That is why on this side of the House we are building, in a nation-first, seven satellite hospitals.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The member for Mudgeeraba was a minister who sacked nurses. I will not be lectured to by the member for Mudgeeraba. The people of this state know that we have been dealing with a global pandemic. They know that our frontline health staff have gone beyond the call of duty, working around the clock, whether it is giving vaccinations or looking after people in relation to COVID. We thank them for that, but tonight we call on the federal government to put an equal share into health across this nation. Queenslanders deserve it.

### Health System, Surgical Incident

**Ms BATES:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister inform the House in which hospital the wrong surgery on the wrong patient caused serious harm or death?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I have already advised, based on the previous question, that I am happy to look into the matter and get a report back from the department.

### Regional Queensland, Water Infrastructure

**Mr SMITH:** My question is to the Premier and Minister for the Olympics. Will the Premier please update the House on the Palaszczuk government's plan to deliver new water infrastructure in regional Queensland?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Bundaberg for the question. The member for Bundaberg is a big, strong supporter of Paradise Dam. On this side of the House, with over \$2 billion allocated to water infrastructure, we know how important water supply is for our growing communities.

Wasn't it surprising that when the member for Callide stood in this place it seemed that the opposition was not too sure what was going on. There you go: another National has left the chamber. Another National has gone.

**Dr Miles:** Last one out turns the lights off.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right. Another one bites the dust. Who will replace that person in that seat?

Let us go back to a topic we love: water. On this side of the House we back the farmers and we back our regions, whether it is Rookwood Weir or Paradise Dam. I was also joined by the Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce, who came along to Proserpine. I do not know whether it is good luck or bad luck to have the Prime Minister one day and Barnaby the next but I will work with anyone, especially when it is for funding. We know that there is Urannah Dam in the Mackay region and proposals for Hells Gates. It seemed to come as a shock to Bob Katter and everyone else when the Prime Minister made an announcement about Hells Gates. No-one really knew what was going on.

**Mr Butcher:** How's the business plan going?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I take that interjection. On this side of the House, we do planning and we have business cases. But all of a sudden—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members to my left.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Nanango!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It was a thought bubble: 'I know what we'll do. We'll just announce this big funding with no business case and no planning.' What an embarrassment! It is no wonder no-one over there stood up to make any comment.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

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

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Who can forget the fake Bradfield scheme from the member for Nanango? There was no funding. There was the Bruce Highway. Queenslanders can count on us to deliver water infrastructure and to stand up for the bush. I say to all the disillusioned LNP people out there, we will back you and we will support you because we are a government for all of Queensland.

### **Health System, Surgical Incident**

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. It has taken the opposition to reveal to Queenslanders that a person was either seriously harmed or died after the wrong surgery was performed on the wrong patient. What action will the government take to ensure that this never happens again to any Queenslanders?

**Mrs D'ATH:** As I have already indicated, I am happy to follow up to get the details of that particular reported incident. However, for those opposite to in some way insinuate that there are no adverse reactions and errors that occur in a public hospital system when millions of presentations—

**Ms Bates:** Wrong patient, wrong surgery.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left.

**Mrs D'ATH:** With all due respect to those opposite who are interjecting, when they were in government I am aware that it was reported on 1 May 2014 that a surgeon had been stood down after operating on the wrong side of a patient during kidney surgery. Those on the opposite side who want to claim—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba! Members to my left, as I hear the answer, the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services is being responsive to the question as asked.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I do not need any assistance from members to my right. I ask that we hear the answer.

**Mrs D'ATH:** As those opposite know, during their time in government there were also incidents and serious complaints that required investigation around surgical outcomes and adverse reactions.

**Mr Janetzki** interjected.

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

**Mrs D'ATH:** Those on the other side act as if this is something that has never been seen before.

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mrs D'ATH:** As I said, there was the botched renal surgery at Rockhampton Hospital.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders. Leader of the Opposition, it is a fair question and I would like to hear the answer.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Whenever there is an adverse and unexplained outcome from a surgery, it is investigated. There are clinical reviews. Clinical Excellence Queensland look at it to see if there is any evidence of systemic issues in relation to that type of surgery or that particular surgeon, to see if there is a pattern or any concerning behaviour. They also look at the particular incident. Sometimes those incidents are also referred to the coroner to look at the circumstances surrounding either the injury that has occurred or the death, to see what can be learnt and whether practices and policies need to be changed around what had occurred. That is the proper process. That is what occurs.

As I have said, once I get the detail of this particular incident that they are referring to I will be able to give a detailed answer about what has occurred in this particular case. As those opposite know, there is a proper process within the health system for clinical review and investigation, including consulting with the families, informing the families of the outcome of those clinical reviews and making sure that where there needs to be changes to procedures and practices and where there needs to be disciplinary action then it is taken. Those opposite know those processes exist.

*(Time expired)*

### Natural Disasters, Preparedness and Recovery

**Mr MARTIN:** My question is to the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure. Will the Deputy Premier outline to the House what the Palaszczuk government is doing to build back better 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 Stretton for his question. I know that parts of his community were flooded in the recent events and he has been supporting those residents and those communities. Before floods hit, we rely on our flood-warning infrastructure to inform our disaster preparedness and response. It helps us to provide information to the public and to forward deploy emergency services personnel, police and swiftwater rescue teams as well as provide information to residents who may need to evacuate.

In Queensland, 870 of the Australian government owned rain gauges are old manual gauges that need to be upgraded. The Palaszczuk government has committed to fund 50 per cent of the maintenance of that flood-warning infrastructure and yet we have heard no response from the Morrison government. More than a week after we announced our flood recovery package of \$741 million, still we have heard no answer to the Premier's letter to the Prime Minister. That \$741 million package, including the Resilient Residential Recovery Package, is funding to assist flooded households to retrofit their homes where it is suitable, to raise their homes where that is suitable or to sell their homes where that is the most appropriate response. That is the right package for flooded Queensland homes and yet we have had no response whatsoever from the Prime Minister.

Queenslanders deserve more than a Prime Minister who puts off flood recovery until he can be in town for a photo opportunity. They deserve better than a Prime Minister who flies in every now and then. They deserve better than a Prime Minister who believes flooded New South Wales households are worth three times as much as flooded Queensland households. They deserve an opposition that will stand up for Queenslanders and say to Scott Morrison, 'Queenslanders deserve their fair share.' Queenslanders deserve the same amount as New South Wales residents. They pay the same taxes and they should get the same level of flood recovery. Queenslanders deserve that.

If tonight's budget has anything less than the same fair share for flooded Queenslanders that they have already offered to New South Wales then the pressure will not just be on the Morrison government. The pressure will be on the Leader of the Opposition, who has not yet said one word about the fact that flooded New South Wales households are getting three times as much support as those in Queensland. I hope we get that answer tonight but, if not, I hope I get that answer from the Leader of the Opposition tomorrow.

### Mackay Base Hospital, Obstetrics and Gynaecology Review

**Ms CAMM:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. It has been more than 150 days since a review into obstetrics and gynaecology was announced following allegations of malpractice at Mackay Base Hospital. When will this report be released publicly so that the women of Mackay can be assured that birthing services at Mackay Base Hospital are safe?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the member for her question. As the House would be aware, as I have reported previously, there is an independent investigation into obstetrics and gynaecology services at the Mackay Base Hospital. It commenced on 1 November 2021. I am advised that, since the Mackay HHS obviously announced the investigation, 170 women have been contacted by the Mackay HHS seeking further information or providing feedback. I understand that we are expecting the exact date of the finalisation very shortly, but it is ongoing.

There were reports in the media about the resignation of a particular doctor; however, those reports were incorrect and have since been clarified by the HHS. There is one on suspension right now and one who has resigned. What is really important is that the HHS chief executive has made it very clear that they are committed to sharing the outcomes and actions of the report and consulting with staff and the community.

I know that the member for Mudgeeraba has been up in the area claiming that we were going to hide the results, but on a number of occasions the chief executive has made it very clear that this report will be released and will be publicly available for all to see. The HHS continues to update women involved with the community on the progress of the investigation and on other actions being undertaken such as the case management pathway. As I say, the HHS chief executive has committed to sharing the outcomes and the actions.

Of course, anyone with information relevant to the review can still come forward and provide information to the HHS for inclusion in the review. They will allow the investigators and the women the time and space to undertake this review instead of trying to continually undermine it. It is important that this process be allowed to follow its proper course and that it can be completed. As I say, I expect it should be completed in the very near future. Certainly in the first half of this year I believe we should see the report. It will be publicly available.

I am advised that since the hotline was set up the HSS received 166 calls. From 9 March, that hotline is now transitioning to the usual consumer feedback and complaint-handling process. I thank the women who have come forward to raise their concerns and complaints. I assure them that their views and concerns are being listened to, that they are respected and that they will be kept informed by the HHS.

### **Economy, Consumer Confidence**

**Ms BOYD:** My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the Treasurer update the House on the recovery of consumer spending in Queensland and how it compares to other spending in Queensland?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the member for Pine Rivers for her question. She would be pleased to know that data released yesterday by the major banks showed that consumer credit card spending is now 14 per cent higher than it was last year and 28 per cent higher than in 2020. Every dollar that is spent is going to the accounts of Queensland businesses, big and small. That is why the National Australia Bank quarterly business survey, also released yesterday, demonstrated that Queensland has the strongest business conditions of any state, except South Australia. That is no wonder because the people of South Australia were in the process of electing a South Australian Labor government.

What we need to see tonight from Scott Morrison on this rising business confidence, rising investment and taxation return to the federal government is Queensland getting our fair share out of the federal coalition government—not next year and not the election after the election; we need it now. Through the pandemic we have saved the federal government hundreds of millions of dollars. New South Wales and Victoria received \$12 billion in COVID support payments; we received \$250 million. It is about time we had our fair share out of Canberra.

The biggest single investment they can make in Queensland is into public health care, but we have not heard anything. We have not heard 'boo' from the Leader of the Opposition on this issue as he could not be bothered to lift a finger or make a phone call to all those lazy LNP federal MPs on fat margins doing nothing for Queensland and delivering nothing for public health care.

It is little wonder, because the state LNP has zero credibility on health care. We know this about the LNP. The member for Mudgeeraba is a continuing member of the Nurses' Professional Association of Queensland, an organisation that repeatedly expressed anti-vax sentiment. For so long as the Leader of the Opposition tolerates the shadow health minister consorting with an organisation that repeatedly expresses anti-vax sentiment, he has zero credibility on health. Fake unions such as the NPAQ need to be shut down, and so does the member for Mudgeeraba. The Leader of the Opposition must demonstrate leadership on this issue and disavow the member for Mudgeeraba for her continuing refusal to disavow this organisation. She should resign or be sacked, but I tell you what: the Leader of the Opposition will not do it because he is in the business of trawling for preferences in this country and this state. That is what the LNP is about: trawling for preferences from the extreme right. That is weakness; it is not leadership.

### **Forensic and Scientific Services**

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. Experienced forensic biologist Dr Kirsty Wright has found that in over half of all cases the government forensic lab has failed to get complete DNA profiles, even when swabs are directly taken from the male sexual offender or murderer. Will the minister intervene to ensure that offenders are held to account and that victims get the justice they deserve?

**Mrs D'ATH:** There certainly has been a lot of interest in the matters that have been the subject of the Shandee Blackburn matter. As members should be aware, I wrote to the Attorney-General asking the Coroner to reopen that investigation to determine whether there are any learnings to be gained and whether there were any failings either specifically in relation to that case or whether there is any evidence of systemic—



**Ms Camm** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Whitsunday, the minister is being responsive to the question as asked. I ask that you hear the answer.

**Mrs D'ATH:** As I say, that particular matter has been referred to the Coroner. However, I am aware of the allegations made in relation to the broader Forensic and Scientific Services staff. I do have concerns that, no matter the fact that they meet all of their accreditation and approvals on a regular basis and undertake, as I understand, external auditing to ensure that they are meeting the relevant standards, these sorts of allegations can damage the public's confidence in these services.

My department is looking at, in addition to the coronial investigation, what else we should and can do to ensure not just that we are complying and getting accreditation but that we are meeting public expectations and maintaining public confidence in our health system. On that basis, my department has recommended to me—because it has been over 10 years since the system had a comprehensive review—that we should undertake that. We are in the process of developing terms of reference as I speak. That has been recommended to me and I am supportive of that.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I take that interjection, because I am reporting to the people of Queensland, not to the *Australian*.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I take the interjection that it is getting worse. That is a serious allegation. Those opposite should put up evidence of the statement they just made in this House. The National Association of Testing Authorities has repeatedly reaccredited the same forensic services that have been managing the COVID outbreak—the same forensic services that were the first in the world to identify BA.2 as a new Omicron variant. We should not in any way taint their reputation. There are allegations being made. I think it is important that we ensure public confidence. That is why I am referring this on.

*(Time expired)*

### **Federal Budget, Education and Workers**

**Ms PEASE:** My question is of the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing. Will the minister please advise the House on how the federal budget should support Queensland schools and Queensland workers, and is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for Lytton for the question. I know she has a special place in her heart for education. She knows that it is the key that can change people's lives. She knows that it puts students on the path to greater career opportunities and how important it is for education to close the gap. Obviously, after the flooding we have to build back better than what we did before.

That is why it is important that in education we get some funding to assist us to do that. The states cannot do it alone. There are disaster funds available and we need them to build back better. We want to build schools having regard to flood mitigation and above the flood line. We need federal funding to do that. We want to be able to do that whether it is in Maryborough, whether it is in Gympie, whether it is in Milton and everywhere else around the state. We need to provide the best facilities for our students. We have heard nothing. I want to see some funding in the federal budget so that the schools in Maryborough and Gympie that I visited recently can be flood-proofed. I want the federal government to provide some money from the disaster relief fund for us to do that.

We need a strong commitment from the federal government to close the gap for our First Nation students. We want them to provide funding for partnerships with excellent organisations like the Clontarf Foundation—that will be here on Thursday evening; I invite everyone to come and hear about their journey—and the Stars Foundation so we can assist First Nation students on their path to greater opportunities for them and their communities.

We need funding to back up the respectful relationships program. I despair because the federal government promised to change the religious discrimination act to protect students from discrimination and they could not deliver in 10 years. Lord knows what we are going to do in terms of the respectful relationships program with the federal curriculum now being rewritten to be age appropriate. We need the \$77 million that Labor has committed to assist in that implementation.

Come on Scott Morrison; you can do it! We also need investment in the mental health and wellbeing of our students.

**Mr Crisafulli:** Mate!

**Ms GRACE:** COVID has had an impact on them. There is \$440 million committed by Labor to assist with student health and wellbeing. What do we hear from those opposite? Ring your mate. Ring your mate. Ring ScoMo: 'Mate'. Come on Scott Morrison; match the \$440 million.

I take the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. He is his mate. He has delivered nothing in 10 years. He has done nothing for workers. They have gone backwards. They have done nothing in education. Pick up the phone, Leader of the Opposition. Give him a ring because the Nats are leaving you in droves.

### Health System

**Dr ROWAN:** My question is to the Minister for Health. The wrong surgery on the wrong patient, allegations of malpractice in Mackay and a forensic lab failing victims—and all this at a time when ambulance ramping is still more than double, the percentage of patients not getting their surgery on time is still more than quadruple and the elective surgery waiting list is still twice 2015 levels. Is the minister up to the job of fixing the Queensland health crisis?

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I appreciate there is some enthusiasm in the room.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I thank the former president of the AMA Queensland for the question. It went really well apparently!

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, amongst many you stand alone. You are warned under the standing orders.

**Mrs D'ATH:** The issues that have been raised in this question time are very serious issues. It is not an accident that this issue is being raised today. It is being raised as a distraction from the federal budget that is being brought down tonight. I think it is very important that those on the opposite side stay quiet for a bit to listen to this.

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will cease his interjections.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I am specifically wanting to make sure that the Leader of Opposition is listening. In the 2012-13 annual report to the Queensland health watchdog, the Leader of the Opposition should be aware, as he was part of the then government, that there were 241 incidents where a patient died or suffered serious harm—

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I take that interjection. It does not matter according to the Leader of the Opposition. Thirteen people had the wrong surgical procedure performed on them.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Leader of the Opposition, your interjections were designed to disrupt the minister. You are warned under the standing orders. I have given you a pretty wide band today.

**Mrs D'ATH:** These are serious issues. The question put to me today is about one case—and, as I say, any loss of life is distressing. For those opposite to come in here and ignore the fact that there were 13 people who had the wrong surgical procedure performed on them or a procedure performed on the wrong part of their body which resulted in death or injury and that there were two people where the procedure involved the wrong patient or—

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Mudgeeraba, you have already been warned under the standing orders. You can leave the chamber for one hour. Members, I have made myself very clear that if you are under a warning you will cease all interjections. I expect silence from those members.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Mudgeeraba withdrew from the chamber at 10.57 am.*

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my right, when I am giving a ruling, I would ask that you please keep your level of interjection down.

**Mrs D'ATH:** During the LNP Newman government's time—2012-13 and 2013-14—there were two people where procedures involved the wrong patient, a wrong body part resulting in death or major permanent loss of life—

**Mr POWELL:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. On this very serious matter and the very serious matters that have been raised this morning, it is extraordinary that the health minister can find data from 2012-13 and 2013-14 and not information from 2019-20.

**Mr SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order. Please resume your seat.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my right, I have dealt with the point of order. Minister, you have 41 seconds remaining.

**Mr Powell** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Glass House, I have just said that there is no point of order and you have interjected. You are warned under the standing orders.

**Mrs D'ATH:** These serious errors in Queensland hospitals are reported annually. What I am seeking advice on is that when there is a report of a single incident I need to make sure that in identifying the hospital—as has been asked of me—I am not going to identify the individual. I have an obligation to respect the family and the individual who has been impacted by the adverse reaction. I have to get that advice. Those opposite should know that because there were 241 of those incidents in one year when they were in power. I will take my responsibilities seriously and get proper advice before I—

*(Time expired)*

### **Public Hospitals, Long Stays**

**Ms BUSH:** My question is of the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. Will the minister update the House on the Palaszczuk government's efforts to fund suitable accommodation for long stay NDIS and aged-care patients waiting in Queensland hospitals and is the minister aware of any other approaches?

**Mrs D'ATH:** As we have been commenting on today, tonight's budget is really important. We hope that there will be not just a substantial investment in the broader public health system and primary and allied health care but dedicated funding to streamline the process for people who should be getting care in their home, getting a place in an aged-care facility or getting an NDIS package so they can move out of the public health system when they no longer require medical treatment.

A hospital ward is not a place for them to have to reside. It is not a good quality of life. Every health minister and aged-care minister in this country has written to the Commonwealth asking for funding on this—every single aged-care minister, disability minister and health minister in the country of all political persuasions. When we talk about bed capacity, when we talk about ramping, when we talk about public health pressures, we know that 500 to 600 beds can make all the difference. That is the size of rebuilding the Redcliffe Hospital.

It is not a small issue. These statistics are people. They are people's loved ones who deserve to get proper care and placement in the community, not having to live for days, months and in some cases years in a public hospital simply because we cannot get the system right. The Commonwealth managed to fast-track that for a short period of time during COVID. All the health ministers said that the system we put in place for that short period of time should become the system going forward, and we got a no. 'No, it is all too hard because it is going to cost the Commonwealth money.' Investment in aged care by the Commonwealth is long overdue, and COVID has shone a light on that.

**Ms Grace:** It's a disgrace.

**Mrs D'ATH:** It is disgraceful—the way they have been cared for, locked in their rooms and not getting fed properly during this latest wave of Omicron in Queensland. It has been shameful to see the Commonwealth put their head in the sand, ignoring their responsibility. The NDIS and aged care are a Commonwealth responsibility. Even though this federal Liberal government has been in power since 2013, they will throw money at hospitals this year, I have no doubt. They will buy new equipment for us. They will not fund the capital to put that equipment in and they will not provide the operational funding to make sure we have the staff to run that equipment into the future.

### Cooloola Great Walk

**Ms BOLTON:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef. Will the minister commit to ensuring that any outstanding environmental impact concerns regarding the Cooloola Great Walk, including the protection of Lake Poona in the Great Sandy National Park, are addressed as a matter of priority?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Noosa for the question. I know that she is particularly passionate about this area in her community. I can confirm that at this stage no approvals have been issued. The concept of ecotourism experiences is based on low-impact, well-managed and regulated long-distance walking tracks or trails. We are obviously committed to developing a series of these known as the Great Walks in Queensland. We have been able to do that in places across the state already by getting the balance right, making sure that we are communicating with the tourism sector, the conservation sector and traditional owners to make sure we deliver an experience that will benefit everyone.

The project proposes in this particular area the establishment of low-key, removable commercial ecotourism accommodation facilities and guided tours along the Cooloola Great Walk. An expression of interest process was run by the Queensland government in consultation with representatives of the Kabi Kabi First Nations people, the traditional owners and native title claimants of the project area, which has resulted in the awarding of a preferred proponent.

As I said, there is a whole range of economic benefits from having these sorts of experiences. We can create new funding sources for enhanced management of our Queensland national park estate. We provide employment and business opportunities for regional communities as well as for traditional owners for their aspirations to be front and foremost. We are developing genuine cultural tourism products that foster an appreciation and understanding of First Nations people's connection to their country ultimately.

As I said, the project itself has not received an approval at this stage. Should the project be approved, it would need to satisfy a number of elements under the Nature Conservation Act. They would be making sure that it is ecologically sustainable, that it is in the public interest and that it provides to the greatest possible extent for the permanent preservation of the natural condition and protection of natural and cultural values in the area. That particular proposal needs to comply with those legislative requirements.

I understand that the Department of Environment and Science is at the moment overseeing the development of the project concept, consistent with the act. We are working closely with the proponent to refine some of the critical aspects. I know there have been a number of people who have raised concerns, particularly around Lake Poona. We are very much working in close contact with the proponent to try to address some of those concerns that have been raised and resolve those to allow the assessment of the site by both state and local governments.

We will continue to work in partnership with representatives of the Kabi Kabi First Nations people to make sure the project does not impact on cultural heritage and to identify tangible benefits for that particular community. We are currently negotiating an Indigenous land use agreement and a cultural heritage management agreement with the First Nations people, the registered native title claimants.

*(Time expired)*

### Federal Budget

**Mr WALKER:** My question is of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. In light of recent media comments of the federal Treasurer, will the minister advise the House what the Queensland government is expected to receive from tonight's federal budget?

**Mr BAILEY:** I thank the member for Mundingburra, who has a strong record of standing up for his electorate and standing up for Townsville. He does not cut and run.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members to my left!

**Mr BAILEY:** He does not cut and run when it gets tough and desert his home town. He stands up for his electorate. He is a man of integrity and a man of principle.

What we want from this federal budget is a fair share for Queensland. That is what we want. What we are expecting is probably less than that. We saw in the last budget that South Australia got double the funding Queensland got for road and rail. They got \$3.2 billion, with a lot fewer people than Queensland; we got \$1.6 billion.

We all know the incompetence of the federal government. If there was an Oscars for incompetence, one could only stand in awe of the Morrison government—the vaccine rollout, quarantine, RATs, declaring a natural disaster a week after we had one here in Queensland, lying about going to Hawaii when the bushfires were happening. One only has to look at the Morrison government's incompetent performance to be in awe of how bad they have been.

While they are doing that, our flood victims here in Queensland are waiting and waiting and waiting for a response—any response. I have people in 132 streets affected by flooding. Many members in this place are in the same situation. They are up against it to recover, and we have no response from this government—none. While they wait and wait and wait, we have a Prime Minister who has promised \$5.4 billion for Hells Gates Dam. When it comes to responding to flood victims in this state, we have heard nothing—zero.

This budget had better correct that to show respect for those people who have had floodwaters through their house, destroying their possessions. They should respond to them and give them the same level of support as New South Wales flood victims. They will only get a third of what New South Wales flood victims will get. That needs to be corrected in the budget.

They also need to respond to our flood resilience package of \$771 million. We want joint funding to help people to raise their home, to build back better and for buybacks. In some cases some houses need to be bought back. They are in the wrong place. That is what this fund is about. It is about helping people to get through the crisis and the difficulty. They deserve more than no response from the federal government. They deserve respect. They deserve respect here in Queensland. That is what we want to see in the federal budget—actual dollars for things that matter now, not in 10 years time. The Queensland flood victims deserve to be supported.

*(Time expired)*

### **Dungeness, Restoration Project**

**Mr DAMETTO:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. The Hinchinbrook Shire Council's Dungeness all-tide access and sand spit restoration project has failed to gain approval. An RTI to access the scientific reports has been lodged. Will the Deputy Premier commit to work with the Hinchinbrook Shire Council to make these documents available and help navigate a way forward for this vital infrastructure project?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for Hinchinbrook for his question. The decisions of the State Assessment and Referral Agency are made independent of me, but I know a bit about the proposal so I am happy to provide some details to the House and then follow up further. I understand the council applied to SARA to dredge the channel to the boat ramp so that it could provide all-tide access for boaties, as well as to dispose of the dredge spoil on the beach and to construct a 380-metre seawall. In considering the impacts of those three elements, approval has been granted for the dredging and the disposal of the spoil, but concerns have been raised about the impact of the 380-metre seawall. Understandably, these kinds of proposals can have impacts elsewhere as well as localised impacts, so scientific analysis has to be undertaken to see how it will affect coastal processes and tidal processes and make sure it is not just shifting an erosion problem from one part of the bank to another. I understand that work has been undertaken.

I also understand that the council have applied under right to information to see those reports. I do not think they should have to go through the RTI process to see those reports. Subject to getting a final briefing, and provided I am advised that I can release them, I will release those reports. If I cannot, then we will look at what I can release. We will make sure they get released as soon as possible.

I understand the department has also undertaken to work with the council on how the seawall aspect of the proposal can be progressed. It might be that it can be varied in some way. I am happy to organise for the member to meet with the acting state planner this week while he is in Brisbane. We can provide what reports we can provide and also talk through what the next steps forward might be. It is not the case that there is opposition to the proposal itself; we just want to properly assess what all the impacts might be.

I certainly undertake to continue to work with the member and the council to ensure we can get an outcome that can deliver that all-tide access to the boat ramp, reduce the need for ongoing dredging in the channel and at the same time make sure we do not have any inadvertent effects. There are plenty of examples around the state where ill-thought-through seawalls have resulted in problems elsewhere. That is why we have processes like we have now. It has helped us to understand a lot better how erosion control measures can impact elsewhere. Informed with all of that information, I am sure we can find a resolution suitable to what the council wants to achieve.

### Charities and Fundraisers, Regulation

**Ms RICHARDS:** My question is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. Will the Attorney-General please update the House on the work the Office of Fair Trading is doing to ensure fair and transparent markets in Queensland, including the regulation of charities and fundraisers? Is the Attorney-General aware of any other approaches?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. The Office of Fair Trading works incredibly hard to ensure that Queensland consumers can have confidence when handing over their hard-earned money. Recently, Fair Trading has been working very hard to make sure that any fundraisers or charities that have popped up as a result of the devastating floods and natural disasters here in Queensland have been compliant with Queensland's robust laws. It is disappointing that people would even attempt to take advantage of Queenslanders' generosity in such hard times, but that is why we have been so keen to remind Queenslanders to be aware of dodgy charities or fundraisers and to check the legitimacy of them before donating online.

As I noted last sitting, the Office of Fair Trading has been in contact with the federal member for Dickson, Peter Dutton, to inform him that his flood victims GoFundMe fundraiser did not meet Queensland's own laws. Of course, the Office of Fair Trading requested that he fix this, and I note that he has done so, but it is so disappointing that rather than a minister advocate for his own government to provide much needed funds for flood victims, he persists with a community fundraising page that did not even meet the strict standards we have here in Queensland. It is not just disappointing; in fact it is now an international embarrassment. In a scathing article in the *New York Times* last week they wrote—

In some towns where torrential rain triggered landslides ... The federal defense minister started a GoFundMe page for his local ... electorate, leading many to question why that financial assistance was not being provided by his government.

It never ceases to amaze me how capable Mr Dutton is of being so tone-deaf. He is one of the most senior ministers in the Morrison government, yet he believes it is the community's responsibility to provide support to flood victims. Mr Dutton even had the audacity to post in the GoFundMe last week—

Your generosity will make a real difference for the lives of people who are recovering from the floods.

Do you know what would make a real difference to the lives of people in Queensland recovering from the floods? It would be giving them a flood recovery package, making sure they get the same money as people in New South Wales whose homes have been devastated. The senior minister in the Morrison government will not even advocate to make sure that Queenslanders get a fair share and neither will the Leader of the Opposition, who has failed to call on the federal government to deliver for Queenslanders who are doing it incredibly tough and needing that disaster assistance. It is time Queensland got its fair share.

### Drummond, Mr S

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Maroochydore, welcome back.

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister confirm why Shaun Drummond was appointed acting director-general of Queensland Health when an internal investigation into suspected corrupt conduct was ongoing?

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

**Mrs D'ATH:** I am aware of the complaint that was made a number of years ago. I am also aware that there have not been any adverse findings at this point from any investigation. I am also aware that at the time there was a decision that it was deemed appropriate that Shaun Drummond continue to act to be the chief executive of Metro North HHS—the largest HHS in this state. It was seen that, based on the circumstances of the complaint, it was more than appropriate he could continue in that role. As such, I think it is more than appropriate he be fit to fulfil the role of acting chief operating officer, now acting director-general. If at some point in the future there is a finding that is adverse against the individual, I will deal with that finding at that time. At this point, there are no such findings against him. It was deemed he was suitable to fulfil that role as chief executive at that point and he is certainly suitable to fulfil the role of acting director-general now.

*(Time expired)*

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

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### Bundaberg Youth Parliament



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I wish to belatedly make a very quick remark. I was in the Bundaberg and Maryborough region last week and I want to thank the members for Bundaberg, Burnett and Maryborough for their assistance with the Youth Parliament as well as for speaking with legal studies students. One of the great privileges I have in this role is being involved with parliamentary education. Each of those members made a great contribution, and I thank them for their assistance.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Southern Queensland, Weather Event



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (11.18 am): I am sorry to inform the House that the current rain event has claimed a second life. QPS divers have recovered the body of a Darling Downs man reported missing yesterday. We express our profound sympathies to his family.

## MOTIONS

### Business Program



**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.18 am): I move—

1. That the following bills will be considered during this week's sitting:
  - (a) the Small Business Commissioner Bill
  - (b) the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill.
2. That the bills listed in 1. be completed by 6 pm on Thursday, 31 March 2022.
3. That if the bill listed in 1(b) has not completed all stages by 5 pm on Thursday, 31 March 2022, Mr Speaker shall call on the minister in reply.


In moving this motion, I want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Sandgate, Minister Hinchliffe, for stepping in and acting as Leader of the House during the last sitting week while I was at home after testing positive for COVID-19. I understand he did a 'sterling' job. While talking about positions, I take this opportunity to congratulate in the chamber the member for Glass House on taking over as the Manager of Opposition Business, a role which I am sure he will truly enjoy. While we welcome the new Manager of Opposition Business, we bid farewell to the former manager of opposition business.

After approximately 1,549 days as manager of opposition business—who is counting—the member for Kawana has been elevated to one of the two leadership positions in the LNP, seeing the demise of the National Party in those positions. I will miss the member for Kawana's contribution on the Business Committee. It might not have been constructive, but it was certainly amusing. I am sure I will not miss his debate because I have a feeling he might still contribute to the debates going forward. I do thank the former manager of opposition business, member for Kawana, during the time that he worked with me as Leader of the House.

Turning to the motion before the House today, members will see there are two bills listed to be debated this week. One is a continuation of the debate on the Small Business Commissioner Bill and the second is the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill. Both bills have been slated for debate this week and have been afforded the whole week for debate up to 5 pm on Thursday, if required, for me to then reply and have consideration in detail time allotted for this debate. Obviously, if we get through those two bills sooner, then we can move onto other bills on the *Notice Paper* as well.

I also note there will be amendments attempted to be moved by the Greens—hopefully they will get that right—which they wrote to me about, and potentially the LNP. As there is a new Manager of Opposition Business, there may or may not be amendments—I am not sure—from the opposition side. As I say, based on being advised that there may be amendments, we did allocate additional time for that. This is how the Business Committee process should work. I am pleased that we do not have to set fixed times for each bill, that we should just let the debate flow, but it is important that this legislation

gets completed by the end of the week. We know there is a time imperative particularly for the public health directives. I look forward to listening to the debates on the legislation before the bill and I do hope that all members support this motion today.

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (11.21 am): I, too, rise on the business program motion as the first opportunity to speak in my new capacity as the Manager of Opposition Business. I want to put on the record my thanks to the members for Broadwater and Kawana for affording me this privilege of serving the LNP team, the opposition, in this important role. I do also want to acknowledge my predecessor who, for over 1,000 days, served in the role of manager of opposition business, the member for Kawana. There was an exhaustive handover as we discussed what the requirements of this position include and most of it was centred around the Monday evening business program of the Business Committee. There are a couple of key attributes which I will continue, one of which is that we here in the opposition reserve the right for every member of the opposition to speak on every bill for the maximum amount allotted time as possible.

There were a number of these negotiation tactics that the member for Kawana shared with me, but I am kind of bemused because to date I have not had to enlist any of them at all. On that basis, I do want to acknowledge the member for Sandgate in that the last sitting we did not even have a business program motion at all. It was very old-school. There was a lot of personal crowing on my behalf that I had instantaneous success where the member for Kawana had failed for over 1,000 days to negotiate such an outcome with the members of the Labor government. Then, to follow that up, last night we succeeded in pretty much getting everything we sought as well. I am two from two! I do not know what the member for Kawana was doing all that time!

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr POWELL:** Maybe a slightly more conciliatory and diplomatic approach does have benefits, but I do reserve the right to enliven the better personality traits of my colleague, the member for Kawana, and his combative debating style should it be required in the future.

Having said that, I acknowledge that, whilst there are only two bills to complete this week, my understanding is that both have extensive speaking lists. The Small Business Commissioner Bill still has an outstanding list of a lot of government members in particular, and I know just about every member, certainly on this side of the chamber, will want to address the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill. I do hope that will be able to be completed by the 5 pm deadline on Thursday afternoon.


Again, I acknowledge the Leader of the House's motion that includes an element for us to be able to have a proper consideration in detail, potentially only half an hour, but that is an improvement on what we have had in the past, and I hope again that that allows those who choose to move amendments to speak to those amendments during consideration of detail.

I understand there are a number of other matters that will be addressed in a subsequent motion, so I do not want to speak too much of those, but again it goes to the extent of the success that I have had to date in negotiating changes to sessional orders in that if we are rising early on Wednesday evening then we sit later tonight. That again ensures that speakers on this side of the chamber will get the most opportunity to speak particularly to the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill.

It is exciting times for me as the new Manager of Opposition Business. I hope I can continue to achieve such outstanding outcomes for members of the opposition. I suspect it will not last. I am waiting for the first time that I get stabbed in the back by the Leader of the House.


**Mrs D'Ath:** Oh!

**Mr POWELL:** It will come. If not the Leader of the House, then the member for Miller will do the job, and I am sure we will be back here having a very combative business program motion debate in the future.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (11.25 am): I support the motion. I firstly congratulate the member for Glass House on his appointment as Manager of Opposition Business—an important role—and I wish him the best for that. I also would like to acknowledge the contribution of the member for Kawana who did have a long reign as the manager of opposition business. I could say that I will miss him, but that would be misleading the House. However, I do wish him well in his new role as deputy leader—obviously another substantial position.



I congratulate the member for Glass House on having a successful foray for the first time, having a different approach to the member for Kawana. Already there has been a breakout of collegiate, good feelings and cooperation. See how much you can do with a different style? I commend the motion, and I look forward to shorter, more fruitful debates on the business motion.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.27 am): I was not intending to speak to the Business Committee motion; however, one is so concerned about this new level of collegiality and friendship that I must put some things on the record so as not to let the Manager of Opposition Business know that he can get away with this newfound friendship that he seems to have with the Labor Party.

I congratulate the member for Glass House on his appointment. It is going to be great to see him in that role. I had not counted the days that I was in that role. Suffice it to say, I knew it was about five years. I look in the mirror every morning and see the grey hair and I knew it was a long time that I was in that role because it is a substantial role in the parliament and, dealing with the issues of the House and members and personalities, it is quite time-consuming, as the member and the Leader of the House will no doubt know.

I thank the Leader of the House for the time that she has served as Leader of the House. When I was manager of opposition business working with the leader and through the CLA, I think we achieved some great things. However, the combative nature—

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I was very quick; I got that out, didn't I? The combative nature of the parliament must continue, and I can assure the member for Kawana—the member for Glass House—I am talking to myself.

**An honourable member:** You are a survivor of COVID.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am a survivor of COVID. My head is a little muddled, okay! I can assure the member for Glass House that what he thinks has transpired in the last Business Committee—the only one he has attended, I might add—will not last long, because the minute the government will want to get through this House what they want to get through, he will soon learn how the Business Committee actually operates.

Can I say that I am profoundly happy that I am not on the Business Committee anymore. It was a committee that I said I never particularly was pleased to attend, particularly when the member for Miller was appointed to that committee, and I tried everything I could—

**An honourable member:** He was nice.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** He was nice, but I am not returning the favour because I know what he really thinks of me.

The Business Committee is a waste of space. I wish the member for Glass House all the best in achieving what he wants to achieve in the Business Committee. I heard the Leader of the House say earlier that when the member for Sandgate was Acting Leader of the House last week they worked so well with the new Manager of Opposition Business that they did not need to have a business program motion. That was only because the Labor Party cannot trust the member for Sandgate to deliver anything in this parliament and they could not trust him to deliver a business program motion. That is why it was back to the old days. How good were the old days? Parliament just worked the way it should have worked. If only we had the midnight sittings once again then I would be completely happy.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Member for Logan, cease your interjections.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It may come as a surprise to honourable members, particularly on this side of the House, that I do not intend to speak on many of these business program motions. I will speak when the need arises and when the new Manager of Opposition Business perhaps needs a little help to get on the right course in terms of life in parliament to ensure that our members are able to say what they want to say. Our constituents are all the better for it with the contributions that our members make.

I wish the new committee all the very best and I wish the new Manager of Opposition Business all the very best in his role. I know, as all honourable members on this side of the House know, he will undertake those roles diligently and professionally and he will go in to bat for us when we need him to. Congratulations.

As I said—and I will end on this note—I am particularly pleased to not be on that committee anymore. Yesterday at 5.30 pm I was reflecting and commiserating with the member for Glass House while I was at a family dinner for my young boy's birthday. Incidentally, Jasper is 12 today and we had an early birthday for him last night because parliament is sitting this week. I was reflecting that, as I was celebrating my young boy's 12th birthday, the member for Glass House was sitting in a Business Committee meeting with the Leader of the House and the member for Miller. I was more than happy to be with my young boy on his birthday, who incidentally does not want to come to Parliament House; they are having KFC tonight, which I will miss unfortunately. I wish all the best to the new Manager of Opposition Business.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

### Suspension of Sessional Orders



**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.32 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That for this week's sitting so much of sessional orders 1 and 2 be suspended to:

1. provide that the automatic adjournment today commences at 8 pm with government business to take place between 7 pm and 8 pm; and
2. provide that the automatic adjournment on Wednesday evening commences immediately after debate on the private member's motion has concluded.

Just speaking very briefly to that motion, I thank the opposition. The government reached out to the opposition to see if they would be supportive of us rising at 6.30 pm on Wednesday after starting the adjournment debate at 6 pm on the basis that we have the flood fundraiser. It is a bipartisan event. We hope that as many members as possible can participate in that and support that event. We thank the opposition for being willing to do that. The opposition requested that in losing that hour on Wednesday we replace it with an hour tonight. We were willing to support that request.

I will say I was a little bit surprised that the opposition were willing to do that during the Morrison government's budget speech and not allow all their members to listen to the budget speech. That is fine; that is what was requested. However, I was a bit surprised. We are happy to do it. It is certainly an important sitting. There are important debates to be had. I welcome the bipartisanship of the Manager of Opposition Business, both in our request with regard to Wednesday evening and also us being willing to alter tonight's sitting hours so we do not lose that hour.



**Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (11.34 am): I rise to repeat my earlier words and acknowledge that, yes, the LNP is supporting this motion to suspend sessional orders for the reason that Wednesday night is an important evening as we acknowledge and raise funds for those affected by the floods, including those in my own community of Glass House. It is therefore important that all members in this chamber be afforded an opportunity to attend that function.

On that note, I let the Leader of the House know that a couple of members were trying to get in but apparently cannot because the bookings have closed. If there is a way to facilitate a number of MPs being able to get on board and attend that function on Wednesday night, that would be much appreciated. Importantly, though, we do not want to lose any debating time, so the addition of an hour this evening will allow us the opportunity to continue to contribute to the public health and other legislation amendment bill in particular. Again, I do not expect this level of collegiality to continue. The bipartisanship will end, but at the moment we accept it and endorse it, and we look forward to debating into this evening. It will almost be like old times as we sit past 7.30 pm.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

### Suspension of Standing Order



**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.35 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That standing order 87 be suspended to enable clauses 14, 19, 20, 22, 31, 32, 34, 35, and schedule 1 of the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022 to be considered.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Introduction



**Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (11.36 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Architects Act 2002, the Building Act 1975, the Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) Act 2017, the Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020, the Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) Regulation 2018, the Planning Act 2016, the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018, the Professional Engineers Act 2002 and the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Transport and Resources Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 [\[416\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, explanatory notes [\[417\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, statement of compatibility with human rights [\[418\]](#).

Queensland's construction industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience over recent years. With the support of this government, it has navigated its way through the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent disaster events in South-East Queensland. This is not a surprise, though, as the industry is backed by 230,000 dedicated Queenslanders who go to work each day to build our great state. It is an industry that bolsters the state's economy by \$47 billion each year and continues to demonstrate solid growth. It is an industry with more than 110,000 contractors licensed by the QBCC in 2020-21, a 2.6 per cent increase on the year before. That is more tradies in jobs in Queensland.

Policies issued under the Queensland Home Warranty Scheme reached almost 170,000 in 2020-21. That is a 31 per cent increase on the previous year. That is more quality homes for Queenslanders. These are significant figures. They are a testament to how critical this industry is to Queensland. What makes the industry all the more remarkable is its willingness to lend a hand in the face of adversity. The building sector is quite literally doing the heavy lifting as we unite and recover from both the pandemic and some of the worst natural disasters in this state's history.

The Queensland government remains committed to supporting the industry through these challenging times. One of the best ways we can do this is to ensure that we have, and maintain, a robust regulatory framework—a framework that protects consumers, encourages investment and promotes safety, fairness, and long-term sustainability in the industry. We are proud of the Palaszczuk government's record on this.

Since releasing the Queensland Building Plan in 2017, we have continued to work with industry to address several longstanding issues. For example, thanks to our reforms, Queensland now boasts the strongest security of payment protections for tradies in this nation. More than \$1.4 billion is now safeguarded through project trust accounts, and our minimum financial requirements for licensing have supported the financial health and viability of building contractors. This is vitally important in today's perfect storm of demand and supply issues created by the pandemic and now the natural disasters as well as being compounded by the Morrison government's fundamentally flawed economic stimulus package that delivered what has been described by many as a profitless boom for the sector—one that has pushed building material costs to unsustainable levels.

The Palaszczuk government, by contrast, is leading the nation through its approach to issues like nonconforming building products and our ongoing advocacy for a contemporary national construction code that meets the needs of Queenslanders through accessible housing. This culminates in the state's built environment being safer, more inclusive and more sustainable than ever before. This also shows how we remain steadfastly committed to responding to community expectations, to being ready to listen and to acting decisively when it is the right thing to do.

We are continuously working to ensure we have a regulatory framework that supports Queensland jobs—one that encourages investment and promotes consumer and community confidence. This framework has held industry in good stead to combat the recent challenges I outlined; however, we know that there is still more work to be done.

In October last year the Queensland government released the *Queensland Building Plan update 2021*. The update outlines what we have already done to achieve our goals of safety, fairness and sustainability. It also reaffirms the government's commitment to working in partnership with industry. It is designed to help industry engage fully in the reform process while supporting the focus on recovery efforts and building back better. The bill before the House today represents the next step in this process.

Within it are a range of legislative amendments that will enhance our already strong and progressive reform agenda. For example, the amendments relating to home solar panels, greywater and holding tanks seek to reflect contemporary consumer expectations about environmental sustainability and the efficiency of our buildings.

The bill also seeks to enhance the efficacy and transparency of our regulatory framework here in Queensland. These provisions will improve the operation of the legislation in line with stakeholder feedback. They will streamline processes to ensure building regulators can carry out their functions efficiently and effectively. Each provision in this bill seeks to clarify, strengthen or modernise Queensland's building laws. This bill will ultimately create a regulatory framework that promotes safety, fairness and long-term sustainability for the building and construction industry.

First and foremost, the bill will modernise Queensland's approach to building and construction. It will recognise several innovative and expedient practices that will promote the conservation of energy and water and save Queenslanders time and money. Queenslanders lead the nation with their uptake of solar rooftop PV energy systems. There are now 697,000 residential solar systems in Queensland and many more on business premises. One in three Queensland homes have rooftop solar, compared to one in four homes nationally. Rooftop solar energy saves Queenslanders money on their power bill and, importantly, reduces household emissions.

The Queensland government's 'ban the banners' legislation has always sought to promote the uptake of rooftop solar. It prevented developers and bodies corporate by-laws from placing unreasonable restrictions on where householders may install solar panels. A recent court decision affected the efficacy of those provisions. This bill, however, fixes the uncertainty around the application of the 'ban the banners' provisions and protects home owners from developer covenants restricting where solar panels can be placed. This is a further step in allowing Queenslanders to play their part in realising our collective renewable energy and emissions reduction ambitions.

The bill will help save water by facilitating industrial uses for treated greywater. We know that population growth and climate change are placing increasing pressure on Queensland's water resources. However, Queensland businesses are rising to these challenges and our legislation needs to support the innovative ways they are developing to conserve water. Amendments in the bill will allow treated greywater to be used in cooling towers for air conditioning in large building developments. They will also allow treated water to be used for other purposes such as the flushing of toilets. They promote innovative water conservation techniques while maintaining the world-class health and safety of Queensland's plumbing system.

The bill will provide flexibility in choosing the most practical and efficient means of sewage disposal, particularly for temporary events like the Ekka, a triathlon event or even an Olympic Games event. At present, properties with a sewerage area must discharge wastewater into the sewerage system; however, this can be impractical for temporary premises such as toilets on a construction site or at an event or a local showground. Additionally, properties outside a sewerage area are required to treat their wastewater before discharging it into a holding tank for offsite disposal. Again, this can sometimes be impractical, particularly where there is not enough space on the property for such a treatment facility. This bill will enable an owner under a local government permit to discharge waste into a holding tank for collection and disposal. This will provide a safe, practical and cost-effective method of dealing with the removal of wastewater.

In addition to recognising modern construction practices, the bill contains several amendments to promote a streamlined, efficient and transparent regulatory framework. Specifically, the bill will amend the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991 to replace a not-yet-commenced provision which was introduced in 2020. This will have the effect of continuing the head contractor licensing exemption under the QBCC Act, subject to key amendments. This exemption in its current form, facilitates commercial contracting in Queensland. It allows unlicensed head contractors to contract to procure commercial building work, provided that work is carried out by licensed contractors. However, the bill will also provide government with the flexibility to address industry concerns with the exemption. This includes its potential impact on security of payment, building quality and safety. The amended exemption will allow a regulation to require certain head contractors to obtain a licence in particular circumstances. Based on stakeholder feedback, the bill amends the Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) Act 2017 to protect subcontractors with retention trust accounts when this exemption is used.

The bill seeks to deliver a fairer and more equitable decision-making and appeals process for the industry and consumers. For example, it seeks to put beyond doubt that the QBCC may share investigation findings with a complainant. Other government agencies, including local governments,

can now provide complainants with information relating to the outcome of their complaints. This should also naturally apply to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. For too long, consumers and licensees have had to rely on the sometimes expensive and unwieldy process of accessing information through RTI. This government believes that this information should be available to Queenslanders up-front. That is why this bill will support consumers by affording them the right to information about their complaint. These provisions recognise that people are entitled to know how and why decisions are made by a regulator. It is an important step to ensure the framework is transparent—an important step will reinforce accountability by making these decisions and the reasons for them available.

Further, the bill will make several other amendments to streamline the decision and appeals process. For example, the bill will allow a person who is dissatisfied with a decision regarding a pool safety management plan to apply for a review of that decision. Amendments to the Planning Act 2016 will ensure adequate provision is made for enforcement notices under the Plumbing and Drainage Act as well as those given under the Planning Act. Additionally, the bill will deliver fair and equitable appeal rights when a person is dissatisfied with a decision-maker's failure to reach a conclusion within a prescribed time frame.

Several amendments in this bill are designed to empower the QBCC to effectively carry out its functions. Firstly, the bill will empower the QBCC to commence prosecutions for offences relating to the combustible cladding checklist. Currently, the commission and local governments can each issue an infringement notice for combustible cladding checklist offences; however, where local governments can initiate court proceedings, the commission is required under the Building Act to gain express permission from the relevant local government to do the same. The amendment in the bill seeks to recognise that the QBCC is better placed to take enforcement action for those particular breaches.

Further, the QBCC's ability to immediately suspend a licence in response to serious risk of harm will be broadened to include risks to the public. Currently, the QBCC may immediately suspend a licence in response to serious financial or safety risks to other licensees, to their employees, to consumers and to suppliers of building materials or services. However, despite this existing power to protect the livelihoods and, importantly, the health and safety of those people, which is appropriate, the commission's hands have been tied when it comes to protecting the health and safety and the financial security of members of the public and all because of the way the current provision is worded. This is precisely what an effective building regulator needs the ability to do, so extending the ability to immediately suspend a licence to include serious financial or safety risks to any person empowers the commission to effectively respond to risks of serious harm and to promote public safety. These amendments are only the first step. We will of course consider the findings of the review into the commission's governance arrangements when Jim Varghese's independent report is handed down to government in the next few months.

Finally, the bill makes several minor and technical amendments to various other pieces of Queensland's building and construction legislation. For example, the Architects Act 2002 and the Professional Engineers Act 2002 establish regulators for Queensland's architecture and engineering professions. These are the Board of Architects of Queensland and the Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland. The amendments in the bill are primarily operational, but they do seek to streamline and improve the board's functions. For example, some amendments seek to ensure critical board policies are published online while others seek to clarify when boards' offices must remain open to the public. Improving those provisions and processes will allow the boards to focus on their core business of regulating their professions. They will promote the highest standards of architecture and engineering here in Queensland.

Similarly, the bill makes several amendments to the Building Act 1975 to improve its application too. The bill will repeal redundant provisions intended to encourage former building certifiers back into the certification profession. Those provisions were introduced at a time when there were significant concerns about an ageing and shrinking building certification workforce when there were concerns about the affordability and accessibility of professional indemnity insurance. Fortunately because of the actions taken here in Queensland, the number of certifiers in Queensland has stabilised since the passage of those provisions and measures have been implemented to help address the uncertainty about professional indemnity insurance. Therefore, this bill is the right time to repeal those provisions, which have not yet begun, that would otherwise have established an alternative recognition pathway. Several minor operational amendments to the QBCC Act are also necessary to improve government and regulator processes and clarify existing provisions. These amendments are required, for example, to extend the commission's ability to share relevant information with other Queensland statutory bodies. These include those involved in regulating other elements of the industry like QLeave.

In the lead-up to the 2032 Brisbane games, the eyes of the world will be here on Queensland, and what will they see? They will see incredible buildings like the Cairns Convention Centre. They will see incredible buildings like the Thomas Dixon Centre that are now nearing practical completion. They will see a world-leading facility in the Gabba. They will see a world-leading facility in the Hamilton Northshore precinct where construction is to get underway soon.

Despite the current industry challenges, the Palaszczuk government has continued to deliver the buildings of tomorrow and ultimately the amendments in this bill will ensure Queensland continues to have one of the most robust building regulatory frameworks in this nation: a framework that supports our strong licensing security of payment and financial sustainability requirements, one which protects tradies, protects contractors and protects consumers alike; a framework that meets community expectations around nonconforming building products, accessible housing and low-emissions buildings. Queenslanders expect modern buildings that reflect our climate and our lifestyle, they expect products that are safe and fit for purpose, they expect homes that are accessible for everyone regardless of their age or capacity, and they expect that our buildings are able to address and make a contribution to mitigating climate change by reducing emissions and providing protection from extreme weather events.

This bill will ultimately support all of these expectations as part of the Palaszczuk government's ambitious reform agenda. In doing so, the bill will hold this state in good stead as we continue to facilitate our progress towards a safer, fairer and more sustainable building and construction industry. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

**Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (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 Transport and Resources Committee

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


Before I call the clerk at the table, I just remind those members who are on a warning. They are the members for Maroochydore, Woodridge, Nanango, Toowoomba South, Mudgeeraba, Kawana, Broadwater and Glass House.

## SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 17 March (see p. 595), on motion of Ms Farmer—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (11.56 am), continuing: To continue my contribution, the permanent commissioner and their office will improve their tailored support and advice to Queensland small businesses, aiming to provide timely and affordable access to justice through their dispute resolution functions. Like many members of this House, I have heard some great feedback on the commissioner from my local businesses. One example I want to raise is Darren from the fantastic Frigg Cafe on Frank Street in Labrador, and with locations at Ascot and Manly as well, who said this about the commissioner—

Maree and her small team have been exceptional in support ...

He said that the commissioner came to their shop and met with them for 90 minutes and followed up on their issues afterwards, raising their concerns with the top levels of the departments that they related to. That is exceptional advocacy and service. I understand internally the Small Business Commissioner and her office describe their powers as being derived from the 'bluff act 1954', but from the feedback I have heard from Frigg and a number of other local businesses they are certainly punching above their weight.

One submission to the inquiry on this bill I want to highlight is from Bruce Billson, the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. A good point it raised was on ministerial interference, saying—

In order for Queensland's small business community to have the full confidence in the Commissioner to fearlessly and consistently represent their small business community, it is important that the role has an appropriate degree of independence from government.

The suggestion from the federal ombudsman was to remove the clause providing ministerial direction because of the potential for this to make the functions of the commissioner highly dependent on the government and subject to operational instruction. He basically said this extra power was going to be overkill and that the statement of expectations provided for in clause 18 should be enough to make the commissioner understand what the minister believes their functions and role should be. As such, I support the shadow minister's very reasonable amendments because I think they would go a long way towards fixing the inadequacies in what we have before us.

The second opposition amendment in particular would help the commissioner immensely. If the government does not support this, it again shows its reluctance to open the books. It shows it is against open data. We want a Small Business Commissioner who has the power and independence necessary to ensure the Queensland government treats small businesses fairly. The Small Business Commissioner has done a fantastic job and we want to make sure this position has the right powers to succeed so it can hold the faith of and best serve small and family businesses across our state.


I do also think we need to look at how business-to-government disputes are dealt with. Currently when these arise it can only be looked at by the ombudsman and they can only really investigate whether the proper process was followed, not many of the specifics of the dispute. I do want to commend the Small Business Commissioner again on her engagement with councils across Queensland. The Small Business Friendly councils program is a fantastic initiative. It is a very simple charter, generally signed by the mayor. There are five steps involved—reveal your blind spots, share and engage, do a stocktake, take action, and get involved.

It is all about making clear commitments to bring consciousness to the work large organisations or governments are doing to be small business friendly. It also provides guidance about where to focus improvements across the organisation. The whole point of signing the charter is for it to be an intentional act showing clear intent and to focus on improving systems, processes and the customer journey for small businesses in that area. The promises and principles which guide improvements will be across the organisation. The whole idea is to streamline and reduce red tape, to improve regulations and to prioritise Buy Local purchasing from small businesses within that local government area.

So far, examples of local governments that have signed up are Ipswich, Townsville, Southern Downs, South Burnett and Gympie. Hopefully Brisbane will sign up soon, although they already do a really good job of supporting small businesses. I very much hope to see our mayor Tom Tate back home on the Gold Coast make this commitment in the near future. A good example of this program came from Ipswich. It is one that the commissioner told me of to illustrate how important it can be and how it can be a catalyst for cultural development. It was about food trucks. An issue was raised with how difficult it was to get one registered in Ipswich. Their local events were suffering because of it. Because the council then got all the key parts of their bureaucracy in the one room to work out their key issues, the process was reduced from a pile of forms with a six-week turnaround to a single form with a response time coming within 24 hours.

I conclude by saying that I support making this important body permanent, but it should be given the additional, justifiable, sensible powers that we have suggested. That is the only way the Small Business Commissioner can properly advocate for the biggest issues facing our small businesses, for disaster support from floods to COVID, red-tape reductions, cost reductions to improve operating conditions and to generally help drive cultural change within our regulators. I commend all the small businesses in my part of the Gold Coast. I hope making this body permanent will help them survive and thrive as we go through these challenging times.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Before calling the next member, I will correct a statement I made a minute ago. The members for Maroochy and Mudgeeraba have been ordered out of the chamber and so their warning is no longer valid. We will proceed on that basis.

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.01 pm): I rise in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill. It is not news to anybody in this place that the last two years have been beyond tough for our small businesses. Small businesses were at the front line of the pandemic. They kept Queenslanders safe by following the health requirements every step of the way and supplying essential services. For that we owe them a lot. As COVID has continued in its reign, in Pumicestone we have seen the string of

storms and a wall of water inundate businesses across my communities and that, more than anything else, is why Queensland businesses deserve the support of a permanent Small Business Commissioner as advocate, supporter and cheerleader.

Small business families are working families and Pumicestone is served by thousands upon thousands of them, with health, disability care, personal services, construction and trades businesses very strongly represented. These are not CEOs with deep pockets. Unlike the Prime Minister, they get up each day and go to work for their families and communities. I myself owned and ran small businesses for over 10 years, largely working with emerging businesses to help them grow, so I recognise the struggles that those small businesses face, although nothing in my experience would have prepared me for the challenges of running a small business during a pandemic and then the recent flood events.

On that note though, I do want to express my concern that flood impacted small business owners in my community who are impacted in their personal and home capacities are in the position where they can only claim \$1,000 in federal support grants from the Morrison government. That is absolutely shameful because part of getting small businesses back on their feet is getting them back in their homes. Where New South Wales business owners and community members can claim \$3,000, in Queensland they can only claim \$1,000. That is a scathing indictment on the do-nothing Morrison government.

Turning to my own experience in small business, I do wish that I had had access to the crafted supports offered by the Palaszczuk government during that time. I am in particular a loud and proud advocate for the Mentoring for Growth program and try my best to spread the word about its benefits across the business community in Pumicestone. Then, of course, our Small and Medium Enterprise Procurement Policy backs Queensland businesses by ensuring that 25 per cent of all government purchases are from those small and medium enterprises.

When COVID hit small businesses, our government massively stepped up its support. From the very beginning supporting small businesses was a central part of our \$14.5 billion economic recovery plan. That plan has kept over 334,000 Queenslanders in jobs. We brokered a \$600 million joint state and federal small business support package that protected thousands of small businesses and the jobs they support. We invested \$25 million in our Big Plans for Small Businesses strategy. We have invested another \$10 million to establish this permanent Small Business Commissioner office.

In Pumicestone, I note that 73 businesses shared in over \$580,000 from the small business adaptation grant program. The differences that those grants made were substantial in financial terms, but in human terms the impact of them cannot be explained. I think of David and Katrina White, who run White Ridge Farm in my electorate, a small tourism business set in beautiful bushland at Elimbah. The White family absolutely personify the can-do attitude of small businesses everywhere. Whether you would like to hand feed a llama, cuddle an alpaca or get your photo taken with Gypsy the camel, I suggest that everybody with young children should visit White Ridge Farm.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns Farmer David and Farmer Katrina spent their time hand building new attractions and infrastructure at the farm. Their attitude was that if they could use recycled materials, thrifted equipment or draw on their own skills, effort and knowhow to improve their business they would not draw even \$1 from their hard-earned business income. From chicken sheds to playgrounds, hayrides to fencing, Farmer Dave and Farmer Katrina drew on their creativity and sheer hard work to make their business even better.

When they did receive a small business adaptation grant they were able to invest the whole amount in promoting their business through billboards and marketing and promotion training and that support really helped them flourish. Sadly, they have since had floodwaters through their home and their new hayride has been wiped out. I wish Farmer David and Farmer Katrina very well. They are incredibly resilient people. If only our Prime Minister for New South Wales would give impacted Queenslanders the same support as those in National Party areas of the Northern Rivers. Maybe the New South Wales coalition supports their National Party more strongly than occurs in Queensland.

In hard times our Pumicestone community goes in to bat for our local small businesses. I thank our vibrant, active and supportive Bribie Business Breakfast Networking group and pass on my best wishes to founder Craig McShane. Craig has recently made the move to Tasmania. He will be very much missed by the Bribie business community. I also acknowledge my local chambers of commerce, the brand new and dynamic Greater Caboolture Chamber of Commerce, as well as the longstanding Bribie Island Chamber of Commerce. I look forward to working with my chambers to promote the benefits of the new permanent Small Business Commissioner and all the other small business supports that our Palaszczuk government offers.



We know that the Small Business Commissioner was a success during the complexities of COVID-19 and making the role permanent is even more important as we recover from the floods. Let us look at the achievements of the office to date. The Office of the Small Business Commissioner has reduced the costs of disputes for small businesses. So far more than two-thirds of leasing disputes managed by the commissioner have been resolved by mediation or informal dispute resolution. From my time supporting small and emerging businesses I think this is perhaps one of the most important aspects of the role. So often when a small business finds themselves in hot water legally they are confused about their options and obligations. They assume obtaining proper advice will be financially crippling and that is especially the case in franchise and retail leasing disputes where there is a big disparity in negotiating power between the parties. The commissioner has also collaborated with the newly established Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction, continuing to deliver small business regulatory reform to assist with recovery.

Our small business support measures have worked and we see the evidence in Queensland's economic recovery. We built our economic recovery plan on the back of our world-leading health response and the results speak for themselves. Now we are swiftly rolling out state government grants for flood impacted businesses and giving that hope and support as we recover. As I doorknocked impacted households in Beachmere, Bribie and Caboolture, many locals identified as small business owners and were very glad to receive information. Time after time small business owners told me that during COVID and since, our strong health response kept the doors of their businesses open. They particularly acknowledged the Premier's role and leadership in achieving that.

The LNP talk a big game on small business every time they stand up on matters of this kind, but at the end of the day what is their record? Of course, when they were in government they abolished the Small Business Commissioner so there was no dedicated advocacy role for Queensland small businesses. In his former role, the member for Clayfield cut \$700,000 from the Mentoring for Growth program. The LNP completely failed to deliver on their promise to lift the payroll tax exemption from \$1 million to \$1.6 million and, of course, the CCIQ complained that the LNP actually oversaw an increase in red tape during their time in government.

The Liberal Party claims to represent small businesses but they sell them out in favour of big business every day of the week. As the Premier has asked over and over, where is the great Queensland National Party when it comes to standing up for small and family businesses in the regions? We cannot forget that two long years ago the member for Nanango would have flung Queensland's borders wide open before people were vaccinated and our small business community would have been decimated as a result. The LNP just do not back Queensland small businesses.

It has taken Labor to make the Small Business Commissioner permanent once more and bring Queensland into line with other states. Under our Palaszczuk Labor government, unemployment is at the lowest rate since 2008 and Queensland is powering forward with strong economic growth. I note the member for Bonney's comments lionising the delivery of services by the Small Business Commissioner and yet suggesting that somehow her role is insufficiently independent. You cannot have it both ways, member. It is Labor that backs small businesses. We always have, we always will and on that basis I commend the bill to the House.



**Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (12.11 pm): I rise to speak on the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. This bill aims to permanently establish a Queensland Small Business Commissioner and supporting office. I also rise to speak in support of the LNP amendments. The explanatory notes state that the objectives of the bill are to establish a statutory basis for dispute resolutions relating to retail tenancy disputes, enable mediation for commercial leasing and small business franchise disputes, and transition from focusing on the response to COVID-19 impacts on small business. The goal is to expand the role and support for small business.

Collectively, small businesses are the biggest employer in Queensland. They are family businesses, often run across several generations. They are owned by mums and dads. They are the backbone of both the economic and social fabric of our communities. Without them our communities would not thrive. In Gympie the majority of our 4,427 businesses are small and family businesses. Small and family businesses carry an enormous risk, which demonstrates their faith in their business, their product and their region. They invest, often with no guaranteed income. They put everything they own on the line so that they can employ staff, pay themselves and create and deliver goods and services needed in their region. Small businesses need a powerful voice and a strong advocate, a strong cop on the beat, that does more than just resolving disputes and mediating tenancy disputes.

This bill fails that test. It fails to deliver the commissioner sufficient powers to properly serve the interests of all small businesses. A lot of trust has been lost in this government. Time and time again, the government has proved to be more obsessed with grand announcements that are repeated ad nauseam. They are shallow announcements. Too often it is more interested in the spin than the delivery. Too often the hype does not match the delivery.

Submissions show that small and family businesses want the commission to have the tools to actually help. They do not want it to be just another body that adds more rules and red tape. It must be a one-stop shop. The commissioner must not be hamstrung by red tape. The commissioner must be independent, otherwise confidence in the commission will be compromised. The commissioner needs increased powers to gather information. Under the current framework, the obligation to act in good faith is used regularly by mediators to ensure constructive mediation, but that no longer exists in this bill.

There needs to be clarity around what is defined as a small business. The government might find that hard because it prefers to deal only with big government, big unions and big business. Having a vague definition with discretion provided to the commissioner potentially interferes in the dispute resolution process. The bill also misses opportunities to deliver further protections for small business. It could have provided a mechanism for small business to deal with business-to-business disputes—for example, payment disputes involving a small business and a larger business—but it does not.

Too often with this government the rhetoric does not match the walk. Independent commissioners are hamstrung by this government. The commissioner needs to be independent to properly advocate. That is particularly important when state government policy or activities are involved. The commissioner is unduly dependent on the executive for administrative support and direction. The statement of reservation notes—

The bill fails to provide the Commissioner with the ability to:

- initiate inquiries and investigations into areas of concern for small business; and
- compel state government departments and entities to cooperate in such investigations

It also states that the commissioner should report to the parliament. These omissions undermine the commissioner's freedom to act in the best interests of its principal client, small business.

The Small Business Commissioner did not appear before the committee yet was present in person to observe the proceedings. Despite having 30 minutes additional hearing time available, the Labor chair refused the request from the deputy chair, the member for Southern Downs, for the commissioner to address the committee.

The Small Business Commissioner must be independent of the minister. It must be independent so that the business community can have trust in the role. That is why the LNP proposes to amend the clauses on the ministerial direction and retain only the statement of expectations. The bill provides no power to obtain information for the commission to influence government departments to provide information that would enable the resolution of issues. The LNP amendments will add a clause that gives the commissioner power to obtain information from government agencies and entities. I urge the government to support our amendments.

Small and family businesses have been hit hard. In Gympie they had to deal with COVID-19 restrictions and rules devised in the Brisbane CBD—devised with no appreciation for their impact in regional areas. Now Gympie is dealing with the impacts of flooding. The government restricted day trip travel to a 50-kilometre radius that was impractical in regions such as Gympie. It made no sense for those wanting to access the Cooloola Coast. It put enormous pressure on our businesses. At one point, Rainbow Beach businesses experienced more than a 90 per cent decline in revenue. One reported a 97 per cent decline. Those that had to completely close experienced a decline of more than 90 per cent in their revenue.

For two years, small and family businesses have battled to stay open. Small businesses are struggling now more than ever. MGA Independent Retailers and MGA Timber Merchants Australia trade under brands such as Drakes, FoodWorks, Friendly Grocers, the various IGA and Spar stores, Mitre 10, and Home Timber and Hardware. They are a family and privately owned community business that employs 21,000 full-time, part-time and casual employees across seven days. In their submission they said—

... larger retailers have managed to cope with the virus in the community better than our members as they are well supported, equipped, and financially resourced. In comparison, it cannot be said that the same luxury is afforded to our members who rely heavily upon services such as the Small Business Commissioners ... to assist them in navigating the complexity of issues associated with the small business.

In February the CCIQ pulse survey showed business confidence is down 16.9 per cent from the last quarter, which is the lowest rate since September 2020. Sales and revenue were down 6.9 per cent in the last quarter and are still falling. Employment levels were down 4.5 per cent and 63 per cent of businesses and staff were impacted by mental health issues. Small business owners are facing a storm of issues as they try to get back on their feet. There are issues from staff shortages, people staying at home, testing regimes, isolation rules and a lack of building materials for repairs. Businesses told the surveyors that problems include: people being more cautious, distressed and staying at home more; a lack of confidence in the economy; the impact of COVID on people's work and incomes and, therefore, their ability to spend; and now, as financial support for businesses disappears and with restrictions gone, employers will not invest or engage more staff because it is too risky.

For the past two years the LNP has regularly called on the government to improve the communication and transparency around COVID-19 restrictions and health directives for small business. We have repeatedly put suggestions on the table for a support package, including targeted grants, payroll tax relief and sick leave cover. Revenue has been slashed and employment is down and we have a government with no plan. The lack of action has left small and family businesses with nothing but uncertainty. We need clear and consistent messaging to restore confidence and give business owners hope for their future. The state government should immediately consult with businesses and develop a plan for business recovery. I urge support for the LNP amendments to give genuine support and assistance to small and family businesses through a properly resourced and supported Small Business Commission.



**Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (12.19 pm): Perhaps the member for Gympie had his head buried in the sand during COVID, because there was a significant amount of support for small businesses. The Labor Palaszczuk government not only stepped up but also delivered. Many businesses in my electorate were the beneficiaries of that. It is interesting that the member for Gympie talked about that. Should we also remind him that their government abolished the Small Business Commissioner when they were in government? Flip-flop—what is your position on that? Are you standing up for it or are you not standing up for it? You were not standing up for it back in the day.

The member for Gympie talks about his flood-affected businesses. Perhaps he might pick up the phone to the 'Prime Minister for New South Wales' and ask him to make sure he delivers the equivalent amount of flood money to Queensland as he is paying to New South Wales. I encourage him to do that because, to date, we have not heard anything from that side with regard to making sure that Queenslanders get their fair share.

In line with that, we should also do the same with regard to the budget. Queensland stepped up during COVID—not just the small businesses but the consumers in Queensland who have backed our small businesses, spent money and supported them to keep them going by contributing to income tax and GST. We have been contributing quite significantly to the coffers of the federal government. I want to make sure that we in Queensland get our fair share. I have not heard anything from those opposite saying that they will ask to guarantee that happens.

In Queensland, small business represents over 97 per cent of businesses statewide and employs 44 per cent of private sector workers—that is, almost one million Queenslanders working in small businesses. In my electorate alone, I have 6½ thousand small businesses. If we look behind those very impressive statistics, we know that there is so much more to it. These small businesses are the heart and hubs of our communities. They are our families, our friends and our neighbours. They are often our first job and are always ready to donate a prize for the local fete, trivia night or community event.

I am incredibly proud of all the small businesses in my electorate. I have some outstanding ones. As a result of that, I very proudly run the Bayside Business of the Month, which is selected by the community. They nominate a range of people. I work with the local chambers, the Manly Harbour Village Chamber and Wynnum Commerce Inc. and with our local businesses. Last month, our very fabulous Port Stop Cafe was the recipient of my Bayside Business of the Month, because they sell the best pies in Queensland. If members are ever down my way—

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms PEASE:** It is a big call. They are fantastic. Richie is the chef. It is open from 3 am to 3 pm. There is plenty of time to get there. His pies, particularly his leek, chicken and mushroom pies, are to die for. If members are down my way, let me know as I will give them the address.

**Ms Grace:** No, you are coming with us!

**Ms PEASE:** Absolutely. I will be popping out there on Friday, because he also makes fresh ones that you can take home and heat up for dinner, which I do. As I said, small businesses are the heart and soul of my community, as they are for everyone's community: from Steve at Tru-Blu Trophies to software developers, homeware shops, cafes, retail, high-end restaurants—we now have some fabulous high-end restaurants—butchers, bakers, mechanics, builders, plumbers and electricians. The list is endless.

Early this month, I attended the BWIB, which is the Bayside Women in Business International Women's Day event. I was delighted to spend the morning with 70 local businesses to hear from Elena Gosse. What a powerhouse is Elena. She is not only a caring mother, daughter and wife; but also a Russian immigrant and now CEO of AIS Water. Currently, she employs over 60 people and she delivers innovative water treatment options for swimming pools. Most importantly, she is also the champion of the Queensland Women's Legal Service and is a great advocate for supporting women escaping from domestic and family violence.

The Office of Small Business and the Small Business Commissioner also attended the event. They were there handing out advice and supporting other local small businesses. We on this side of the House know how important small business is. I have talked about the fact that they create jobs and keep our community strong. Small business is big business. Queensland small businesses have shown remarkable resilience throughout the pandemic and have come through due to their ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

The Palaszczuk government has supported small businesses through the pandemic with the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan, as I have spoken about earlier, putting small businesses at the very heart of the recovery program. This plan was underpinned by \$14.5 billion in recovery, member for Gympie. I am not sure whether the member for Gympie's electorate was aware of those initiatives.

The government has committed more than \$2.5 billion in business support since March 2020, and hundreds of small businesses are benefiting from these initiatives. We have also set an SME procurement target of 25 per cent, meaning \$4 billion into the hands of Queensland small businesses. This bill will ensure that the Office of Small Business Commissioner can continue to support this hugely important sector. Outstandingly, I know that the Small Business Commissioner's office has helped many of my small businesses during the pandemic, assisting them with problems with their rent, problems they were having with their lease et cetera.

The commissioner's vision is to enable and empower small businesses to be productive and offers a collaborative advocacy that enhances operating conditions. It provides fast and fair assistance and informs small businesses and the public to make better decisions.

My mum ran a small business. She employed and empowered, might I add, many women. I too have run small businesses. I know firsthand the amount of work that goes into running a small business. I thank and commend each and every one of my small businesses for everything that they do. I make a personal call out to Shanice from Manly Golden Crust Bakery who contacted me just the other day because she wants to find someone to assist in donating her end of bread to a community organisation. That is just one. That happens with all small businesses. In turn, I am ensuring that I support all of my small businesses, just as the Labor Palaszczuk government supports small businesses.

I also acknowledge all members of the committee who worked on this bill, because it is really important that we acknowledge all members—not just one side of the House—as they all work hard on it. They all bring something to the table during committee hearings. I also acknowledge the committee secretariat and thank them for their great work. I also thank the minister, who does an outstanding job and is very committed to local small business. I know firsthand that she has come out and seen many of my local small businesses. It is really lovely to have her out. I will take her to the Port Stop Cafe.

**Ms Farmer** interjected.

**Ms PEASE:** You will have to. It is sensational. I commend the bill to the House.



**Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (12.27 pm): I have been in small business all my life. I was in business with my father and my family. I have just come to realise that the advice my father gave me was completely wrong, because he said, 'Leopards can't change their spots.' Now we see the LNP. They are changing. Suddenly they love the Small Business Commissioner, yet they sacked the Small Business Commissioner. Isn't it amazing that they have completely changed sides? They said, 'Great, we will fight. We are not happy with what the Palaszczuk government has done for small business.' Since the Palaszczuk government came to power, over 368,000 jobs have been created in this state. Over 200,000 have been created since 2020.

I refer to the recent floods. One of the first people to visit my electorate after the first flood was our small business minister, who met and talked with small business people, guiding them through the process of making sure that we could get them back up and open again and back on their feet. They have not forgotten that our small business minister was one of the first people through their door to help them, to talk to them and to work out how they could get their doors open. This is what a good Labor government does: we talk about small business. That side of the House always say that they are the champions for small business. Let us get in the Tardis and go back a little bit, because all the reform for small business has come from Labor governments.

I have been in small business all my life. I can remember when the Goss government came to power. It was the Goss government that brought in the retail tenancy act. It was the first government to make sure that small businesses were looked after when they had to deal with shopping centre landlords. I had to do this because I had shops in shopping centres. Small business owners were always at a disadvantage when they had to go to these multinationals to try to renegotiate a lease. We saw that reform through the Goss government. We saw more reforms from the Beattie and Bligh governments.

Then we had the Newman government. In small business every time the tills stopped turning over and the takings dropped it was when we had LNP governments. I survived the Borbidge-Sheldon government of 1995-96. Then we had 'Cyclone Newman'. I can tell members that he was not good for small business. Those on that side of the House forget about that. Every time they come to power federally or in this state they cut wages. What they do is cut the discretionary spending of the average person. They believe the multinationals are cheaper. They believe by cutting jobs and cutting wages they are helping small business people, but they are not. It is not hard to understand.

I support this bill because I believe the Small Business Commissioner is a must. I am glad that this legislation will ensure the Small Business Commissioner is in place permanently.

I had some papers dropped off to me at my office. I will refer to Des Houghton's column in the *Courier-Mail*, which, I will be honest, I never actually read.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** The peanut gallery over there is getting a bit upset at the moment. We will give them some oxygen and let them vent and let their lungs have a bit of a go. Remember that Des is the promotions officer for the LNP. What we see in Des's column on a Saturday we see from this mob on Tuesday in parliament. One does not have to be Einstein to work out the connection. This is what Des wrote—and I am going to ask the mob over there who gave him this information—

Two dozen trains an hour will be required to meet demand on the cross-river railway for the 2032 Brisbane Olympics.

Those figures are contained in leaked Rollingstock Expansion Program documents.

Really! Everyone knew that. He continues—

They say 65 additional six-car trains will be needed "to meet transport demand for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games and to maintain service reliability at current service levels on the newly sectorised network.

"The trains procured ... will also ensure that Cross River Rail is able to realise its full potential of 24 trains per hour."

This is where it gets interesting. He continues—

The state government has already announced a \$7.1bn project for the 65 new trains to be built at Torbanlea near Maryborough. It's another pander to the unions—

that is unusual coming from Des—

with the construction, testing and maintenance of the new trains to be conducted within Queensland by government decree—

That is new too—especially to them. Fancy building trains in Queensland! Can members imagine it! It is something that they cannot imagine.

**Ms Grace:** Why don't we bring them from India?

**Mr SAUNDERS:** Why don't we bring them from India? Why don't we bring them from China or anywhere else? Do not forget that Des is the publicity officer for the LNP. It gets better—

Taxpayers will suffer. I'm told the trains could have been built much cheaper overseas.

Now we know where those opposites stand. I say to them: come to see my small business people in the Maryborough electorate and tell them that you want to build trains overseas; tell them that the workers at the train factory will not be spending money in the small businesses in my community. We know where they stand.

We knew this before the 2020 election. I have said in this place before that the Thursday night before the 2020 election they showed us what they thought of small business in my area. They sneakily put their budget estimates out. There was no money for the Cross River Rail trains to be built in my electorate, but there was money for them to be built overseas. As I have often said, their candidate deflated like a balloon. He disappeared and was gone. He packed up his things and went. He knew after that that there was a lot of trouble coming their way.

That mob over there think that they are the doyens of small business—that they are the champions out there with their badges on. I know who the champions of small business are. It is always Labor governments. Labor governments make sure that workers have money in their pockets. They make sure that workers are looked after. They make sure that workers have a job. They make sure that workers have a full-time job and not a part-time job.

This federal government is absolutely disgraceful. I hope that tonight they work out that Queensland exists and that we are not cut off the map of Australia and gone. In the Wide Bay and Hinkler electorates we need both federal members to step up. We desperately need them to go to Scott Morrison and say, 'Give us money for our regions and for our small business people.' Why are my people who have been flooded being treated differently to those who have been flooded in New South Wales? Why are my small business operators being treated differently to the small business operators in New South Wales? Where are the voices of the federal LNP members for my city which has suffered flooding? People should see the look on residents' faces. The federal members and the federal government pander to New South Wales instead of Queensland.

The Small Business Commissioner is a must for this state because small businesses need help. I was in small business all my life. My family employed a lot of people. When a Labor government is in power they make sure that workers have a job and that workers have spending money. If their wages are cut and their jobs are threatened they put away their wallets and do not spend in small businesses. They go to the multinationals or do not spend. I saw it in the Borbidge-Sheldon years. They were tough years when they came to power, particularly after the good work of the Goss government.

We saw it with 'Cyclone Newman' too. He tore through the small business community. I saw people getting sacked. I saw what happened in my community. These people opposite say that they support small business. I never heard one voice stand up for small business between 2012 and 2015. I was a small business operator. I was walking through my community talking to small business people. I never heard anything from anyone on that side. Did their front bench raise even a whisper about small business in their meetings? They never raised it in the community.

They have the hide to come in here and tell us that we do not know about small business. They tell us, 'You have never been in small business.' How many of those opposite have been in small business? I have been in small business all my life. It is only Labor that makes sure that small business is looked after. I commend this bill to the House.



**Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.37 pm): Like the member for Maryborough, I too am a proud former small business employee. I am proud to support this bill and the role of the Small Business Commissioner. It is a very important one.

I had the great pleasure of having a fantastic conversation with Small Business Commissioner Ms Maree Adshead at the Diwali festival, of all places, last year. That is remarkable for a few reasons. First is the fact that our Small Business Commissioner understands the value of attending not just business events in the community but more general community events where she has the opportunity to engage more broadly and promote the work of the Office of the Small Business Commissioner in the community not just in small business. She knows, as we do on this side of the House, that everyone knows a small business owner and it is only a matter of time before those small business owners may need assistance. That is where the role of the Small Business Commissioner comes in.

As we have heard, the role of Small Business Commissioner is wide and varied. The temporary commissioner functions include, but are not limited to: providing information and advisory services to the public about matters relevant to small businesses, particularly recently in relation to COVID response measures; assisting small businesses in reaching an informal resolution for disputes relating to small business leases; administering in a mediation process prescribed by regulation for responding to the COVID-19 emergency in relation to small business tenancy disputes; advocating on behalf of small business to the state, the Commonwealth, another state or local government or any other entity involved in administering a matter that is in any way relevant to small businesses; and working collaboratively with the equivalent of the commissioner in other states or the Commonwealth to enhance conditions for small business.

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner provides a monthly newsletter which is accessible online or small businesses can subscribe as well as check the social media channels that provide updates and information for small businesses on a wide range of topics and across agencies. This is not just limited to COVID or flooding support; it is all about the everyday issues that impact small businesses.

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner has a contact centre that small businesses or their advocates are able to call. They can also submit an inquiry online if they prefer to do it that way. They can talk to a staff member and receive personalised information and advice. The Queensland Small Business Commissioner has received feedback that small businesses are delighted to be able to speak to someone who can listen and help and not just be referred to a website for information. That has certainly been the case in my community, and I will touch more on that later.

As I said, when I called the commissioner's office to get a little bit more information on behalf of a local business owner, the person I spoke to was so kind and helpful. She had an excellent customer service ethic. I still remember our call about a year later because our interaction was such a positive one. Something that really struck me in our conversation was the statistic that she shared with me on the phone—that, by playing a mediating role, the Office of the Small Business Commissioner were able to work through well over half of their cases to reduce the rent where a business owner was in distress.

By playing a mediating role rather than coming in heavy-handed they were able to work through that at an early stage. It is critical that the Small Business Commissioner's office likes to get involved when that relationship is still a positive one, when it is still a good relationship. This is key because in my experience once a relationship is frayed it is that much harder to reach an outcome or a consensus. Members of the House will be aware that I worked in my family restaurant for many years.

**Ms Grace:** And what a great restaurant!

**Ms PUGH:** Indeed it was. I take the interjection from the member for McConnel. In working with many other restaurateurs I quickly came to realise that many small business owners do not own their business because they love the HR, the management and the business side of things; they love what their business does. My dad did not open a restaurant because he loved rostering and paying bills; he loved to cook and his partner loved to be front of house.

For many small business owners, not only is the bookkeeping and the management not their favourite part but a lot of them really dread it—so, too, with the difficult and delicate tasks like speaking with their landlord to negotiate in tough times like we saw during COVID or getting the best rates from their suppliers so they can be competitive with the bigger players who do get those lower prices on their supplies and can offer lower prices in the market. It is really tough for a lot of these small business owners to do that. These are not skills that necessarily come naturally to many business owners. Having the Small Business Commissioner not just for the advocacy but also for the support can be invaluable.

I would like to share a story from my community during COVID that involved the Small Business Commissioner in some small way. I have a very popular local business owner. Her business, because of the specific nature of it, was profoundly affected by COVID. In this particular case, this business owner is very business savvy. In fact, she used to be an accountant. In terms of qualifications and being across the numbers, there is nobody more qualified than this particular person. It was for this reason that she had come to the conclusion that she needed to ask her landlord for a small discount—about \$50 a week—in order to make her business viable going forward. It was going to be enough to help her while she worked her way out of COVID.

Her business had gone from being fully booked pre-COVID to being unable to operate for periods of time. She contacted me because she had confidence in her financial ability but not in her negotiating skills. She asked me for some advice. I reached out on her behalf to the Small Business Commissioner's office, who provided us with a template letter to help her ask for a rent reduction. She decided not to get the Small Business Commissioner's office involved at that stage, but I can tell the House that she felt incredibly comforted and supported knowing that if she needed the Small Business Commissioner they would be there.

She sent the letter, which I read—it was very well worded—and the landlord did not take it well. They told her there were other tenants lining up to take her place and she would not be getting the reduction and how dare she even ask. She called me very distressed and told me that she believed she would be evicted and she was already looking for an alternative location. She was quite distressed and we spoke a number of times over that week. I was concerned about how she had been treated. As I said, I thought the letter she sent was very reasonable and very respectful.

I am pleased to report to the House that this story has a happy ending. The lovely local business owner received a follow-up call from the landlord a week later accepting her request, albeit begrudgingly. I am really proud of her for stepping out of her comfort zone and starting the process, knowing that if she needed the Small Business Commissioner they were there to help. I thank the Small Business Commissioner for providing that template letter because it was incredibly useful, even though it was a difficult thing for my small business owner to do.

I cannot overstate, as I said, the importance for many small business owners of knowing they have that support there, somebody they can turn to for advice if and when they need it. I think for a lot of people just knowing that there is someone they can call on gives them the confidence to take that initial step themselves. That is certainly what I saw in this case.

I love to promote the work of the Small Business Commissioner far and wide. I know that she has a wonderful supporter in our fantastic Minister for Small Business, who loves coming to my electorate of Mount Ommaney because, member for McConnel, we do have the very best small businesses in the whole of Queensland!


**Ms Grace:** Hear, hear!

**Ms PUGH:** It is true. I have said it on the record in this House, so it must be true. I cannot mislead the House. Mount Ommaney has the best small businesses in Queensland.

I have some time left on the clock, so I will put in an early pitch for my small business awards that will be coming up later this year. As I said, the Mount Ommaney small businesses are so fantastic that we need an entire awards ceremony. They are like the Logies of Mount Ommaney. All members are welcome to attend.

**Mr Power:** Without slapping!

**Ms PUGH:** That is the Oscars. This year for the first time I will be delighted to invite our Small Business Commissioner to attend those awards. Having spoken to her about them last year, I know that she was very excited by the concept. Right across the length and breadth of Queensland we do have wonderful small businesses. I know that our Small Business Commissioner and our Minister for Small Business are so engaged in making sure that those small businesses get the assistance and the information they need. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (12.47 pm): I rise to support the Small Business Commissioner Bill before us today. Like the last two speakers, the member for Maryborough and the member for Mount Ommaney, I, too, previously worked in small businesses. I would like to put on the record that I dispute the comment made by the member for Mount Ommaney. The best small businesses in Queensland are in Hervey Bay.

My father worked in small business for a long time as well. For most of his working life he was a small business owner. He owned his small businesses a number of decades ago and during that time the regulation around small business was very difficult. I can recall as a young man speaking with my father about the difficulties he had when he went to deal and negotiate his leasing arrangements with particularly big business who owned those premises and how they more or less had the power. He felt that he was always behind the eight ball when it came to a negotiating situation.

It goes without saying that the importance small business plays in the everyday life of Queenslanders and the Hervey Bay community cannot be underestimated. Small business is the lifeblood of the economy on which Hervey Bay and, indeed, the rest of Queensland and Australia relies. Small business drives our future growth. It is estimated that nearly 449,000 small businesses operate in Queensland. Of those, 2,900 are in Hervey Bay which represents about 97.7 per cent of all businesses in Hervey Bay. Putting that into perspective, it is one small business for every 18.4 people in Hervey Bay. Small business generates \$120 billion per year in the Queensland economy and employs approximately 42 per cent of all private sector workers in Queensland.

This bill before the House is important in ensuring that small business owners get the support they need when working with the myriad of frameworks they need to operate under when doing their important business. The Small Business Commissioner is currently a temporary role. This bill, amongst other matters, enshrines the Small Business Commissioner as a permanent fixture in the small business landscape in Queensland.

Small business by its nature is by and large made up of mums and dads. By definition, a small business is one that has 20 workers or less, defined as non-employing, micro or small business. Because of the size and nature of most small businesses, access to assistance on matters related to



small business is generally difficult to obtain, not because of the availability of information but because of the complexities of dealing in the small business regulatory space and, more importantly, because of their lack of time and money to seek support.

As part of the 2020 election, the Palaszczuk government committed to the permanent establishment of a Small Business Commissioner and supporting office. It also was a key initiative under the Big Plans for Small Business strategy, which was released in June 2021. The QSBC and supporting office was temporarily established in May 2020 to provide support for the small business sector impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We know the great job they did during that time. The act has been amended to extend the QSBC arrangements until the role can be permanently established under separate legislation, which is in line with the government's election commitment. Transitional arrangements have been enacted which allow for the continuation of information, advice and dispute resolution services for small businesses to ensure there is no gap in support until the permanent QSBC is established. Prior to this, many small businesses were unable to resolve issues informally and quickly, with minimal support available to assist in achieving an early resolution. As a result, Queensland small businesses were often required to pursue more formal legal channels to resolve disputes than those in other states or to access national systems of support.

In my electorate of Hervey Bay, small business is paramount in driving the local economy on a number of key fronts: economically, by driving commercial activity and stimulating the local economy; jobs wise, by being a main driver on employment in our key sectors, like our tourism industries, our retail and our many commerce functions, like accountancy and financial advice and services; and through the many hundreds of various sector activities, be they business or social, that small businesses weave through the fabric of our community.

We have small businesses like 50's Diner which is on the Esplanade in Scarness. It is a great young family business which is making its way. Proprietors Ross and Kelly employ a number of locals and provide a great vibrant and active environment for locals and tourists alike. They have only just celebrated their first anniversary, and I must say that they were brave to take on a new small business during COVID. Ross and Kelly have negotiated their way through the pandemic. They have done all the right things by their community, although this at times was detrimental to their bottom line, let alone being personally stressful for them because of the behaviour of some of their potential clients.

Ross and Kelly lease their business and have to legally, and compliance wise, deal with the requirements of today's small business structures and still operate through their 12- to 16-hour days. As young business owners, they have enormous energy to achieve and to work for themselves, their family and their staff. When they are confronted by the challenges of the regulatory and legal framework system, they confront it head on and, as they did with the COVID-19 regulations, take it in their stride. They know that the Palaszczuk government is supporting them through their challenges by providing a service like the Small Business Commissioner and its office. This is a comfort and a backup for timely support and advice.

As mentioned, with this bill the QSBC will provide a central point of contact in relation to matters affecting small businesses. The QSBC will provide information and advisory services to the public about matters relating to small business as well as assist disputing parties to reach formal resolution, including by facilitating the exchange of information between parties. The QSBC will also provide alternative dispute resolution services and administer a dispute resolution process for small business disputes. It will also advocate on behalf of small businesses to the state, the Commonwealth, another state, local governments or any other entity involved in administering a matter related to small business.

As local members, we all know of incidents where small businesses, because of their limited size, have difficulties dealing with larger corporations and organisations when negotiating matters related to their particular circumstances. I mentioned this with the history of my own father, which was decades ago. It is great to know that in this current regulatory environment we have this legislation in place. The issues can be complex or they can be just run-of-the-mill disputes related to everyday business activities. One of the key areas of the bill that will assist small businesses will be by giving the QSBC the ability to work through with small businesses the many and varied areas of these disputes, particularly providing a front door for small business disputes in Queensland.


By its nature, the main focus of the bill is in the area of dispute resolution. Why is that? It is because we are finding more and more complexities of business arrangements between small businesses and large corporations becoming more litigant. Small businesses do not have the firepower associated with the major businesses, and the power imbalance between the two has grown somewhat over the decades and tilted towards larger corporations, which use this power imbalance to dominate

the small business in a business partnership. This is not healthy for the small business owners, it is not healthy for business competition and it is definitely not healthy for the consumer in our small towns and cities in the regions. Having the Small Business Commissioner available to assist them during these disputes allows small businesses to balance the scales a little by giving them the assistance they need in these matters. The QSBC will provide a front door for all small business disputes in Queensland, and that is a much needed outcome for small businesses not only in Hervey Bay but across Queensland.

It is noted in the Education, Employment and Training Committee report No. 14 that stakeholders were unanimously in support of the permanent establishment of the Small Business Commissioner and were generally supportive of the elements of the proposed bill. There was consultation with many and varied individuals and peak industry bodies, and they all helped inform the permanent commissioner model that we are discussing here and enshrining in legislation with this bill. It goes without saying that this legislation has gone through its full process and the policy objectives contained in the bill give full effect to the government's election commitment to establish a permanent Small Business Commissioner and supporting office. As recently as late last year, I had the pleasure of meeting the temporary Small Business Commissioner in Hervey Bay and I was able to talk with her about matters related to small business, particularly in regional and rural areas, and about what she saw as the longer-term outcomes of small business disputes and also about the role.

I congratulate the Education, Employment and Training Committee on its work on the bill, ably led by the chair of the committee, the member for Redlands, and the deputy chair, the member for Southern Downs. I also wish to acknowledge the work of other committee members for their contributions to the passage of this bill. I congratulate the Minister for Small Business for bringing this bill before the House because I think it is an important bill that is necessary to give support to small businesses Queensland wide to deal with a growing range of disputes and litigation in business generally. It also assists small businesses by giving new business owners in particular the support they need when they join the many hundreds of thousands of others who have put up their hands to work in a small business.

This Labor government has always been supportive of small business. Despite what those on the other side say, we have a record of supporting small business and we will continue to support our great small businesses in Queensland. I support the bill before the House.

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (12.57 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. The Small Business Commissioner Bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly and referred to the Education, Employment and Training Committee on 12 October 2021. The objectives of the bill are: to give effect to the Queensland government's commitments to permanently establish a Queensland Small Business Commissioner and a supporting office; to 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; and to cease the operation of the temporary commissioner on commencement of the permanent commissioner, including transitioning 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 committee, in its report No. 14 which was tabled in the Assembly on 26 November, has recommended to the Assembly that the bill be passed. The committee consulted widely with a range of peak bodies—which was further to the consultation that had been previously undertaken in preparation for this bill—with small business commissioners from other Australian jurisdictions as well as with the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman.

It is clear to all here in this Assembly that COVID-19 has had far-reaching implications, some of which were foreseen and acted upon and some of which were foreseen but not acted upon. Members on the other side should hang their heads in shame that Queenslanders were left without rapid antigen tests because their LNP federal colleagues did not listen to the expert advice which said that, as we transitioned out of this global pandemic, testing methods such as rapid antigen tests would be vital. Here in Queensland our government listens. We consult, we listen and we act. The National Cabinet endorsed the national code to apply to all tenancies that were suffering financial stress or hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as defined by the eligibility for the Commonwealth government's JobKeeper program.

Debate, on motion of Mr Russo, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

## MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

### Southern Queensland, Weather Event; Health System



**Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): On behalf of the opposition I wish to express our deepest sympathies to the families of the two flood victims—at North Branch and Kingsthorpe—and another missing. It is deeply concerning, following on from what has been a really tragic start to the year. There are several communities at the moment that are dealing with flooding, but I particularly highlight Dalby and Warra. I know that beaches on the Gold Coast are closed. There are flood warnings for the Nerang and Coomera rivers. Logan and Albert rivers have minor to moderate flooding. I know that there are over 100 roads closed across Queensland. On behalf of everyone on this side of the House, and indeed the parliament, we say to every Queenslander, please stay safe during these troubling times.

Queenslanders no longer trust this government to fix the health system. Of all the horror stories that we have told in this House, of all the brave victims who have sat in that gallery who have come forward and told their stories about the unacceptable delays waiting for an ambo to arrive, about the waiting list for the waiting list, the elective surgery delays, the stories from the brave health whistleblowers who have come forward and told us what it is like to work under a system like this one, the one that has left so many Queenslanders baffled as to the state of Queensland Health is that it took the opposition to reveal that Queensland was the only jurisdiction in calendar year 2019-20 where the wrong surgery was performed on the wrong patient causing that person to either be seriously hurt or dead. That is just unacceptable in a First World health system.

Imagine being the family. Imagine being the family of someone who went in for what may have been knee surgery and that person may have then had their heart operated on. Just imagine being that family. Imagine getting the phone call to say that that had happened. But did they receive the phone call? Did they receive the justice they deserve? I can say who they did not get the phone call from. They did not get the phone call from the health minister because the health minister did not know it had occurred. It follows a worrying—

**Mr Bailey:** It was before she was the minister, you nong! It was before she was the minister!

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order! Pause the clock! Member for Miller, I ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

**Mr BAILEY:** I withdraw.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** The minister withdrew, but I will take the interjection. The minister has quite rightly pointed out that the current minister was not the minister, but I dare say she does not have to look too far to get the answer because the Deputy Premier was in fact the minister. There has been a doctor who has just been unceremoniously dumped by his own factional colleague there.

One way or another, this family deserves justice. One way or another this family deserves an answer. It is a worrying trend of ministers in this state and the Premier refusing to get across their brief, refusing to answer the tough questions. During question time, they had no problems: briefs flying around, giving information from a decade ago, but not one person was able to answer sensible questions. What hospital did it occur in? What systems have been put in place to make sure it never happens again?

**Ms KING:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. My concern and my point of order is that, given the response received from the minister this morning, the Leader of the Opposition is in danger of misleading the House.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! When I am taking a point of order, I do not need assistance from anyone in this chamber. Member for Pumicestone, continue your point of order.

**Ms KING:** My point of order, Deputy Speaker, is that the Leader of the Opposition is coming dangerously close to misleading the House and I ask—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. There is a process for dealing with misleading the House. You will follow that process.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** We cannot trust this government to get an ambo to your door, we cannot trust this government to get people through the ED and now we cannot trust this government to do the right surgery on the right person. That is a deeply concerning trend: for the minister to be unaware of this incident, for the minister to have not ever made contact with the family, for the minister to sit in this House and not be able to answer the simplest of questions about a failing of a system, about a failure

of putting steps in place to ensure it never happens again to another Queensland family. Despite all the bits of paper that were flying around, one thing is beyond any doubt: Queensland is the only state where this occurred, and that is a deeply troubling scenario which must be rectified.

Why are we having this fight? I will tell you why we are having this fight: we are doing it on behalf of the patients and the brave people in the health system who are at breaking point, who are calling out, looking for somebody to be on their side, to give them an opportunity to heal the Queensland Health crisis.

You want to talk about trust? As of 10 minutes ago, before I walked in this place, the opposition still had not received a response to a question on notice that was due yesterday about severity assessment codes. Do you know what that data says, Mr Deputy Speaker? You will know. It is the internal report on errors made in hospitals. We would like to see that on behalf of the Queenslanders. We are determined to help staff drive the change they need to fix the Queensland Health crisis.

Just a few days ago, the opposition was able to reveal 911 pages of horror reading on the Queensland Health crisis. What did they show? They showed patients waiting over 10 hours for an ambulance to come. They showed a patient in a wheelchair waiting three hours at the end of a ramp. They showed a culture where ambos had to use their own cars to ferry themselves between stations. They showed a culture of a health system which the people no longer trust this government to fix.

Let me bring a few new facts from a little more recently. Last night there were ramping times at the PA of two hours and 20 minutes; at the Mater public of 3½ hours; at Ipswich where a brave family member sent me a photo just last night—

**Mr Bailey:** So stand up for more funding from Canberra. You never stand up for Queensland.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member for Miller.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Last night somebody waited five hours. Last Friday in Metro South, a 1A case waited half an hour. Imagine that—a 1A case waited half an hour. This is not the fault of the ambos. I hear the Minister for Transport saying, 'Stand up.' We have stood up. We will do two things in contrast to the government. We will demand from Canberra our fair share of funding regardless of who is there, whether it is blue or whether it is red. I will never play politics with health, whether it is—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is plenty enough noise outside this chamber today without us descending into a rabble in here.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** We will continue to be the voice for whistleblowers and patients. We will never play politics with health. We will step up; whether it is a government which wears a blue jersey or a red jersey in Canberra, we will demand our fair share. There will be a difference between us and those opposite. Let me tell honourable members the difference is we accept that health is a responsibility of the state government and we have put our solutions on the table to heal the health crisis. The shadow minister and I have gone around the state and done something that the government has stopped doing during its third term: we have listened. We have listened to people and they have put forward their solutions: better triaging, better resources, better data in real time and putting doctors and nurses back in charge. That is how we will heal the Queensland health crisis.

**Mr Brown** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Member for Capalaba, you are on a warning.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** We will continue to put forward our solutions to heal the Queensland health crisis. It is unacceptable for families to wait hours on the end of a phone when a frustrated paramedic is waiting hours at the end of a ramp. It is the result of a system where the emergency departments are overflowing because a government is refusing to listen and act on the solutions—the solutions that we are putting forward, the solutions that patients are putting forward, the solutions that our brave health workers on the front line are putting forward.

Trust matters in health. Queenslanders have given up trusting this government. When a government cannot deliver basic services, when a government cannot deal with the issues they are faced with and when a government cannot even conduct the right surgery on the right patient, you know health is in crisis in this state.

### Boyce, Mr C



**Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (2.11 pm): What an extraordinary spectacle we saw in this House just a few hours ago: an extraordinary demonstration of the complete irrelevance of the Leader of the Opposition. There was the member for

Callide; he got up, he put in his resignation and he stormed out of the chamber all in one go. It was obvious—completely obvious—that the Leader of the Opposition and the leadership team knew absolutely nothing about it. That is the esteem in which the Leader of the Opposition is held by the member for Callide. There was not one word of acknowledgement by the member for Callide—not one word of recognition even—that the Leader of the Opposition existed.

The former member for Callide is off to share some of his progressive world views with the likes of Senator Matt Canavan and Senator Gerard Rennick, opposing renewable energy projects and spouting his climate change denial. The former member for Callide did not just deny climate change; he actually welcomed it. The former member for Callide was the one who said in this House, 'We should celebrate, not fear, the modern warm era.' Colin Boyce has his work cut out for him in Flynn up against the hardworking, heavy industry supporting Matt Burnett. In the unfortunate event that he succeeds, he will end up where he started: on the opposition benches.

It reminds me of the member for Moggill, who unceremoniously had Bruce Flegg deposed in the hope of becoming a minister in the Newman government and has spent every one of his seven years in this House in opposition—226 sitting days. That allowed him to indulge in one of his great passions: the death penalty. I will at least give Colin Boyce his due. Colin Boyce was a crank, but at least he never pretended to be anything else. Colin Boyce was a member of the LNP who gave comfort to those who deny science and spout conspiracy theories, but he did so from the backbench. Compare that to the shadow minister for health, the member for Mudgeeraba, who does the same thing while sitting on the front bench.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr Boothman** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member for Mudgeeraba! Order, member for Theodore!

**Mr DICK:** The member for Mudgeeraba does so because the current Leader of the Opposition cannot or will not do anything about her ongoing membership of the nurses so-called professional association of Queensland. The person who would be the health minister under an LNP government pays membership dues to an organisation that is openly associated with anti-vaccination.

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Treasurer, resume your seat. Leader of the Opposition, you are on a warning.

**Mr DICK:** For all of the current Leader of the Opposition's talk on this issue—an issue he should be able to control—

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Resume your seat. Member for Chatsworth, you can join your leader on a warning. I had just called the House to order, I had warned a member and you immediately interjected.

**Mr DICK:** The options are clear for the Leader of the Opposition: compel the member for Mudgeeraba to abandon and disavow NPAQ, a fake union, or back the calls for NPAQ and their dangerous far-right theories peddled out of Bowen Hills to be shut down. If the member for Mudgeeraba will not abandon the conspiracy theorists in the hard right, then the current Leader of the Opposition should exercise his power to remove her from the front bench. I hazard a guess the Leader of the Opposition will not do it because the Leader of the Opposition cannot do it—

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Mudgeeraba, you can join them on a warning.

**Mr DICK:**—because the power no doubt lies in the back room of the LNP and the Leader of the Opposition does not have a key to the back room.

Today we saw all the confected outrage over integrity replaced by confected outrage over health. They have given up on their strategy. It turns out the LNP's integrity inferno has all the substance of the LNP's Bruce Highway duplication hoax and the fake Bradfield scheme. No wonder the member for Callide is leaving. Even he can see this LNP under the current leader is an ineffective political opposition, and everyone in the National Party in the LNP knows it. They cannot prosecute a line of argument, they cannot stick to a tactic, they cannot execute a strategy. The Leader of the Opposition is all over the shop. I say this: Queenslanders deserve better.

Tomorrow the Leader of the Opposition has a chance to finally show Queenslanders that he is on their side. When Scott Morrison fails to invest in Queensland, which we all know he will, then the Leader of the Opposition can take a stand. He can put aside the confected outrage about health and about the integrity inferno and he can call out Scott Morrison for his failure on Queensland. That is his history. That is Scott Morrison's history and it is the failure of the Leader of the Opposition to do anything or say anything or act in any way to support this. If he does not do that, then the member for Broadwater will remain the enfeebled, diminished leader of an organisation that has zero relevance to Queensland.

**Honourable members** interjected.

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

### Integrity in Government



**Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.17 pm): I am not going to be bullied by misogynous bullies from the other side of the House.

**Honourable members** interjected.

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

**Mr DICK:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at those words and I ask the member for Mudgeeraba to please withdraw them.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I have previously indicated I will take points of order in silence. I will start warning people and I will start asking people to leave the chamber if that behaviour continues. I will take some advice and I expect silence while I am taking that advice. The member has taken personal offence and I ask you to withdraw.

**Ms BATES:** I withdraw.

When governments give up on governing with integrity they give up on governing for you. It becomes more about governing for their mates, and it should never be about that. Governing is a privilege, but, now in its third term, this government seems to have forgotten that. When that happens important things begin to drift. Things drift so badly that the government begins to lose control of basic services, and we all know that this state government is losing control of Queensland Health.

I want to address the appointment of Shaun Drummond to act as the director-general of Queensland Health. Revelations have today shown that Mr Drummond is currently under investigation by the Crime and Corruption Commission. Let's consider that for a moment. The government has chosen to appoint someone who is under investigation by the state's corruption watchdog because he is suspected of corrupt conduct to act in the position of Queensland Health's director-general. You cannot make this stuff up. This is not some minor appointment. This is the most senior bureaucrat in Queensland Health who is tasked with ensuring that our health system runs safely and efficiently. This is the director-general of the portfolio which has the largest budget of any Queensland government department.

Just when you think that the Queensland government's integrity inferno could not burn any hotter, here we go. Mr Drummond is alleged to have bankrolled a private defamation action launched by four psychiatrists with Metro North's cash—public money, taxpayers' money. It is also alleged that Mr Drummond did this without seeking the approval of the then attorney-general. That is a check and balance which is rightly required but seems to have been conveniently missed on this occasion. What is more, this defamation action was taken against a disability pensioner over a blog post. I raised this issue back in February 2020 when interviewed by the ABC. I said back then that it was just disgusting. I weighed in on the Metro North scandal saying at the time—

The fact that taxpayers are funding to sue a [former] patient is just disgusting. Health bosses should be investigating patient complaints, not suing patients when they come forward to make these complaints.


Is that overkill? I will let Queenslanders be the judge.

The then attorney-general who was never consulted about the defamation case is, of course, now the Minister for Health. It is the same minister who Shaun Drummond, as acting director-general, now reports to. It should be noted that it was the health minister who appointed Mr Drummond to a newly minted position of Queensland Health's chief operating officer, a position that never existed before and one which reports directly to the minister. That sounds kind of like a director-general, doesn't it? How do you think that made the former director-general feel? Make no bones about it: Dr John Wakefield had the rug pulled out from underneath him in a very public fashion—so much so that those opposite shouted it from the rooftops. His authority was immediately compromised given the new role and, sure enough, he is now gone. A crystal ball was hardly required to see that one coming.

There are also questions over Mr Drummond's links to Deloitte, where he took up a position as a partner in the middle of last year. Public reports say that he is on a leave of absence from that position while he works for Queensland Health. Queensland Health, of course, would be a significant client of Deloitte, so how is that situation being juggled? How can he make decisions when a conflict of interest may exist? The issue has been canvassed with the state's Integrity Commissioner. I hope another laptop will not go missing if the Integrity Commissioner's advice does not fall the way the government would like it to! That is exactly what happened last time, isn't it? Maybe there will be more backgrounding done against the commissioner by the Premier's office. Who knows? This is the Queensland we now live in.

Given the integrity clouds closing in on Mr Drummond, the opposition is today questioning whether it is appropriate that he acts as director-general. The opposition believes that until these allegations have been appropriately investigated and then dismissed it is not proper for Mr Drummond to act as director-general. We know that an integrity inferno has ripped right through the government. Now we learn that Queensland Health has not been spared. We cannot have this hanging over our health system. Ramping across the state remains at highs we have not seen before. Some patients are waiting eight hours before they are off-loaded and treatment begins. We need Queensland Health's leadership to be solely focused on trying to fix the crisis at hand. We do not need another integrity distraction like this.

### Miller Electorate, Queensland Floods

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (2.22 pm): The recent floods in Queensland, from Wide Bay down to the border, had a particularly strong impact on my electorate and on many other electorates. In 132 streets in the electorate of Miller people had floodwaters through their houses. It is important to outline what flood damage is like: whole streets have piles of people's personal possessions covered in a brown, moist film of river mud and silt; wallpaper, furniture and floorboards in houses are wet and brown; your feet slip on the fresh mud after the floodwaters have gone down.

It is a terrible sight to see in piles on the street people's photographs and framed mementos—their high school certificates and the things they love that have been on the walls of their homes for years—now ruined; to see the street white, covered in plasterboard remnants; and to see gardens that people have loved for so long covered in brown film. When you meet these people, you can see in their eyes what is ahead of them for the next 12 to 18 months of their lives. Days later, the river silt and mud all over people's loved things bakes in the summer sun, resulting in stench. It is terrible for everybody involved.

These people deserve justice. They deserve respect. They deserve support from government in equal measure, and they are not getting it from the federal government. The federal government has said that flood victims in my electorate and in the electorates of every person in this House, including members of the opposition, deserve only a third of the support that flood victims in New South Wales get. It is offensive to treat flood victims differently in terms of financial advantage. I find it deeply offensive. I will stand up for my constituents until they get justice from the Morrison government.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** I find it offensive that those opposite who have flood victims in their electorates are interjecting instead of supporting me. The \$3,000 worth of support that New South Wales flood victims receive is what Queensland flood victims should get. Those members opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, should be supporting us to go into bat to get justice for them. Instead, it is just politics. It is offensive. There the Leader of the Opposition sits mute. He does not stand up for flood victims in this state because of his spineless attitude. He should be standing up to Canberra and getting justice for flood victims.

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

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I will take some advice first. Minister, please withdraw that unparliamentary language.

**Mr BAILEY:** I withdraw. It is offensive that we do not have a bipartisan position in Canberra to get justice for flood victims. People on the other side of the House should be standing up for their constituents, to get justice from Canberra, and they are not. It should be bipartisan. Tonight's federal budget provides an opportunity for this travesty to be rectified. Some 18 days this has gone on. How would you feel if you were a flood victim in my area looking at 12 to 18 months of recovery?

**Mrs Gerber:** You have been leaving whole communities out of the review.

**Mr BAILEY:** We have the member for Currumbin interjecting. She has flood victims in her electorate that she is not standing up for.

**Mrs Gerber:** A hundred per cent. Will you include them in the review?

**Mr BAILEY:** How dare she interject? We have a disaster package to help people raise their houses, a buyback scheme and money to help people build back better, yet Canberra will not even reply to us. These flood victims deserve justice and support. They are getting it from this government. They are getting it from our Premier in Queensland but they are not getting it from those opposite, who do not stand up for the flood victims in this state. You should all be ashamed of yourselves.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Minister, your comments will come through the chair or not at all.

**Mr BAILEY:** The Leader of the Opposition will not stand up for flood victims in Queensland because he is running a protection racket for Scott Morrison and Barnaby Joyce. It is a gutless performance.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I draw your attention to more unparliamentary language used by the minister and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, I would ask you to withdraw.

**Mr BAILEY:** I withdraw. I am passionate about this—absolutely. Flood victims deserve justice from every member of the parliament, not members of parliament who are not standing up for flood victims.

*(Time expired)*

### Palaszczuk Labor Government, Unions



**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.28 pm): I want to give the House some transparency with respect to corruption in Queensland involving the Labor Party and their association with the union movement in the state of Queensland. Last weekend the paper revealed that the nurses union were not only getting advance copies of a secret government document but also helping to draft it. Not only were they drafting it; they were editing it.

**Ms King:** You hate nurses.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** No. I will tell you what we hate: the corruption risk that associates with the union movement and the Labor Party.

We know why: when the nurses union is not only editing a government document with respect to government policy but making a direct attack on competition, that is corruption. That is a corruption risk. That is what the CCC should be looking at, and we wonder why. Why would the Labor Party be campaigning so much against these independent unions being established in Queensland? We heard the attack from the Treasurer this morning with regard to independent unions. What about the workers choosing where they want to invest their membership fees? What about the workers choosing who they want to advocate for them in industrial relations matters? That is what the choice is and that is what the Labor government is trying to take away from people.

The nurses union will say, 'We don't donate to the Labor Party. We're not affiliated with the Labor Party.' It may not be officially now, but here is what it does do: it donates its money to the Queensland Council of Unions—\$110,000 from the nurses union, and I table a copy of the ECQ disclosure.

*Tabled paper:* Extract from the Electoral Commission of Queensland webpage titled 'Donor Location Map' [\[419\]](#).

There was \$110,000 from the nurses union to the Queensland Council of Unions and the Teachers' Union donated \$120,000 to the Queensland Council of Unions. The Queensland Council of Unions then runs third-party political campaigns for people like the member for Miller, who is only in here because of his union membership and what he owes the union. That is why he is in here. His preselection—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** He is not in here for talent—I give you that—and he is not in here for competency; he is in here to do the union's bidding. We saw it: he gave cabinet documents to union members and said, 'How should I vote?' They replied, 'There's only one way to vote—option A.' I was surprised to then see the Premier's comments. When she was asked about this, the Premier said, 'We don't make decisions. We don't vote on things.' What on earth do they do? What does cabinet do? I have been in cabinet. We make decisions. We vote on things. We do not go to the union movement and say, 'Which option?' What on earth! What do these lemmings do?



**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order, Attorney-General!

**Mr Bailey**: They win elections!

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: The level of interjection is really getting out of hand. I will start warning members and asking members to leave the chamber.

**Mr BLEIJIE**: I take that interjection: 'We win elections,' he says. Do members know what that shows? That shows the arrogance of a third-term Labor government—

**Mr Lister** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Pause the clock. I warn the member for Southern Downs.

**Mr BLEIJIE**:—that thinks it can come in here and do what it wants without transparency and without accountability. He sits there not making decisions in cabinet, and the Premier confirmed it. I wonder what he does around the cabinet table. Could members imagine the contribution?

**An opposition member**: Twitter!

**Mr BLEIJIE**: I know he is on Twitter every second in the cabinet, but I suspect he has all of his phones lined up and then he says, 'The ETU says this. The CFMEU says that.'

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Pause the clock. Resume your seat, member. Do not use props. You are using those phones as a prop. If you do it again, I will warn you.

**Mr BLEIJIE**: He takes his instructions from the ETU and the CFMEU. They are the ones dictating Labor Party policy. I am not going to sit by and let the Labor Party try to stifle debate about independent unions being established in Queensland. Why does the Labor Party not allow workers the choice?

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE**: What does it have to hide from an independent union, which, I might add, charges the worker half the price of the nurses union and half the price of the Queensland Teachers' Union?

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE**: Don't let me lose my voice. COVID may get me, but this Attorney never will.


**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order, Attorney-General!

**Mr BLEIJIE**: Why not let members save their money with half membership fees? I reckon these independent unions give a better service than the nurses union and a better service than the Teachers' Union. I say to Queensland nurses and to Queensland teachers: you are being ripped off by the unions. Support unity with our independent union and choice—

*(Time expired)*

## Domestic and Family Violence Prevention

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (2.34 pm): The tragic deaths of Hannah Clarke and her precious children Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey have horrified all Queenslanders and, like all Queenslanders, I have been sickened to hear the harrowing details that are emerging through the inquest, and it has been incredibly difficult to read and to watch. Through all of that, I have to say that I have been inspired by the resilience and the strength of Hannah in the face of such an indescribable situation and I want to pay tribute to her bravery.

I also want to thank Sue and Lloyd Clarke, who have used Hannah's story to raise awareness around a dangerous form of domestic violence—coercive control. I have also heard countless stories from women who, after having heard Hannah's story, are seeing parallels and they have been motivated to reach out to services and to family. One survivor told me how she begged to be hit so that the violence would be real, because at that moment she thought it was all in her head.

Coercive control is a dangerous form of domestic violence used to instil fear in victims. Perpetrators use tactics such as isolating women from family and friends, tracking their movements through invasive surveillance, controlling access to money, where she goes, what she wears. Fundamentally, it is about power and control and the belief that too many men have that they are entitled to this power.

Previously many survivors lacked the language or the knowledge to describe the regime of terror that they were suffering under. Listening to many of Hannah's friends and family give their accounts at the inquest, it is clear that at the time many of them were unable to describe the regime of terror that Hannah was living under but they just knew something was wrong and that it was dangerous. I want everyone to know that if you are concerned about your friends and your family who may be in an abusive relationship there are services that can help. Together with Telstra, Griffith University and the MATE Bystander team, we have developed the Be There app to help people be effective bystanders. We are trying to make it easier for Queenslanders to identify what coercive control is and what to do and how to respond earlier and appropriately, because it can be a very complex situation. We all have a role in ending violence against women.

Hannah's legacy and the ongoing advocacy of Sue and Lloyd Clarke have also contributed to the Palaszczuk government's commitment to criminalise coercive control. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce has handed down its report on how we best do that and the report is very clear: we cannot criminalise this behaviour until our systems and our community understand what coercive control is, know how to identify it and how to appropriately respond. The report makes several recommendations on how we need to improve training and how we improve training for our frontline responders along with expanding training for more integrated responses within our service system so that we can better protect victims but also hold perpetrators to account. The report also includes recommendations aimed at preventing coercive control and, in particular, educating young people on what is a respectful relationship, and this is really crucial work.

Again, I want to thank Sue and Lloyd Clarke, who have been using Hannah's story to educate young people and their parents on some of the subtle warnings of this insidious form of abuse and I know that they are working closely with Carolyn from Beyond DV and talking to young high school girls and their mums about what the dangerous signs are. Work is already well underway right across government agencies on the recommendations of the report, and I look forward to tabling the response in parliament soon.

I want to pass on my condolences to all of the family and friends of Hannah Clarke and I look forward to receiving the findings from the Coroner. Domestic and family violence is a national crisis and the Palaszczuk government will continue to do what we can to keep women safe and hold perpetrators to account.

### Loganlea Community Centre



**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (2.39 pm): Today we have heard a lot from those opposite—from the member for Waterford, from the Minister for Transport and from the member for Woodridge—about flood support for Queensland victims, so I thought it would be important to bring to the attention of the House the situation of the Loganlea Community Centre, which is one of 17 unfunded community centres, along with the 127 funded community centres, around the state. Let us look at what those opposite, who have been so sanctimonious when speaking about what we have been doing on our side, have been doing for those in their communities who have been on the front line helping those affected by floods.

I want to table some statistics about the Loganlea Community Centre, including their future plans, and give members some idea of how many people use the Loganlea Community Centre. Around 475 people a week use the community centre in the areas of seniors, health and wellbeing, crisis and welfare, kids, youth and disability. It supports more than 22½ thousand people over the course of the year.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of documents relating to the Loganlea Community Centre [\[420\]](#).

When it comes to flood support, in the week of 28 February the Loganlea Community Centre activated itself to provide community assistance. They notified all the surrounding local government representatives—local, state and federal—that they were operating seven days a week and had all hands on deck to support the community. LCC sent an email to the Waterford electorate office asking if there were any funds available to aid the community. LCC were delivering frontline assistance to people who had been significantly impacted by the floods. To this day there has been no response to this email. Minister Fentiman railed about flood support for local communities this morning. What has she done for the LCC in her electorate? I will tell members: she bought them a bag of groceries and some vouchers for them to use in their assistance.

Let us look at the other member who is involved, the member for Woodridge. The LCC also contacted the Woodridge electorate office, as a segment of clients receiving help and assistance from LCC are from within his electorate and also to seek guidance from the Treasurer's office as to the best

way to approach a government funding submission. Minister Dick's office commented, 'There are a lot of great community organisations both within Minister Dick's electorate and that provided services for residents within Minister Dick's electorate, and it is a shame that they are unfunded and continue to go unfunded but that's just how things are.' An invitation extended to Minister Dick to visit the centre was declined.

**Mrs Gerber:** Because he was in Dubai? Was he in Dubai sipping champagne?

**Mr Krause** interjected.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Apart from the fact that he was in Dubai. They were advised that, if there were any issues that Minister Dick needed to address, they would be raised by Minister Fentiman in due course. The Woodridge electorate office also sent a newsletter email communication during the floods highlighting community drop-in centres in Logan, several of which were not in the Woodridge electorate. Loganlea Community Centre was not listed as part of this list, even though it was actively supporting the community. Minister Dick thanked them for their efforts on social media but, apart from that, was not prepared to see them.

The Logan City Council Disaster Management Team contacted LCC on Sunday, 26 March and advised them they did not need to render assistance to the local community, they should instead direct all residents to the Logan City Council Disaster Dashboard or send them in person to one of the two recovery centres operating at the time—one in Beenleigh and one in Jimboomba. The Loganlea Community Centre supports thousands of people per year who have financial disadvantage or literacy issues and a large proportion of local residents have English as a second language. There was no public transport throughout this period as well as issues around accessing technology.

When it comes to becoming a funded centre, the LCC approached the Waterford electorate office following the recent announcement from Minister Enoch's office about a \$20,000 cash boost for community centres. They are ineligible for it as they are not a recognised 'state government funded centre'. After no response, LCC had to follow up with the Waterford electorate office who indicated they had forwarded the LCC email to Minister Enoch's office for a response but had received none and suggested LCC follow up themselves.

The LCC contacted the minister's office directly to gain clarity around becoming a state government centre and to seek insight into the process and the office indicated it was unsure but would have a representative of the Department of Communities get in touch. Basically the department then said there is no process for accreditation and the only way to receive funding for a community centre is to monitor the QTenders website 'in case a currently funded centre chooses to relinquish their funding.' The Department of Communities stressed to LCC that the area in question is already well funded with Crestmead Community Centre and Kingston East Neighbourhood Group. Those very centres were sending their clients to the Loganlea Community Centre. They are funded; Loganlea is not. It looks like Labor in their own area pick on those they do not like and will not fund the ones who are helping their own voters.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Before I call the next Speaker, member for Scenic Rim, you have given lots of points of order around unparliamentary language. I would get you to withdraw that unparliamentary language you used before.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I withdraw.

## Type 1 Diabetes



**Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (2.44 pm): I would like to bring to the attention of the House the plight of diabetics in the electorate of Hervey Bay—indeed, across Queensland and Australia—and the appalling spin of the Morrison federal government, specifically the federal health minister and his media announcement recently on diabetes that showed the federal health minister's lack of awareness of the different types of diabetes, and his total misrepresentation of the 129,000 type 1 diabetics in Australia. The federal health minister would have the public believe he is giving new essential equipment, being continuous glucose monitors, or CGMs as they are known, to this group of people who struggle every day to maintain their health and stay alive with this autoimmune disease.

Continuous glucose monitors are non-invasive and enable type 1 diabetics to monitor blood sugar levels and not guess or prick themselves incessantly. This device literally keeps them alive by bluetoothing to smartphones and/or transmitter devices. CGMs for most type 1 diabetics have been around for years. However, the federal health minister would have you believe that they are new and he is helping all type 1 diabetics across Australia. The reality is that he is not. The federal health minister

is discriminating against the vast majority of type 1 diabetics because it is only people under 21—that is, 11 per cent of type 1 diabetics—and those on a Health Care Card who are eligible to have free access to CGMs and other health requirements to stay alive. The federal health minister does not mention this in any of his publications. In fact, in his annual performance statement he combines type 1 diabetes with all other forms of diabetes, and he says he is giving CGM devices to all Australians with diabetes. He is not. This is a total lack of care and understanding.

The federal government should step up tonight in its 2022-23 budget and address the needs of type 1 diabetics. CGMs and lifesaving pharmaceuticals should be free to all type 1 diabetics. There is no remission for type 1 diabetics. It is an autoimmune disease and cannot be reversed. Those who earn just \$1 over the Health Care Card threshold must self-fund all their diabetes health requirements, which is a cost of \$9,000 per year, not to mention if they require a pump, which is an outlay of \$10,000. A single person who earns \$1 over \$33,488, which is the cut-off for eligibility for a Health Care Card, must self-fund \$9,000 per year, bringing their income down to \$24,488. This is poverty to the extreme. What sort of support is this from the federal government?

I know that the federal health minister and other ministers have been inundated with emails from type 1 diabetics asking for free access to CGMs and other medical supplies. These people have received nothing back—not a single squeak—from any of them. To save money, type 1 diabetics seek alternative ways to prolong their CGM devices. This is dangerous, but, sadly, because of replacement cost, a necessity. This action can corrupt the accuracy of the data on their blood sugar levels. Forcing diabetics to do this is not good enough. Continuous glucose technology should not be a privilege for those living with type 1 diabetes in Australia. It should be the norm, as should pumps, needles and all devices that keep these people alive, and it should be free to all.

Self-funding a CGM is very expensive for most type 1 diabetics and it is just not feasible. It is not just children this condition affects. Anyone can be diagnosed at any age. Type 1 diabetes does not change as people age. A person turning 21 is no longer eligible for free access to CGMs. Their pancreas does not miraculously start working again, yet they can no longer access CGMs which they have relied on previously. They now must find \$9,000 a year at the age of 21. This is a disgrace. The management of this autoimmune disease is relentless. It is 24/7, 365 days a year of sleepless nights, monitoring of food, injecting of insulin, relentless doctors' visits, blood tests, glucose tablets and stress. The burnout is real and, by not allowing type 1 diabetics access to life-saving technology, the federal government just adds to their burden.

The NDSS has indicated that between 10 and 12 people per day are found to have type 1 diabetes autoimmune disease in Australia. This could be any one of us. This disease does not discriminate, yet this federal government does. On this federal budget day, the LNP Morrison government has an opportunity to step up and make the lives of many hundreds of thousands of type 1 diabetics a little easier. Tonight it has a chance to change their lives. We can only hope that all type 1 diabetics across the country, and in Hervey Bay, receive more from this Morrison government than its shallow hopes and prayers.

### Regional and Remote Queensland, Housing



**Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.49 pm): I rise to speak about housing in remote and regional areas. It was pleasing to see that it was raised as a hot topic at the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils' big conference recently. At the same time we read in the papers about the \$1.8 billion Brisbane city deal. The Prime Minister came up here and, with the Premier, announced that deal, which includes \$250 million for a livability fund for Brisbane and \$450 million for a new bus stop at Woolloongabba. That is all very nice, but I would already give Brisbane a gold star for livability. You have done a pretty good job. It is a livable place. In fact, it is too livable because there is too much congestion down here.

A few years ago I was introduced to the term 'diseconomies of scale'. I had never heard of it. I was told that there are diseconomies of scale when too much of the population merges at once creating bulky infrastructure demands such as you are experiencing right now in Brisbane. It brings to mind a recent conversation I had with my sister. She lives in Brisbane. She said, 'Rob, if you are going to do something in politics do something about housing for my kids. They're never going to be able to afford a house in Brisbane.' I said, 'Tell them to move to Townsville.' That is what I did. I could afford a house in Townsville, but I could not afford a house here. There is an answer there and it is about moving people to the regions. The government has a role to play in that.

**Mr Nicholls:** I know where your sister lives.

**Mr KATTER:** I have a few sisters here, member for Clayfield. I want kids to move into the regions. We need to put effort into providing equity by making Mount Isa, Rockhampton or Townsville more livable. That is where the effort is needed, not in Brisbane, which is pretty livable already. Overpopulating this area is exacerbating the issues that we face in the first place. Affordability comes in the regions.

There are some other ways that we can improve affordability. Let us look at home loans. Since 2001 there has been a scheme, which I did not know existed, where the state says, 'We'll give loans to low-income people at two per cent.' The terms and conditions of it are surprising. Last year in Queensland something like 46,000 home loans were approved, but only 17 people took up that scheme. There is a scheme sitting there that you can build on. For years I have stood in this House saying that we need a bank or a government facility that moves outside the traditional lending methods and that can activate loans. Access and affordability of capital is a big inhibitor to making investment in regional and remote areas. Banks do not like loaning out there anymore. Even when we convince someone that it is still livable in the regions, they cannot get money from the banks to buy a business or buy a house. That needs to be fixed and the government needs to play a role, as they have before.


Let us talk about title deeds in First Australian communities. If you want to fix housing there, give those people the same chance that everyone else in Australia has. I think it is the most discriminatory thing that we do in government when, in places like Doomadgee and Normanton, we say, 'Sorry, mate, but unless you can get your blue card and get a job and start making some money, we're going to deny you the possibility of owning a house here.' There is a process, but even I have struggled to get through it. Let's make it easier for them to buy a house. They should have the same right as anyone else in Australia to buy a house in the town in which they live, and I know they want to do that because many people have approached me about it.

Over the years we have heard a lot about the first home buyers grant from the member for Hinchinbrook. It has been a pet issue of his. We should expand that scheme to existing homes. I was a valuer for 15 years in remote and regional Queensland. To build a house in Hughenden or Richmond will cost about \$400,000 to \$450,000. That is the bare minimum. If you do an RP data search of those areas to try to find a sale in the town footprint for over \$400,000, you will not find one. No-one is going to build a new house because they will not get their money back. The first home buyers scheme extends only to new homes but in none of those places will you get your money back so the scheme does not roll out there. How convenient! We can never access that scheme. We need to allow the scheme to apply to existing homes in the regions and in remote areas so that we too can get some benefit from it; otherwise it is a metropolitan scheme. Call it for what it is.

Lastly, I refer to unlocking rural residential land. Mount Isa is a great example of an urban footprint, plonked in the middle of nowhere, where you need state and federal government assistance to unlock barriers to freeing up land, such as ILUAs and other planning instruments that have shrouded over that. Councils need help with that. I grew up on acreage outside of Charters Towers. You had battlers' blocks and people living in a converted shed for years before moving into a house. That is a big part of the housing project and a big part of regional and remote housing that needs to be considered.

All of these things play a big part in trying to address the housing issue. If we displace some of the population, we can provide opportunities for my nephews in the future so that they will consider the regions to be livable places and they will be able to get funding to build something in those areas.

### Christensen, Mr G

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.54 pm): The Deputy Prime Minister and Nationals leader, Barnaby Joyce, has said words to the effect that he cannot tell the member for Dawson, George Christensen, what to do. The facts I am about to outline will confirm that Mr Joyce's attitude is a gross dereliction of duty. Over at least eight years, the member for Dawson has had a consistent track record of making statements that support Russia and are in alignment with Russian disinformation. Given the Russian attempts to destabilise the West and the invasion of Ukraine, those statements are damaging to our democracy and to Australia's national interest.

On 2 March 2014, the member for Dawson posted a tweet opposing US intervention in Ukraine after the Russian invasion of Crimea. That position was at odds with that of his own government. The tweet stated—

East Ukraine is ethnically Russian & wants to be part of Russia. Obama should leave well alone.

I table a copy of that tweet and a copy of the 2014 ABC Online article that recorded it. The tweet was deleted after the member for Dawson left Twitter in January 2020.

*Tabled paper:* Extract, dated 2 March 2014, from the Twitter account of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, relating to Ukraine and an article from the ABC news website, dated 2 March 2014, titled 'Ukraine warns of war as Russia approves deployment of troops in region' [421].

In February 2017, on Twitter he made several pro-Russian assertions that were reported by Australian media outlets. I table those tweets and copies of the articles that reported them.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of social media extracts and articles regarding the Russia and Ukraine conflict [422].

In those tweets he made the following pro-Russian assertions: 'Russia is demonised unfairly'; 'Russia is not a threat to the West'; 'Russia is a democracy; and Russia did not shoot down MH17'. Those tweets became the subject of media scrutiny and the following morning they were deleted. He stated they were a 'distraction'. He also modified his position on the shooting down of MH17, claiming that it was done by Russian-backed Ukrainian separatists. Such a claim whitewashes the source of the missiles that shot down MH17—Russia.

Another example of the role of Russia in spreading disinformation about the 2020 US election result has been well documented. Mr Christensen was vocal on Facebook that the election was stolen from Donald Trump. On 8 July last year, the member for Dawson appeared in an interview on Russia Today, a well-known propaganda tool of the Kremlin. That video has now been removed from YouTube, as all Russia Today's videos have been removed as disinformation, but I table a screenshot.

*Tabled paper:* Extract, dated 8 July 2021, from YouTube depicting a screenshot of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, during a television interview [423].

Mr Christensen's alignment with Russian disinformation has continued during the COVID pandemic. On 10 August 2021 he made a member's statement to the House of Representatives, claiming that lockdowns and face masks do not work. Many of the assertions in his speech reflected Russian disinformation, identified by the European External Action Service's East StratCom Task Force. I table a summary of those links.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of documents relating to statements allegedly made by the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, in the House of Representatives and document, undated, titled 'Coronavirus: Stay up to date' [424].

Russia has used the Coronavirus pandemic as another opportunity to destabilise Western democracies through disinformation.

The member for Dawson has promoted conspiracy theories, such as the 'Great Reset', which links the pandemic with a looming totalitarian society implemented by global elites. The 'Great Reset' conspiracy theory is also a theme in Russian disinformation. I table an excerpt from Christensen's 'Great Reset' website and an excerpt from the EUvsDisinfo database.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of extracts from the webpage of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, titled 'Reject the great reset' and document, undated, titled 'Coronavirus: Stay up to date' [425].

Some of Mr Christensen's Facebook posts on the invasion of Ukraine have also been concerning. While he has not endorsed the invasion or Putin, he has made posts in alignment with Russian disinformation. In a 1 March 2022 Facebook post, Christensen labelled the Western media coverage of the invasion 'fake news' and shared a video portraying the coverage as 'pro-Ukraine lies'. I table the post.

*Tabled paper:* Extract, dated 1 March 2022, from the Facebook page of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, regarding YouTube post titled 'The first casualty of war is truth' [426].

On 4 March 2022, his Facebook post shared a link to a ZeroHedge website article casting scorn on a Russian ban from international cat judging competitions. I table the post.

*Tabled paper:* Extract, dated 4 March 2002, from the Facebook page of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, regarding banning Russian cats from competitions [427].

ZeroHedge has been identified by US intelligence as an amplifier of Kremlin propaganda. I table a copy of the ABC America online report.


*Tabled paper:* Articles, dated 4 March 2022, from the ZeroHedge website regarding banning Russian cats from all competitions [429].

While the post was covered by a clickbait photo of a fluffy cat, it was a story culminating in a YouTube video that maligns other more substantial acts of Western solidarity with Ukraine. Christensen's clickbait drags readers into a more sinister piece of pro-Russian propaganda. I table the article and the link.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the ABC news website, dated 16 February 2022, titled 'US accuses financial website of spreading Russian propaganda' [428].

What I have raised is no secret. It can be uncovered with a Google search. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister are entrusted with our nation's security, but they have not lifted a finger when it has been compromised by the actions of the member for Dawson. Barnaby Joyce did not want to poke the bear. In these acts Mr Christensen may have been an active part of Russian disinformation. Alternatively, if he was unaware of the Russian disinformation he was repeating, he was in effect Putin's patsy. Which one is he? I call on Scott Morrison and Barnaby Joyce to explain why they have turned a blind eye to Mr Christensen's acts against our national interest for so long.

### Wivenhoe Dam, Water Releases

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (2.59 pm): I want to raise an issue that clearly shows how this government is out of touch, does not listen and certainly does not understand. Yesterday in her press conference the Premier said—

There are some small releases from Wivenhoe that will be happening, but they will not have any impact on the river levels at all.

Well, that statement is in stark contrast to what Seqwater said just before the Premier's press conference which advised of likely flooding on bridges and crossing, including Colleges Crossing, which impacts residents in the electorates of Moggill and Ipswich West. What has happened today is that those people are re-living being stranded because the Premier is clearly out of touch and does not even listen to the government agencies telling local communities what is actually going on. This is a community that has been stuck for a long time because of the recent floods.


*(Time expired)*

## SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 648, on motion of Ms Farmer—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.00 pm), continuing: A part of Queensland's approach to the COVID pandemic was to establish a temporary Small Business Commissioner. This role was established to deliver advocacy and dispute resolution functions for Queensland small businesses. Prior to the appointment of the temporary Small Business Commissioner, Queensland small businesses faced the hurdles of negotiating multiple pathways in the dispute resolution process. Clearly, this was an added burden on small business owners who, at that time, were struggling with many issues.

There were so many stories that I heard from small businesses from my community who were hurting. Some of the businesses I met with were: Crank Climbing, Chipmunks MacGregor, Sunny Florist, Thomas Meat, Grace Education, iThai Restaurant, Brisbane Spine Clinic, Zarraffa's Coffee in Sunnybank Plaza, Trailer Trash Tattoo, the Boxing Shop, A & K Costume Hire and even the Runcorn IGA. You can tell from the range of businesses I have just mentioned that the burdens were being felt across the small business sector and not by just one sector.

I heard how the small business grants received would be used to pay staff, pay the rent, pay bills, such as electricity, and allow some businesses to reinvent themselves through an online presence. These grants gave hope and, for some, a way out from, at least, some of their struggles.

A linchpin for the sector to have the ability to recover was the Office of the Small Business Commissioner. I am sure the team at the Office of the Small Business Commissioner received many calls. This new, albeit, temporary appointment clearly worked well, and our government saw the many benefits resulting from this avenue of assistance to small business. This led to inquiring into appointing a permanent Small Business Commissioner.


The bill we are debating today broadly provides for an advocacy role for the commissioner on behalf of small business to the state, the Commonwealth, other state and local governments or any other entity involved in administering a matter relevant to small business. The proposed act further allowed for other activities to be carried out by the commissioner at the direction of the minister. It was important that the functions of the commissioner in the bill be sufficiently broad to avoid inadvertently narrowing the scope of the commissioner's functions. The commissioner is not intended to replace the valued input and advice from industry stakeholders which will still continue to inform the development of the government's small business policy and program activities.

Concerns were raised with the committee about the independence of the commissioner's role in response to the proposal to allow for activities to be undertaken at the direction of the minister. I assure members that these concerns are unfounded and that, under the bill, the commissioner operates independently with the appropriate level of oversight. This provides a balance between the commissioner carrying out the role and functions impartially and public accountability and transparency. The department's explanation clarified that this was to increase the commissioner's responsiveness to emerging issues as needed. Further, the bill requires the commissioner to include details in its annual report of any ministerial directions it has received during the financial reporting year. This provides for public transparency and accountability.

There were many small business owners who contacted me when the first lockdowns to slow down the spread of COVID-19 were introduced. They were worried; they were stressed. This worry and stress was not only for themselves but for their staff. Many wanted to keep their staff and were looking for all means to be able to do so. They were also worried about how to pay the bills and how to keep their businesses open. Small businesses were struggling. These were real people struggling.

The Brisbane South Small Business Roadshow held in my electorate was very well attended. They wanted to hear from the minister and they wanted to find out more about how the Small Business Commissioner could help them. They wanted help and to know their government would help them. I know the roadshow was appreciated by our small businesses on the south side. The lived experiences of the small business owners from the south side of Brisbane showed that people wanted to be helped, and this was a solution they were looking for.

The establishment of a Small Business Commissioner for Queensland in a permanent role is another example of how our government listens and acts. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (3.06 pm): I rise in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. The bill aims to permanently establish the position of the Queensland Small Business Commissioner and their office and provide a statutory basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions relating to retail tenancy disputes. It will also allow businesses to opt into mediation for commercial leasing and small business franchise disputes. A permanent commissioner and their office will provide small businesses with specialist support, including advocacy and dispute resolution services, as they have done since 2020.

Businesses across Queensland have struggled over the past two years faced with a pandemic, reduced trade, workforce shortages and, just as they got back on their feet, recent floods. It has been an extraordinarily difficult and stressful time. I acknowledge the struggle that many have experienced and the resilience shown by the sector, their employees and the communities who supported them during these difficult times.

In early 2020 our government created the temporary Small Business Commissioner position, cognisant of the fact that businesses needed during COVID more dispute-resolution functions relating to retail tenancy disputes than ever. We also established the Business Support Grants Program which as of 1 December last year had paid out \$318 million to nearly 35,000 businesses. There was also our Small Business COVID-19 Adaptation Grant Program to support small businesses that were subject to closure or were impacted by COVID restrictions to adapt and sustain their operations and build resilience. This program has provided \$196 million to nearly 20,000 businesses. We awarded \$1 billion in no-interest job loans to the 7,000 businesses that supported 86,000 Queensland jobs. In addition, we provided electricity bill rebates for 180,000 Queensland businesses.

Whether it is small business grants, tenancy dispute resolution, mentoring or getting the economic conditions right that has seen our government since coming to office help create over 405,000 jobs and an unemployment rate of 4.3 per cent—the lowest it has been in over 13 years—we want to see our small business community flourish and thrive post these difficult past two years. Small businesses make up 97 per cent of all Queensland businesses. The Nudgee electorate is home to over 4,000 small to medium sized businesses in industries as diverse as manufacturing, construction, service, hospitality and retail.

My community, like many, had a tough time during COVID. I wanted to ensure that we were doing everything possible to make sure that they survived the pandemic. I held a virtual small business forum so my local businesses could hear directly from then minister for small business Shannon Fentiman. She outlined the support that Business Queensland could offer and how the government could support them through the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Queensland small business grants were very well received by businesses in my electorate—businesses such as Hub Brewing in Geebung, a neighbourhood brewery owned by Linda and Chris, where locals meet for friendly banter over a cold beer or two. All beers are brewed onsite and there are different food trucks every week.

**Mr Mellish:** Great times.

**Ms LINARD:** I take the interjection from the member for Aspley. It is a great place. The \$10,000 grant allowed them to improve their online ordering and scheduling system and to invest in additional marketing for the business. If anyone in the chamber is ever in Geebung, I highly recommend dropping by and trying their Sonic Lager—a personal favourite of mine.


Another beneficiary of the Queensland small business grants was Bells Property Services in Virginia that conduct building facade inspections. They used the \$10,000 grant to support the development of new technology to augment their existing building inspection services. Then there is Steve from the Photo Booth Guys in Banyo who also received a \$10,000 grant which he said made all the difference when it was needed most. This is just a small example of the many local businesses that reached out to us and were assisted by our small business supports.

Many others called and were desperate for advice and advocacy in respect of tenancy disputes. Having the office of the Small Business Commissioner has been of tremendous assistance and comfort to local businesses in this regard, with my office referring many for their assistance. Since opening in May 2020, the temporary Queensland Small Business Commissioner has carried out more than 7,200 activities for small businesses, commercial tenants and landlords. This includes answering 5,400 inquiries, mediating in 970 disputes and coordinating 580 outreach and 240 advocacy activities. Additionally, 66 per cent of leasing disputes accepted by the Queensland Small Business Commissioner have been successfully resolved either by informal resolution or mediation. This has saved small businesses from paying costly legal fees. Permanently establishing the position of the Queensland Small Business Commissioner will allow them to continue this vital work.

As I said earlier, it has not only been the last two years of COVID disruption that has challenged our small business community, the recent floods were a further knock when many were getting back on their feet. As the waters receded late last month, I, like many local members, was out in my community surveying the damage and providing whatever practical assistance was needed. Whether it was industrial businesses in Virginia, takeaway and retail businesses on Zillmere Road or our much loved Inflatable World at the back of Toombul, all were impacted—none more so than the 150 businesses and their employees catastrophically impacted by the inundation of Toombul Shopping Centre.

Many businesses and their staff reached out to my office and to my federal colleague, the member for Lilley, Anika Wells, for assistance. Last Thursday we convened a public information session for Toombul businesses and employees and any other businesses in my local community that had been impacted by the floods. The information session came about following a phone call to Small Business Commissioner Maree Adshead. Within days of our phone conversation we had representatives of the Small Business Commissioner's office, Peter Maddock, the director of assistance, and Julie Robson; Glenn Watson, the regional director of the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training; the regional area manager, Brian Coe, and his team from the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority; and representatives from the federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Centrelink and the Brisbane City Council on site across from Toombul to assist small businesses. I take this opportunity to thank each of those mentioned for their time and assistance, and the Small Business Commissioner for her advocacy. I asked her to contact Mirvac, the owners of Toombul Shopping Centre, to offer every assistance to all the businesses in the centre and she faithfully did so and has been of great assistance with ongoing information and coordination.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleague and friend the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, Di Farmer, who has been out to my electorate and so many other electorates across Queensland several times already in her first year in the role to listen to the concerns of local businesses and to continue to tailor our response as a government to their needs. When it comes to supporting small business in Queensland, it is only a Labor government that will do what needs to be done when it needs to be done most to keep our state moving forward. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (3.13 pm): I rise in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill and to make a small contribution to the debate this afternoon. We cannot underestimate the contribution of small businesses in our state. There are estimated to be around 450,000 small businesses of up

to 20 employees across our state. These businesses are in every industry and in every community in every region of Queensland. Importantly, they employ more than 40 per cent of all private sector workers and contribute an estimated \$120 billion each year to our economy. Their contribution is enormous. In my electorate of Algester there are many small businesses in places like Acacia Ridge and Archerfield right through to where I live in Hillcrest that are absolutely making a huge difference in terms of employing local people but also driving the economy of my local area.

From my portfolio's perspective, we know how important small businesses across the information and communication technology industries are to our state. We are fortunate to have thousands of innovative and vibrant small businesses across ICT industries. In fact, the 2019 State of Small Business report identified that small businesses across the information, media and telecommunications industries are some of the fastest growing in Queensland. It is an incredibly exciting space when we look at the kind of growth we are seeing in the information, media and telecommunications industry area.

From artificial intelligence to cloud based technologies, these businesses are not only employing tens of thousands of Queenslanders and boosting our economy but also improving our lives and making our state a better place in which to live. For example, Brisbane based technology business Real Serious Games is profiled in my portfolio's Digital Professional Workforce Action Plan 2020-24. This company creates engaging ways for businesses to train, upskill and create safer work environments by using extended reality, XR, technology. Its cutting-edge work has applications across the construction, mining, transport and education industries using technology to make workplaces safer for employees.

It is for these businesses and their future that I support the Small Business Commissioner Bill. Any efforts to make it easier for small businesses to start up and grow are good for Queenslanders and our economy. This bill seeks to establish a permanent Queensland Small Business Commissioner to deliver key functions of engagement and support, dispute resolution and mediation for leasing and franchising disputes. That is an incredibly important part of ensuring small businesses are able to operate at the highest level in our state. Over the years since the Small Business Commissioner role was temporarily created we know that that role has made a huge difference to many small businesses across Queensland.


We know that it can be challenging to start up and grow a small business. Over the past couple of years, COVID-19 has caused unprecedented challenges for Queenslanders, including small business owners and the people they employ. Businesses across a number of industries, including hospitality, tourism and the arts—to name just a few—were particularly hard hit. The Palaszczuk government stepped up to provide a range of supports to small businesses to help them recover from the impacts of this pandemic. This included the creation of the temporary Queensland Small Business Commissioner along with financial assistance and relief.

The Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 builds on these efforts, including the permanent appointment of a commissioner. This is an important function providing information and advocacy support to small businesses and informal resolution and mediation. Of course, we have seen the impacts of the recent floods across South-East Queensland. This bill will assist small businesses to recover from these floods and future disasters, particularly if they need support with leasing and franchising disputes. Having seen the devastation firsthand across many communities and as my department has led community recovery efforts, I know just how important this support and assistance will be for many small business owners recovering from the recent flooding events. We are seeing some flooding impacting local areas now that I know Deputy Speaker Lister has a particular connection to.

From my portfolio's perspective, it is also important to note that the changes included in this bill will apply to commercial tenancies. While there is no impact for residential tenancies in social housing, my department regulates a range of for-profit and not-for-profit service providers that could be deemed small businesses by the commissioner. This includes retirement villages, residential or manufactured home parks, residential services such as boarding houses and supported accommodation services and community housing providers. These regulated accommodation providers could have the opportunity to approach the Small Business Commissioner for dispute resolution assistance. The commissioner could be a valuable source for information, advice or relevant general support. It would complement and possibly ease the workload of existing dispute mechanisms such as the Queensland Ombudsman or the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Additionally, the establishment of a permanent Queensland Small Business Commissioner could complement existing Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 initiatives regarding guidance on best practice and enhanced dispute resolution mechanisms for the regulated housing sector.

Before I finish I want to pay tribute to the Minister for Small Business not only for her outstanding work in ensuring that this bill has come to the House but also on the work that she oversaw with regard to the recent Workforce Summit, which I think was an incredible success. Industries right across our economy came forward to speak about the very challenging aspects of not just running a small business but also the workforce that is required to ensure that small businesses can continue to thrive in Queensland. I want to place on record my thanks and acknowledgement to the Minister for Small Business for overseeing that summit but also for continuing to represent the interests and needs of small business in Queensland. On that note, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (3.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, which was introduced by the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development to this chamber last year. First, I would like to thank the Queensland Small Business Commissioner for the work the commissioner has done to date following the temporary establishment of her office. I would also like to note that the commissioner herself has run a small business in my electorate of Redcliffe. I met her many years ago—I think around 2007 or 2008—when she had just moved out of her garage to start a small business in her local community in a shopfront. I am so glad that she knows the community very well and is very supportive of small businesses in the community and, of course, is a champion herself and has been a mentor to many small businesses across Queensland.

We know that small businesses account for 97 per cent of all Queensland businesses and the small business sector plays a key role in Queensland's economy. It is important that we protect small businesses in our state as they are a valuable part of our communities. We also know that our small businesses have done it tough over the past two years due to the pandemic. I want to thank them for their continued support of their communities and I also thank the community for supporting them.

In Redcliffe we have a number of great small businesses going about their business each and every day to support their community and provide employment. On behalf of our entire community I want to say thank you. While time does not permit me to thank each and every one of them individually, I know that our community is supportive of them.

We know that it is hard for small business owners who just get up each day to open their doors and keep their business running and often do not have the time to worry about what legislative changes or policies are happening at any level of government and what they need to be aware of, but we know that the decisions we make in this chamber can make a real difference to their business. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Redcliffe Chamber of Commerce in my community who represent small businesses in my local area. They provide an invaluable avenue for our business leaders to meet, swap stories and learnings and make connections to upskill and support their businesses.

The establishment of a permanent Queensland Small Business Commissioner and supporting office will provide important resources, advocacy and dispute resolution services to Queensland small businesses. This bill brings Queensland in line with other jurisdictions and was an election commitment of the Palaszczuk Labor government at the 2020 election. The temporary office was established in May 2020 to provide support to small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and has already been providing key resources in relation to the pandemic and more recently this year's devastating floods which impacted so many businesses across the state, in particular, in South-East Queensland.

I, like many members, have spent days and weeks out with our communities after the devastating floods and weather events in recent weeks. The rain this week I know will bring back memories for so many. I know that there were some small businesses in my area that were also impacted, and we need to make sure that both as a government and as a local community we are supporting these businesses as they recover.


My constituents of Redcliffe are truly remarkable and rallied round each other in the wake of the recent floods and weather event. This includes a number of small businesses donating their time, expertise and products to help their fellow community members, and for that I say thank you. While there are many small businesses that helped during the floods, I take this opportunity to thank Trina from Breathe Easy Cafe for donating over 350 personally made meals to those that were in emergency accommodation after the floods and who also raised \$2,165.55 and donated it to the mighty team at Chameleon Youth Housing to continue their invaluable work for our community of finding homes for people.

I want to thank Chris from Hakuna Ma'Coffee who cooked all of the food at our recent flood community event on Saturday which I held to say thank you to the community for pulling together and supporting each other during the floods. These are just two examples of remarkable small businesses

in our Redcliffe community that I have no doubt have been doing it tough—I know that Breathe Easy Cafe only started six months ago—but have gone above and beyond to give back to the community. They have not only provided a tremendous service but supported their community at their time of need. On behalf of our community, I say thank you.

I turn to some of the elements of the bill before the House today. Sometimes small businesses require assistance negotiating or in relation to disputes with their landlords or other agencies. Access to private legal advice and consultation can sometimes be an expensive and difficult thing to navigate. This bill will allow the Queensland Small Business Commissioner to provide alternative dispute resolution services and mediation services for retail shop leasing disputes. The Queensland Small Business Commissioner will also be a key component in facilitating the exchange of information between parties. The commissioner and supporting office will essentially be a central point of contact for Queensland small businesses in relation to matters that affect them.

Where disputes cannot be resolved through mediation, the Queensland Small Business Commissioner can refer matters to the relevant tribunal and/or court jurisdictions. The Palaszczuk government recognises that small businesses should be able to receive support from government when needed. The Queensland Small Business Commissioner will provide this much needed support following a tough couple of years for the sector and will drive productivity and advocacy for small business owners across Queensland. When small businesses thrive, our economy grows. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (3.26 pm): I rise today to contribute to the debate on the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. As we have heard, the intent of this bill is to make permanent the functions of our Small Business Commissioner—functions that have already supported so many small businesses during the last couple of really tough years as we have struggled through COVID-19 restrictions and as we continue to struggle through the COVID-19 pandemic.

I thank my friend Di Farmer, the Minister for Small Business, for coming out recently to hear the stories of small businesses across my electorate of Kurwongbah—the stories of adversity and the stories of resilience—at my small business networking event on 2 March. I want to thank the Burpengary Community Club for hosting us that day and for keeping up with our coffee orders. The food was fantastic. I was really pleased that we were able to donate what was left to the SES workers who gave their hearts and souls responding to the extreme weather events that hit us just as COVID restrictions were easing.

Sometimes the hits just keep coming—hits like for Southern Cross Tennis which were lucky to be able to send a representative after flooding cut off literally all of their roads north and for Dave at Aussie Home Loans at Burpengary where the entire shopping centre was closed for a day and no doubt the clean-up effort was longer. I also want to acknowledge the businesses on the other side of Station Road at Burpengary where Coles and a bunch of other businesses such as Bellygood Chinese and the Coffee Club had no choice but to close during the floods.

Copper & Cane Distilling at Old Petrie Town were represented, with Guy, the owner, putting on a brave face after COVID put gin tasting well in the background for a while and the flooding meant that market days, which are his best advertising and walk-in opportunities, were no more. However, Guy from Copper & Cane, Adam Gibbs, who lost White Brick Brewing in the Bancroft area during COVID—and that was a big loss, believe me, if you have ever tried White Brick—but not for long as he is restarting as Hip Hop Brewing, and the other Jimmy Sullivan, who is our famous local Chilli Coffee man, are partnering up to make some chilli beers and chilli spirits. I am looking forward to seeing that eventuate.

I am proud of small business events like these and the ones my neighbours the member for Bancroft and the member for Morayfield hold that bring about great ventures like this. I will give a small plug for Chilli Coffee. There is some in the Lucinda Bar. If anyone wants to get adventurous and try one, they will make you one there.

There was also Lisa from Counting Stars who was trying to launch her new yoga business but had to cancel her official launch because of the floods. I encourage any of my north side colleagues in need of some active relaxation to google Lisa's services at Counting Stars at Burpengary. I have not tried it myself—just saying.


We also had an unexpected guest at our event courtesy of the Labor candidate for Longman, Rebecca Fanning, and I thank Rebecca for our special guest. Rebecca is reaching out to small businesses across the federal electorate of Longman and listening to how the federal government can assist in our economic recovery. The special guest was Tanya Plibersek, the federal shadow minister

for education and training who is responsible for the financial commitments we need to match our government's commitment to TAFE—including the free TAFE courses we are helping to fund to train up the people we need in a whole bunch of skills shortages areas.

I know the representatives from local businesses who attended our event are hopeful for the future, and I thank them so much for engaging with us. As a government, we have a responsibility to help where we can. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we helped over 50 businesses across the Kurwongbah electorate with hundreds of thousands of dollars to adapt their operations to this new uncertain era. In a localised effort, recognising the impact of ongoing roadworks as well as COVID on businesses based on the old Petrie roundabout, I was happy to donate \$1,000 worth of coffee vouchers for the Kadison and Lealta coffee shop which were then passed on to worthy recipients in the community, including Meals on Wheels, et cetera. That coffee shop had trucks and fencing outside their coffee shop for a number of weeks, and it is pretty hard to buy a coffee through a fence.

Kudos also goes to Le Service Course, which managed to keep operating through the trying times. Adam would have been well within his rights to seek the services of our Small Business Commissioner during the past months. I was happy to help out by purchasing a bike and services to the value of \$1,000. The bikes I ride have motors, so I ran a social media competition to give away a Trek mountain bike. I am happy to say it went to a good home, and Le Service Course has picked up a few new customers in the process.

It probably goes without saying—because I know everyone in this place supports small business—that, as we continue to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, if you are healthy, please go to your local shop, please interact with your grocery suppliers and please get your car or bike serviced. I know this legislation gives us that extra power to help small business to negotiate those leases and to make employing locals that bit easier. For that reason, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (3.31 pm): I rise in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. I start by thanking all of my small businesses across the Capalaba electorate, of which there are many. I acknowledge all the small businesses within the Capalaba Park area and Capalaba Central. The Capalaba industrial estate is a hive of activity. It is always full and very hard to get a car park when you try to visit a business there. There are great businesses there, like Bacchus Brewing, which are fantastic brewers. We also have fantastic shops at Maridale Park. I worked next to many of these places when I was a bottle shop manager, and I got to know the business owners of the small businesses around there.

We have shops at Alexandra Hills on Vienna Road, and we also have the shops at Alexandra Hills itself, including great businesses like Pattermore's Meats. Daryl is a fantastic community supporter. He does so much, especially for local sporting clubs, by making sure they have meat trays and vouchers to raffle. Daryl particularly came to the fore when there was a shortage of meat in the big retailers. He was going out to the markets and stocking up big time, and that carried my local community through that shortage. I want to thank all of the small businesses at the shops at Wellington Point. Those shops were created by the former member for Capalaba, Michael Choi, and Doris Choi. They have now sold that set of shops, but there are fantastic small businesses there.

I mention my small businesses in Birkdale. There is a growing health district along Birkdale Road and I want to thank them for all the work they do. There are shops on Thorneside Road at Thorneside as well. The fish and chip shop there is my favourite fish and chip shop in the electorate. I probably should not play favourites but I grew up in Thorneside and I love the chips and gravy there, although I have been laying off it for the last few months.

**A government member:** You look very good.

**Mr BROWN:** Thank you. I want to acknowledge the work the small business minister is doing in this area, particularly around COVID. The small business minister has come to the Redlands area multiple times and has worked very well with the chamber of commerce. I know the communications have been well received down there because those businesses are willing to come to the events here in Parliament House. Those events are well attended by Redlands businesses.


We have provided \$2.5 billion in COVID assistance, and we had close to 1,000 COVID grants go out totalling nearly \$1 million. That was fantastic support for our local area to get them through a very tough time. I know the Small Business Commissioner helped in mediations with landlords during COVID. Those businesses, such as hairdressers in the beautician area, did it particularly tough when COVID first hit. The Small Business Commissioner was able to mediate fair deals to ensure they were not kicked out of their premises, and those businesses were able to come to arrangements with their landlords so they could come back bigger and stronger.

I also want to acknowledge the businesses on Old Cleveland Road which have just gone through a fire. I know Melin the Thai restaurant is just about to open in new shops. They did not have insurance, unfortunately, so they are starting from scratch. I would like to thank Councillor Tracey Hughes and the mayor who have assisted that business to get back on their feet, particularly because they did not speak English very well and there was paperwork to get into this new business facility. Today is their grand reopening. I would have liked to have been there to have some Thai tonight, but I am in here. As soon as I get out of parliament, I will be going down there for a beautiful feed because I have missed them.

The Small Business Commissioner will do great things. A particular area of concern for me is the fact that there is another task force into regional bank closures. This is the third one that the federal government has launched since 1997, with a royal commission in there as well. I know it is a real issue for regional communities when they lose their bank branches. Those branches mean so much to those communities and, Deputy Speaker Lister, I know you would think that as well. These businesses want to get on with business. Some of them take a lot of cash in their jobs, and when their bank branch closes in their small town, it can be a dramatic experience for them to have to find a new bank branch hopefully in the same town. If not, they end up having to travel vast distances to do their local banking.

I know that a lot of people do their banking online now, but we have to acknowledge that sometimes the NBN and communications in regional communities are not up to scratch like in city areas. These bank branches in regional communities play a vital role. I hope the Small Business Commissioner can add to these task force reviews—and I know the federal government started one late last year—so we can help those small businesses keep these vital services, such as a bank branch in their local town.

I again want to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. I know it will be a fantastic help for my small business community, which is very large in Capalaba. The support that the Small Business Commissioner will give, particularly around advocacy and mediation, will go a long way to ensuring that the small businesses in Capalaba can do what they do best—that is, serve our community.

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (3.38 pm), in reply: From the outset I want to acknowledge the contributions made to the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 debate by so many members since the debate began during the last sitting week in February. It has been fantastic to hear of the value and genuine regard that members have for their local businesses. There has been recognition of the importance of small business in general and also accolades for our Small Business Commissioner and her team. They have clearly made a huge impact, and one would only need to look through the *Hansard* records of this debate to see the story of how widely they have spread their assistance across Queensland and how much it is appreciated. They have provided small businesses with targeted support, particularly in relation to leasing disputes, which has enabled their recovery and boosted their resilience.

Since we first began this debate, small businesses in SEQ have suffered yet another blow from the impact of devastating flooding. We stand alongside those businesses to support them in whatever way we possibly can, including ensuring that they are able to access the significant disaster recovery funding made available to them through the joint arrangements between our government and the Commonwealth. I only hope that those opposite have, by some chance, put pressure on their federal colleagues, on Scott Morrison in particular, to apply the same funding formula to our suffering businesses that he did to businesses in New South Wales.

Back to this legislation. As highlighted through this debate, the bill is an important piece of legislation that will permanently establish a Queensland Small Business Commissioner to enhance the operating environment for small businesses right across the state and provide access to timely and cost-effective dispute resolution assistance. As a key measure, forming part of the Palaszczuk government's response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the temporary Small Business Commissioner and supporting office has already had a big impact for small businesses, and this bill is the next step in ensuring that this can continue.

As we have heard throughout this debate, small businesses are at the heart of every electorate, supporting local jobs and local communities. In fact, the member for Glass House said that if it were not for small businesses his electorate would not exist, and I think that is true for all electorates. It is why this bill is so important. The temporary Small Business Commissioner has carried out more than 7,400 activities since May 2020, and I am sure every member here would have a small business in their electorate that has been assisted by her or her office in one way or another.

I again wish to thank the chair, the member for Redlands, and every member of the Education, Employment and Training Committee for its examination of the bill. The committee made a single recommendation that the bill be passed, and I thank the opposition and other members of this House for their stated intent to support the bill.

I would like to now turn to some of the issues raised in the debate. Members opposite have questioned whether the commissioner role established by this bill will be sufficiently independent of government. I need to state really clearly that I was absolutely appalled to hear some members opposite infer in some way that public servants play games or deliberately put obstructions in the way of the processes of government, including the Small Business Commissioner. There were some absolutely horrific accusations made. Politics is a rough game, but I simply will not have the reputations of public servants impugned in that way; I want to place that on record.

I can assure all members that the concerns about independence are unfounded and that under the bill the commissioner will operate independently. Provisions in the bill provide an appropriate level of oversight to enable the role to deliver effectively on its objectives. An appropriate balance has been provided between the commissioner carrying out the role and functions impartially whilst maintaining public accountability and transparency in relation to the activities undertaken.

As highlighted during the debate, there are two elements in the bill that provide a role for the minister in relation to the activities of the commissioner. These are: clause 18, under which the minister can give the commissioner a written statement of expectations about the minister's expectations for the performance of the commissioner's role, including the nature and scope of their activities; and clause 17 which enables the minister to give the commissioner a written direction about a matter relevant to their functions. The commissioner must keep the minister informed about the functions and activities they have performed and comply with any request to provide the minister with information regarding their functions and activities.

The commissioner must also prepare and give the minister, within three months after the end of each financial year, an annual report on the functions and activities undertaken, which is tabled in parliament. This includes reporting on any direction given by the minister and any actions taken by the commissioner as a result.

I would now like to turn to the member for Buderim's proposed amendments to the bill, neither of which will achieve the outcomes he describes. The first proposed amendment would omit clause 18, the power for the minister to issue the commissioner with a direction. This amendment has been proposed in an apparent attempt to increase the commissioner's independence from government. This amendment is not necessary, given the protections I have already highlighted and will not achieve this objective. Instead, it will remove the ability for the government to require the commissioner to undertake activities in response to urgent or emerging issues impacting on small businesses.

As outlined in my opening statement, the power for the minister to issue directions has been included in the bill for the sole purpose of ensuring the commissioner is able to be directed to respond to emergent issues or matters that require an urgent response or action to be taken that is outside of the commissioner's business-as-usual activities. For example, this power could be used in directing the commissioner to increase support to small business in response to situations like COVID-19 or the flood emergency which has just impacted the south-east corner of this state.

The directions power is intended to have a limited focus and removing it would undermine the commissioner's responsiveness. It would also leave us out of step with small business commissioners in other states and territories who have a power for the minister to issue directions in their legislation. Removal of the power for the minister to issue directions would limit the minister's powers to be only able to issue the commissioner with a statement of expectations, which I note the member intends to retain in the bill. The statement of expectation power is intended to be used to guide the commissioner's focus over a longer period and is not designed for responding to emergent or urgent issues.

The amendment also ignores the public accountability measures associated with the ministerial direction power that require any direction made, as well as the specific actions taken by the commissioner in response, to be published in the commissioner's annual report which will be tabled in parliament. Importantly, the member's amendment would not change the reporting lines for the commissioner who would continue to report to the minister, not parliament. As such, it does not deliver on its stated objective of making the commissioner independent of the minister or government.

Furthermore, the activities of the temporary commissioner demonstrate how this role is working independently to support small business across the state—and we have heard this time and time again from almost every member's speech. Through advocacy and engagement, the commissioner is providing a valuable and impartial conduit between small business and government, raising issues and

identifying solutions to support small business. For example, recently the commissioner led the Summertime Taskforce. As the chair of the taskforce, the commissioner established an independent industry reference group made up of representatives from relevant Queensland government agencies and regulators, small business friendly councils, peak bodies and key industry associations. The taskforce project sought to identify ways in which small businesses could make the most of Queensland's great weather by facilitating better use of outdoor areas and on-street dining and to revitalise our CBDs. The commissioner has provided the report on the research findings and recommendations from the Summertime Taskforce project to government for consideration.

In addition, the commissioner took on a prominent role in championing and raising issues on the impacts of the COVID pandemic on small business after witnessing and hearing about the impact on small business owners that were listed as exposure sites for COVID-19. The commissioner strongly advocated to government on this issue and, in response, the government established a COVID-19 cleaning rebate to support small and medium businesses and not-for-profit organisations that have been listed as an exposure venue by Queensland Health. The role of the commissioner can and does act independently and, for the reasons I have just outlined, this amendment should not be supported by the House.

On this last point, I would also like to turn briefly to some comments made by those opposite in the committee report's statement of reservations. In the statement, the opposition stated that they believe the Small Business Commissioner should report to parliament to ensure independence from the government of the day. The member for Southern Downs—you, Mr Deputy Speaker—even suggested in your contribution to this debate that the arrangements in the bill would allow for the executive to alter the commissioner's annual report before it is tabled in the Legislative Assembly. I would like to assure the House that the reporting requirements in this bill are not unique and reflect the approach taken in the majority of similar Queensland acts, establishing commissioner and ombudsman roles; this being that the annual reports, after being prepared by the relevant entity, are given to the responsible minister who must table it in the Legislative Assembly within the required time period. The reporting approach in the bill is also the same as the process that all statutory bodies must follow in preparing their annual financial reports under the Financial Accountability Act 2009. These reports must be given to the relevant minister who must table it in the Legislative Assembly.

Members opposite also raised a concern that the bill does not allow the commissioner to initiate inquiries and investigations into areas of concern for small business. This issue was explicitly considered during the development of the bill. While other jurisdictions have commissioners with powers to compel information and carry out investigations, it is unnecessary in Queensland because there are existing mechanisms to effectively deal with such matters. For example, the Queensland Ombudsman has existing jurisdiction to investigate complaints about Queensland public agencies' actions and decisions and the Office of Fair Trading can investigate consumer complaints and scams. Providing the commissioner with a separate power to conduct inquiries and investigate complaints would create duplication and could contribute confusion for small businesses.

While there is no power to investigate complaints under the bill, a function of the commissioner under the bill is to provide a central point of contact in relation to matters affecting small businesses. Under this broad function, the commissioner can provide initial assistance and support where a small business has a dispute and may direct or refer a small business to an appropriate agency with jurisdiction to undertake an investigation. In addition, another function of the commissioner under the bill is to advocate on behalf of small business to the state, Commonwealth another state or a local government or any other entity administering a matter relevant to small businesses. This provides the commissioner with the ability to make representations and raise issues on behalf of small businesses with other agencies and entities. This is a broad function and gives the commissioner considerable scope to advocate on behalf of small businesses in relation to any issues of concern. For example, the temporary commissioner has made an independent submission to the current parliamentary inquiry into the operation of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990.

I would now like to turn to the member for Buderim's second proposed amendment, which would insert an additional clause into the bill to allow the commissioner to request information from prescribed entities including government departments. I note from the member's contribution that this would ensure government treats small business fairly and this amendment is intended to give the commissioner greater scope to gather information. Others in this chamber, including the members for Buderim, Southern Downs, Theodore and Glass House, went further and indicated in their contribution that this power is necessary to give the commission sufficient powers, for example, to conduct investigations and inquiries. The proposed amendment will not achieve the outcome the opposition intends. It will only allow the commissioner to request relevant information, which is information the commissioner



reasonably believes is necessary for the performance of its functions as set out in the bill. As the bill does not contain a function for the commissioner to instigate inquiries or investigations, the proposed additional information requirement clause would not be used for this purpose.

I would like to reiterate that careful consideration was given to the scope of the commissioner's functions to avoid duplication of existing arrangements that provide for small business concerns to be addressed and to focus on those areas that are a priority for specific support where none currently exists. Before I conclude this point, I think it is important for me to clarify the types of disputes to which the commissioner will be able to assist small businesses reach an informal solution.

The commissioner will be able to assist small businesses in reaching an informal resolution for small business disputes which are lease disputes and franchise disputes. These are disputes that will typically be between a small business and its landlord or a small business and its franchisor. However, the commissioner will not have a role in dealing with disputes or issues small businesses may have with state agencies or other parties. As I have stated, small businesses and individuals already have mechanisms in place to deal with those types of disputes. This is why the amendment to allow the commissioner to compel information from state agencies is unnecessary and potentially duplicates the role and function of other entities. For these reasons the member's second amendment should not be supported.

I would also like to address a point the member for Buderim made about the absence of a definition of 'small business' in the bill and this being too vague, potentially causing confusion for small businesses. A small business definition has not been included in the bill as there is no single definition used consistently. For example, the Australian Taxation Office, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Fair Work Ombudsman use different definitions of small business. Given that small businesses account for 97 per cent of all Queensland businesses, preferencing one definition over another would present a greater risk of excluding a genuine small business than inadvertently assisting a larger size business. Stakeholder feedback received in the development of the commissioner model highlighted clearly that a restrictive small business definition presents a risk of potentially excluding businesses from accessing support that are in genuine need of assistance and aligned with the policy intent.

Other jurisdictions with the commissioner model—New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia—do not include a small business definition in their small business commissioner acts. Feedback from these jurisdictions indicated that this approach did not create issues for their service provision. Not specifying a definition will provide the commissioner with the flexibility and discretion to support businesses that may fall outside of the traditional definitions. Guidance is included in the bill that the commissioner may have regard to the number of employees and the annual turnover to assist in deciding whether or not a dispute is a small business dispute.

In its report, the committee made a suggestion that in the absence of a legislative definition the commissioner should publish an operational definition of small business to assist small businesses. I support the committee's suggestion. In fact, I have already discussed with the commissioner how some practical guidance could be provided.

The member for Surfers Paradise correctly noted in his contribution that small businesses deserve to be supported by a small business commissioner that effectively advocates on their behalf. That is why a specific function of the commissioner will be to advocate on behalf of Queensland small business to the state, the Commonwealth or another government or any other entity involved in administering a matter relevant to small businesses.

I note that the member for Toowoomba South wants to know what support is being provided to small businesses. I am very happy to tell everyone in the House that the Palaszczuk government has made small business one of the key planks of our \$14.5 billion economic recovery plan, including \$2.5 billion in support for small business; \$600 million for the 2021 COVID-19 business support package, funded jointly by the Queensland and Australian governments; \$196 million for Small Business COVID-19 adaptation grants; \$6.5 million for COVID-19 Border Business Zone hardship grants; \$1 billion for interest-free or low-interest jobs support loans; \$1.3 billion in payroll tax relief and land tax relief; \$100 million for electricity bill rebates to small- and medium sized businesses; and \$700,000 in additional mental health support for small businesses and their families. I say this to the party opposite, which did not even go to the last election with a small business policy—I think that the Leader of the Opposition said about one sentence about small business in his last budget reply speech. Furthermore, to support small businesses directly impacted by the recent rainfall and flooding event, we have jointly funded an additional amount of \$558.5 million between the Commonwealth and Queensland governments which will be provided to support communities in need.

Lastly, I would like to respond to the criticisms by the member for Buderim and the member for Hinchinbrook about the committee chair's ruling that the commissioner was not invited to make a contribution to the committee at the end of the public hearing. As the member for Redlands has explained, the agenda for the public hearing was decided by the chair and the deputy chair, the member for Southern Downs, as had been resolved by the committee. Members opposite should raise their concerns with their respective representatives.

This bill gives effect to the Queensland government's commitment to permanently establish a Queensland Small Business Commissioner and supporting office. It is a statutory basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions. We are fully supportive and know that this is a key element of our support for small business. I note that the opposition abolished the position and never bothered to actually reinstitute it in any form that they considered would be appropriate. I commend the bill to the House and I seek its support.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### Consideration in Detail

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—



**Ms FARMER** (3.59 pm): I move the following amendment—

1

**Clause 2 (Commencement)**

Page 6, line 7, '1 March'—

*omit, insert—*

3 May

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

*Tabled paper:* Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, explanatory notes to Hon. Di Farmer's amendments [\[430\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Di Farmer's amendments [\[431\]](#).

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—



**Mr MICKELBERG** (4.00 pm): Clause 6 details the functions of the Small Business Commissioner. I would like to speak to the difference between the capability delivered by this legislation and that of the previous small business commissioner, abolished in 2012. During this debate we have heard much from those opposite about the fact that the LNP abolished the role of the Small Business Commissioner when in government, somehow suggesting that our support for this new permanent Small Business Commissioner is a hypocritical position.

**Mr Power:** That is hypocrisy.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I take the interjection from the member for Logan. It is something that I addressed in my contribution to the debate but let me say it again. In 2012 the LNP abolished the role of the Small Business Commissioner because the role was poorly structured and held no power. That is why I am speaking to this clause. It was costing Queensland taxpayers and small businesses money without delivering any real benefit. Red tape was not being cut; the role was just another layer of administration between the minister and Queensland businesses.

When appointed by the Bligh government in 2011, the then minister responsible said that the Small Business Commissioner would work with Queensland's peak industry groups such as the Tourism Industry Council, the CCIQ and the Australian Industry Group to look at the systemic issues in regulation in the state and reduce that regulation in a very measured way with world's best practice. It would reduce regulation in such a measured way that three months after being appointed the then small business commissioner did not even have an email address so that small businesses could contact him and he could not even say how many small businesses he had met.

Eight months down the track, the then small business commissioner, who had been tasked with reducing red tape, had delivered nothing. The very bodies that the small business commissioner had been charged to engage with were critical of the role. At the time Peter Strong, the then CEO of the Council of Small Business Australia, said—

I think the role wasn't effective because it was set up the wrong way. The commissioner didn't have a lot of power and the role lacked definition so it was difficult to do anything and get measured on what you had done.

That is why the role was abolished and that is why it is important that the permanent Small Business Commissioner is independent and empowered to deliver for small business. That is why we are supporting this bill. We call on those opposite to genuinely empower the permanent Small Business Commissioner to deliver for small business.

This section could also contain provisions, as the minister alluded to, to empower the Small Business Commissioner to initiate inquiries and investigations into relevant areas of concern. Such a function would give the Small Business Commissioner real powers to address emerging issues that are affecting small business and their staff, regardless of the political winds of the day. I acknowledge that the minister will have such a power; however, the Small Business Commissioner should be able to initiate inquiries as and when they deem appropriate. The question has to be asked: why has the state government decided to limit the functions of the Small Business Commissioner? The minister should explain why.

**Ms FARMER:** I note the outrage from those members opposite. The fact is: they were in government. If they wanted to establish a new small business commissioner role under the auspices of any regulations or framework they wanted to, they could have and they did not. They just abolished it and, quick as a flash, that was the last we saw of the small business commissioner.

As I outlined in my speech in reply, this amendment will undermine the responsiveness of the commissioner by removing the ability of the minister to direct the commissioner to respond to urgent or emergent issues such as the impact of the floods on businesses in South-East Queensland. The concerns of those opposite that this power will be misused or will undermine the community's trust in the integrity of the commissioner are absolutely unfounded. It is intended to have a limited use in responding to urgent or emerging issues. It overlooks the reality that the power for the minister to issue a direction contains public accountability safeguards, most notably that any directions must be listed in the annual report, which must be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Lastly and most importantly, it does not deliver on its stated objectives of making the commissioner independent of the minister, because the commissioner will continue to report to the minister and not the parliament. I ask that members do not support the amendment.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I think the minister is speaking to the wrong clause. We are speaking to clause 6, not clause 17.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Have you concluded your contribution on that clause, Minister?

**Ms FARMER:** Thank you.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—



**Mr MICKELBERG** (4.06 pm): I move the following amendment—

**1 Clause 17 (Ministerial direction)**

Page 10, lines 15 to 26—

*omit.*

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

*Tabled paper:* Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, amendments to be moved by Mr Brent Mickelberg [\[442\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, explanatory notes to Mr Brent Mickelberg's amendments [\[432\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Mr Brent Mickelberg's amendments [\[433\]](#).

I am moving this amendment to strengthen the independence of the Small Business Commissioner. As we have heard from the minister, she will be able to issue the commissioner with both a ministerial direction and a state of expectations. Despite the assertions of the minister, submitters in relation to the bill did raise the need for the Small Business Commissioner to be more independent of the government. One submitter, Rural Solutions Queensland, specifically stated—

It is our belief that there is a ... need for an independent body specifically for small business during the current pandemic and in the future as businesses commence their recovery pathway.

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman stated in its submission on the bill—

In order for Queensland's small business community to have the full confidence in the Commissioner to fearlessly and consistently represent their small business community, it is important that the role has an appropriate degree of independence from the government. As such, we suggest omitting the clause regarding Ministerial direction (clause 17) ... retain ... the Statement of expectations (clause 18) ...

Given what we have seen in recent months in relation to the independent Integrity Commissioner and the not-so-independent State Archivist position, the reasons this is important are self-evident. Throughout the debate, government members have contended that this concern is remediated by the fact that the Small Business Commissioner will be required to furnish a report to the parliament each year—and the minister just relied on that fact. I would have to say: that does not give me great comfort given what we have seen with the changes to the former state archivist's report in recent months.

In relation to the need to greater independence, raised by LNP committee members—including you, Mr Deputy Speaker Lister, in your statement of reservation—the minister in her reply speech stated—

... I think it is fair to say that the suggestion in the statement of reservation is inconsistent with the role of small business commissioners in other states and is not supported by stakeholders.

Let us examine the minister's assertion. New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia all have a small business commissioner. Only in New South Wales does a circumstance exist where the small business commissioner receives both a ministerial direction and a statement of expectations. In Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia the commissioner receives either a ministerial direction or a statement of expectations. In Western Australia the commissioner's role is governed by a board of management, with the minister's role being to appoint the board.

Small businesses need to know that the Small Business Commissioner is working for them and not working for the government. It is for that reason that I have moved my amendment, which seeks to make the Small Business Commissioner role more independent. I urge all members to support this measure.

Division: Question put—That the amendment be agreed to.

**AYES, 35:**

**LNP, 31—**Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Gerber, Hart, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Watts, Weir.

**KAP, 3—**Dametto, Katter, Knuth.

**PHON, 1—**Andrew.

**NOES, 52:**

**ALP, 49—**Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Kelly, A. King, S. King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Madden, Martin, McCallum, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Mullen, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Skelton, Smith, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Whiting.

**Grn, 2—**Berkman, MacMahon.

**Ind, 1—**Bolton.


Pairs: Enoch, Crandon; Harper, Robinson.

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mr Mickelberg) negatived.

Clause 17, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 20—

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (4.14 pm): In speaking to clause 20, I seek clarification from the minister with regard to comments she made in summing-up in relation to the need for the Small Business Commissioner to provide the parliament with an annual report through the minister. The minister said

that this provision was not unique, so my question to the minister is: how will this process differ to that applying to the State Archivist where we saw an annual report amended, not by the minister evidently, because the minister has given her assurance that it will not be amended by the minister? I think the language that the minister used was the 'responsible entity'. In this instance, who is the responsible entity and will that responsible entity, if someone other than the Small Business Commissioner is the responsible entity, have scope to amend the drafting of the annual report as prepared by the Small Business Commissioner?

**Ms FARMER:** I reject the premise of that question. What the member has failed to acknowledge is that an independent investigation of the matters raised about the State Archivist's report somehow being inappropriately altered have been found to be completely unfounded, so I simply reject the premise of the member's question.

Clauses 18 to 20, as read, agreed to.

Clause 21—



**Ms FARMER (4.16 pm):** I move the following amendment—

**2 Clause 21 (Who may apply)**

Page 12, lines 26 and 27, from 'has,' to 'Act,'—

*omit, insert—*

has

**Mr SPEAKER:** The question is that the minister's amendment No. 2 be agreed to.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. No amendment has been circulated. I have not seen the amendment alluded to by the minister. I would like the minister, if she has tabled the amendment, to furnish it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I am informed that they have been circulated, members. Table staff have given me that assurance.

**Ms FARMER:** Mr Speaker, I am happy to speak to the amendment just to clarify what has been circulated.

**Mr SPEAKER:** That would be of assistance, Minister.

**Ms FARMER:** The amendment corrects an error relating to the referral of small business franchise disputes from the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman to the commissioner for mediation. The bill incorrectly references the referral being made under section 15(a) of the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Act 2015, which is Commonwealth legislation. The amendment is minor and technical in nature and removes reference to section 15(a) in clause 21(2) to reflect that referrals are made administratively and not through a particular legislative power.

Amendment agreed to.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I rise to speak to clause 21, which details the circumstances in which mediation can be undertaken, and I want to highlight many examples of misinformation in relation to the capability that the permanent commissioner will be empowered to deliver. During this debate we have heard all sorts of contentions from government members about what the Small Business Commissioner will be able to achieve because of this legislation. Simply put, many of those contentions are ill informed. We heard from many about how the Small Business Commissioner will be able to mediate business-to-business payment disputes. However, the commissioner has no powers to enforce dispute resolution between small business suppliers and big businesses dragging out payment for services and goods. We heard from Minister de Brenni about how this legislation was for the small retailers who are having to compete with businesses which flout the law by marketing illegal tobacco. That is a ridiculous contention when the sale of illegal tobacco is dealt with by the Queensland Police Service in the first instance and certainly not by the Small Business Commissioner.

Submitters to the bill highlighted that this bill misses an opportunity to bring in further protections for small and family businesses. It misses an opportunity to genuinely deliver on the minister's stated objective of this bill to enhance the operating environment for small businesses in Queensland and to reduce the time and cost associated with resolving disputes involving small business. The government should be empowering and resourcing the Small Business Commissioner to provide dispute resolution in relation to some of these matters, but for reasons best explained by the minister, the government has chosen not to deliver such a capability.

Clause 21, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 22 to 37—



**Mr MICKELBERG** (4.20 pm): In speaking to clause 23 in relation to the commissioner's approach to acting on an application, I speak to the issue in relation to having no definition of 'small business', which the minister spoke to in her summing-up. It is my view that this creates unnecessary vagaries. I accept the contention that the Small Business Commissioner may be able to put out an operational definition, but it begs the question why a definition is not included in this bill and why it is on the Small Business Commissioner to come up with her own definition. I understand the minister's assertion that there are differing definitions in other jurisdictions and other government departments, but surely for the interests of clarity, probably most importantly for the interests of the very mediators and the Small Business Commissioner who are going to be doing the job of determining whether they have the capability or the jurisdiction to mediate in these instances, a definition contained in this bill would make sense.

This clause in particular talks to the fact that the commissioner may have regard to the number of employees and the annual turnover, but provides no guidance as to what that consideration might look like, what those numbers might look like: is it 20 employees, is it 200? Is it a \$1 million turnover, is it \$5 million, is it \$10 million? I think it is incumbent on this House to provide clarity rather than to leave it to the Small Business Commissioner to come up with an operational definition when it should be included in this bill.

**Ms FARMER:** The member opposite likes to think he knows more than just about anybody else in the whole country about small business. This was a matter that was considered very carefully in putting the legislation together. It is a treatment of small business definition which is agreed on by every state and territory that is using this approach. In fact, I do not think there was one major small business stakeholder that did not agree that this needed to be allowed to be open to a certain extent so that small businesses were not precluding themselves.

In fact, I had discussions with the Small Business Commissioner today to go over what some of the issues have been. Right up until this point there has been no problem whatsoever. She, in fact, reiterated a conversation that she had with the small business commissioner in Victoria who applies a similar approach. They have had not one single problem with this. This makes sure that small businesses do not preclude themselves from seeking assistance. An issue that our department finds quite often, and I certainly find it often when I am talking to small business owners, is that they will often rule themselves out of seeking assistance because they think they are not eligible. We want the message to small businesses to be that they should seek assistance and they will receive it if they are eligible. As I said, there has been no instance whatsoever to this point where this approach to the definition of a small business has created any problems at all.

Clause 22 to 37, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



**Mr MICKELBERG** (4.24 pm): I move the following amendment—

**2 After clause 37**

Page 19, after line 11—

insert—

**37A Information requirement made by commissioner**

- (1) The commissioner may ask a prescribed entity for relevant information in the entity's possession or control.
- (2) If the commissioner asks a prescribed entity for relevant information under this section, the entity must comply with the request unless the entity considers that—
  - (a) giving the information could reasonably be expected—
    - (i) to prejudice the investigation of a contravention or possible contravention of a law in a particular case; or
    - (ii) to prejudice an investigation under the *Coroners Act 2003*; or
    - (iii) to enable the existence of a confidential source of information, in relation to the enforcement or administration of a law, to be ascertained; or
    - (iv) to identify a confidential source of information in relation to the enforcement or administration of a law; or
    - (v) to identify a person who has given the entity or someone else information about a matter mentioned in the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 186(1); or

- (vi) to endanger a person's life or physical safety; or
- (vii) to prejudice the effectiveness of a lawful method or procedure for preventing, detecting, investigating or dealing with a contravention or possible contravention of a law; and
- (b) it would not be in the public interest to give the information.
- (3) For subsection (1), information is not taken to be in the prescribed entity's control merely because of an agreement between the prescribed entity and another entity under which the other entity must give the information to the prescribed entity.
- (4) A person is not liable, civilly, criminally or under an administrative process, for giving the commissioner information under this section.
- (5) In this section—
  - prescribed entity** means—
    - (a) the chief executive of a department; or
    - (b) a local government; or
    - (c) an entity prescribed by regulation involved in administering matters relevant to small businesses.

**relevant information** means information the commissioner reasonably believes is necessary for the performance of a function under section 6.

This amendment seeks to create a new power which would allow the Small Business Commissioner to require a prescribed entity to produce relevant information that the entity may hold. The intent is to ensure that where disputes exist involving government departments and entities, that the Small Business Commissioner is able to require the government entity to produce information that may enable the more timely resolution of the dispute. This is a power that has been used to resolve disputes in other states. Too frequently I hear from Queensland small and family businesses that have been pushed to the brink of financial ruin because of government departments—frequently Queensland Health and Transport and Main Roads—not paying their invoices within the agreed terms. The power created by this amendment could be used by the Small Business Commissioner to influence government departments to provide information enabling the more timely resolution of disputes. Businesses that battle to get paid by some of the bigger government departments tell me they feel they are just ignored and that there is little willingness by departments like Queensland Health and TMR to engage in good faith to resolve disputes. This power will provide another tool that the Small Business Commissioner can use to ensure that government departments do work proactively and positively to resolve disputes.

I ask all members to support this sensible amendment. The government has indicated it does not intend to. That is disappointing. Any tools we can provide the Small Business Commissioner with to better and more readily resolve disputes should be supported so that they can support Queensland small and family businesses.

**Ms FARMER:** I rise to speak against the member for Buderim's amendment. We have heard a lot from the member and those opposite that this amendment is necessary to ensure the commissioner has sufficient powers to perform its functions. It will not achieve what those opposite intend. The commissioner does not have a function to investigate or launch inquiries and this amendment therefore falls short of its stated intent. Careful consideration was given, as I said in my speech, to the commissioner's function to avoid duplication of existing arrangements across government, such as that of the Queensland Ombudsman. If there is one concern we in this House hear about from small business it is red tape. The member's proposed amendment will achieve more red tape, more confusion, more layers—

**Mr Mickelberg:** How?

**Ms FARMER:** Because it duplicates functions. I do not think any of us want that for any small business. We are trying to simplify things for small business and to make it really clear where they can go to for support. I go to the member's statement about on-time payment policies in particular. As the member knows, we introduced an on-time payment policy to reduce invoice payment times. As of the last quarter of reporting, an average of 90.4 per cent of invoices from small businesses were being paid on time. We continue to work to improve that because we know that by supporting small businesses we are supporting local communities.

Division: Question put—That the amendment be agreed to.

**AYES, 36:**

**LNP, 31**—Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Gerber, Hart, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Watts, Weir.

**KAP, 3**—Dametto, Katter, Knuth.

**PHON, 1**—Andrew.

**Ind, 1**—Bolton.

**NOES, 51:**

**ALP, 49**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Kelly, A. King, S. King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Madden, Martin, McCallum, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Mullen, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Skelton, Smith, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Whiting.

**Grn, 2**—Berkman, MacMahon.

Pairs: Enoch, Crandon; Harper, Robinson.


Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mr Mickelberg) negatived.

Clauses 38 to 74, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (4.33 pm): I move—


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

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### Long Title

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (4.33 pm): I move—


That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.


## ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CALLIDE

### Resignation of Member

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, this morning I was handed a letter of resignation from the member for Callide and, as I have now read that letter, I note that the resignation took effect immediately. I table the letter for the information of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 29 March 2022, from the member for Callide, Mr Colin Boyce MP, to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt MP, tendering his formal resignation from the 57th Parliament of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland [434].

### Seat Declared Vacant

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.34 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the seat in this House for the electoral district of Callide has become and is now vacant by reason of the resignation of Mr Colin Boyce on 29 March 2022.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.



## PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (EXTENSION OF EXPIRING PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 22 February (see p. 39).

### Second Reading



**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (4.35 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Community Support and Services Committee in conducting its inquiry into the bill and finalising the report, which was tabled on 25 March 2022. I would also like to thank the many stakeholders who made submissions and appeared before the committee. The committee made one recommendation, that the bill be passed. While non-government members of the committee tabled a statement of reservation, the committee supported the passage of the bill in the interests of giving the government the necessary public health powers to deal with the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency in Queensland. I will address issues raised in the statement of reservation in my speech.

COVID-19 is an unprecedented global health crisis that has changed the world as we know it. It is unpredictable, highly contagious and poses a serious risk to people's health. It has caused untold disruption to governments, economies and communities across the globe. It has been just over two years since COVID-19 was detected. In that time, over 450 million people have contracted COVID-19 globally and tragically more than six million people have died, according to the World Health Organization.

Throughout most of the pandemic, Queensland adopted a suppression strategy with a goal of no community transmission, guided by the advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and decisions of National Cabinet. Queensland's public health response to COVID-19 has evolved since March 2020 and has adjusted as our vaccination rate has continued to increase.

By comparison to other jurisdictions, Queensland has fared remarkably well in response to COVID-19. If Queensland was the United Kingdom, adjusted for population, we would have had 12,500 deaths to COVID-19. By enabling our Chief Health Officer to rapidly apply public health measures, we limited the loss of life to a fraction of that number: 700 deaths as at 22 March 2022. If it were not for short and targeted lockdowns, vaccine mandates, masks and physical distancing requirements that we instituted whilst awaiting the production and approval of a vaccination, we would be facing a very different situation with hospitals overrun and lives lost. I acknowledge the 700 lives lost because that number represents human beings—Queenslanders, loved ones—whose family members are grieving due to their loss.

I acknowledge that those necessary public health measures have been tough on businesses, communities and people. However, the health, social and economic outcomes for Queensland stand as evidence that this approach was worth the hard work. Let me be clear about just how important Queensland's successful response to COVID-19 has been. It has minimised economic impacts compared to other jurisdictions, given us more freedoms than other states and territories, mitigated the impact on our health system and ultimately saved lives. It has ensured that Queensland has been positioned to lead the nation in terms of Australia's economic recovery.

Queensland's successful COVID-19 response is underpinned by the temporary enabling framework made to the Public Health Act 2005 at the start of the pandemic. This framework enables swift and effective responses that balance risks and the need to protect public health. For example, during the Indooroopilly cluster in July last year, the highly virulent Delta variant had the potential to become widespread in our community at a time when vaccines were still being rolled out. A short and targeted lockdown was essential to prevent widespread outbreak, loss of life and systemic impact.

We only have to look to our southern states to see what could have happened had government not acted decisively throughout the pandemic. Over 21 months, not including the initial period of national lockdown, New South Wales endured around 125 consecutive days of stay-at-home orders and Victoria spent over 260 days in lockdown. In comparison, Queenslanders spent a total of 21 days in lockdown, with 11 of those applied to South-East Queensland only.

As our vaccination coverage has increased, restrictions have gradually eased in Queensland. It is important to note that Australia is not an outlier in the restrictions that are currently in place. The Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker measures the comparative stringency of government

measures that have been implemented to combat COVID-19. Australia ranks as less stringent than Germany, the United States, Canada, Italy and India. As much as we might wish to have COVID-19 firmly in the rear-view mirror, it is very much with us right now. We must remind ourselves of that. Right now, we have passed the first wave of the Omicron variant. As such, we have only minimal restrictions in place in order to protect our most vulnerable. However, with the emergence of Omicron subvariants and with cases increasing over recent days, it is clear that we are on the cusp of a second Omicron wave and we will be closely monitoring the situation over the coming weeks.

This illustrates that Queensland's framework enables a range of things to be done but does not require the powers to be used at the current time. It enables us to dial up the response quickly in the event restrictions are needed and dial back down as soon as the measures are no longer needed. There may be a point in the future where restrictions are not required at all, but we are not there yet. Measures must be relaxed in a controlled manner. As the Chief Health Officer said in the committee hearing—

... it would be reckless to withdraw all of the measures on one occasion as soon as we ended this wave.

Queensland is now in a transition stage as we move towards living with COVID-19 where the virus is continually circulating in the population; however, the transition to living with COVID-19 is not linear. Even with high vaccination rates and protections in place, Queensland has recorded over 700 deaths with COVID-19 in the first three months of 2022. To put that into perspective, in 2017, one of our worst flu years on record, there were 226 deaths with influenza as the underlying cause.

We are likely to see new and different waves and variants in the future which may have unique characteristics and vary in severity. Already we are seeing the emergence of BA.2 and BA.3 sublineages of the Omicron variant. Australia will also be one of the first countries to head into winter with Omicron already circulating. Waves of COVID-19 will likely overlap with the flu season in the winter months. This is of particular concern as people are likely to have less immunity in the upcoming flu season due to reduced exposure to flu over the past two years. Flu cases generally rise between April and October, and it is over this period that we may see increased pressure on our hospital and health system.

In their statement of reservation, opposition committee members queried whether a six-month extension is based on expert medical advice. The advice is clear: the combination of influenza and COVID-19 over the next six months may put significant pressure on the health system. It is critical that the government is able to continue to respond quickly and effectively to the risks of COVID-19. We must continue to listen and respond to the expert health advice from experts like the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation and to implement National Cabinet decisions. This bill will allow us to do that.

Extending the temporary legislative framework will allow us to take a considered approach to removing restrictions while also balancing risks and safety measures over the next six months. It is important to note that what underpins this bill is the emergency health declaration. Irrespective of extending this bill, once that declaration is lifted, which we are obliged to do if we consider it is no longer an emergency, the provisions under this act will fall away, even before October if that were to occur. I also point out, however, that no state or territory has lifted their health declaration at this point in time.

As much as there is a lot of focus on mandatory vaccinations, particularly around venues in Queensland, it is important to note that there are other mandatory vaccination public health directions in place in Queensland. They include to the aged-care and disability sector. That mandatory vaccination direction is in place as part of a National Cabinet decision. Every single state and territory has been asked to put that direction in place. There has been no decision or recommendation from either AHPPC or National Cabinet to lift that mandatory declaration on aged care or disability. In fact, the most recent decision of National Cabinet is to apply the third dose, the booster, as a mandatory requirement in aged care and disability. They are strengthening that direction, not removing it. If these powers were not extended, that direction would fall away. After April, staff at aged-care facilities would not have to be vaccinated at all, let alone have a third booster or a fourth booster. It is important to remember that.

Also, this public health directive allows for, and in fact is the instrument through which we implement, the rule around seven days isolation for people who are positive with COVID-19 and quarantine of seven days for people who are close contacts. Again, this is a national standard that AHPPC has not recommended a reduction or removal of at this point in time. If these powers are not extended after April, there will be no instrument that enforces the requirement to isolate and quarantine.

These powers are not just about mandatory vaccinations in venues. This is about the requirement in those vulnerable settings to have staff and visitors vaccinated. It is also about our isolation and quarantine rules, which are still some of the most fundamental principles recommended by the World Health Organization.

I note that amendments have been circulated to reduce the time to May. That would mean we would need to come back in the next sitting week, introduce a bill, declare it urgent, not send it to a committee, debate it that week and pass it, simply to extend it for another month. To get it beyond May, we would have to do that. If we were to accept that amendment today, we would have to come back in the next sitting, start all over again, not allow a committee process and pass it if we needed to have these powers go beyond May.

If we are to respond to an unpredictable and evolving threat, we must have the flexibility to act quickly to respond to the circumstances. The temporary legislative framework introduced in response to COVID-19 gives us this flexibility. The power of the Chief Health Officer to issue public health directions has made it possible to take preventive measures such as requiring masks to be worn. It enables the Chief Health Officer to continually tailor measures so as to minimise adverse impacts on individuals, the health system, businesses and the Queensland economy.

This framework ensures that restrictions are only applied for the shortest period of time necessary to address that public health risk. Indeed, the measures in the bill require the Chief Health Officer to revoke a public health direction as soon as it is no longer necessary. The bill extends these public health measures until 31 October 2022 or until I, as the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, declare the end of the public health emergency, whichever is earlier. The Public Health Act 2005 compels me to end the COVID-19 public health emergency as soon as I am satisfied it is no longer necessary to exercise the emergency powers to prevent or minimise serious adverse effects on human health. I take this obligation very seriously. I will end this public health emergency as soon as I consider the criteria to be met. If that declaration is made, the emergency powers will come to an end from the time the declaration is made. As I say, there is no state or territory that has lifted its declarations yet, either.

The bill also temporarily continues amendments made to the Corrective Services Act 2006, the Mental Health Act 2016 and the Disaster Management Act 2003 to support the COVID-19 public health response. Extending the measures for only six months, until October 2022, will ensure the emergency measures are available to protect Queenslanders but do not continue for longer than necessary.

The bill is of significant interest to the community, with over 1,700 submissions to the committee inquiry. Many submissions noted that the emergency powers to respond to COVID have been in place for two years now. A common theme in submissions was the impact the emergency powers have on people's day-to-day activities. Some submissions shared personal stories about how they, their families and community members have been affected by the restrictions. I know that Queenslanders are feeling tired and frustrated and are wondering when their lives will return to normal. Living through a pandemic, where everyday life can change in an instant, has taken its toll on us all. If there is one thing Queenslanders are good at, it is banding together during tough times. Queenslanders have been overwhelmingly cooperative with temporary restrictions to their everyday activities despite personal inconvenience. We know that some of these decisions have also been heartbreaking. This shows real community spirit and care for our neighbours.

Queenslanders have also stepped up to protect themselves, their family and friends by being vaccinated. Overwhelmingly, Queenslanders understand that vaccinations save lives, particularly in our vulnerable and elderly community. The unfortunate truth is that the pandemic is not yet over. I ask Queenslanders to continue to show patience and to do their part by keeping their distance with people where possible and getting tested and staying home if they are sick. Critically, if they have not been vaccinated or are due for their booster, please do so immediately.

The statements of reservation called for more transparency and scrutiny of the COVID-19 legislation and more parliamentary oversight. The temporary nature of the COVID-19 legislative amendments has meant that the COVID-19 legislative framework has been scrutinised by parliament seven times since its introduction. The powers in the bill are also subject to legislative safeguards. The regulation that extends the public health emergency declaration is disallowable by parliament. The Chief Health Officer and emergency officers can only give directions that are reasonably necessary to assist in containing or to respond to the spread of COVID-19 within the community. The Chief Health Officer must revoke public health directions as soon as reasonably practicable once they are no longer required for this purpose.

The member for Maiwar suggested that the Chief Health Officer's decisions take into account political factors, going so far as to suggest the Chief Health Officer 'accepted this general point in the public briefing on the bill'. The member for Maiwar's comment misunderstands the nature of public health advice and misrepresents the evidence given by Queensland Health at the hearing. As the director-general clearly explained at the public hearing of 7 March 2022—


Public health decisions have to take into account the community behaviour, the group behaviour, of segments of the community or the community. As such, they do have to take into account those issues that influence the behaviour of the community. Clearly that is what public health is.

The non-government members in their statements of reservation on the bill want more data and more health advice published for each and every decision made by the Chief Health Officer. In making a direction, the Chief Health Officer has made clear that he draws both on his own expertise and on expert knowledge from groups such as the Communicable Diseases Network of Australia. The Chief Health Officer considers and gives relative weight to epidemiological information, the capacity of the hospital and health system, the latest evidence about the course of the virus, available treatments, community behaviour, human rights and more.

The Chief Health Officer provides clear advice to the public at press conferences whenever changes to public health measures are made. In addition, there is a wealth of information on the Queensland Health website, including daily updates to case numbers, deaths, hospitalisations and the number of people in ICU. The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee also publishes regular statements and the Communicable Diseases Network of Australia regularly update and publish national guidelines. There is no shortage of publicly available information from expert groups and no shortage of published, reputable and scientific literature, including from ATAGI and the TGA.

Many submissions expressed the view that the public health measures being extended by the bill impose limitations on human rights that are unjustified or need further safeguards. The state has a fundamental obligation to ensure the right to life of its citizens. While there have been instances where other human rights such as the right to freedom of movement have been limited, these limitations have been necessary to save lives and protect the health and safety of Queenslanders during the pandemic.

From the beginning of the pandemic we have put the health of Queenslanders first and we will continue to do so. The bill represents the Palaszczuk government's continued commitment to supporting the health and safety of all Queenslanders during an unprecedented time of uncertainty. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.53 pm): I rise to contribute to the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. I do so being in the privileged position as the opposition shadow minister for health and ambulance services. Before I delve into my response to the bill, I want to reflect for a moment on what it means to be a healthcare professional, as you would well know, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly. I am not sure there has been a time in human history where such a spotlight has been shone on health care as it has been over the past two years. It is quite a profound thing to say, but I say it because I believe it to be genuinely true.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have no shame in saying that I love health care, as I know you do as well. I love the undeniable good it can bring to the life of one person or the lives of many. As a registered nurse, I have lived it. I have lived the highs of a healthcare career—being with a patient when their life is changed for the better. There is nothing quite like it. A test, a vaccine, a scan, a surgery—these things change people's lives; all done through the wonders of modern health care.

I feel extremely lucky to have experienced firsthand the delivery of all of those things. But that feeling is not always like that, as we now know. In those autumn days of 2020 our healthcare workforce went to work every shift not knowing what they were in for. Out there was this great unknown and the whole world was watching. I think that captured the imagination of many here in Queensland but also right across the world. These people, our healthcare workers, were not just shuffling off to another day at work—they were putting it all on the line. They were our defence, our protection, superheroes in scrubs—and I do not use that term lightly.

Suddenly work in health care was not just another occupation because these people were on the coalface of a disease that nobody knew anything about. The sacrifices, miracles and magic that our health workforce weave every day were suddenly acknowledged on a very wide scale. So too the toughness, the grit and the risk of fronting up each day to face what was then a very worrying, unknown, invisible enemy.

I am proud and so thankful for the incredible job our frontline health workers did and continue to do through the pandemic. I am also so proud and so thankful for every day before and every day since. To my healthcare colleagues out there I just want to say thanks. I am sure the events which have

unfolded since March 2020 have piqued the interest in a career in health care for many a young person and maybe not so young. If it has, let me say to you that you will not regret it. It is a richly rewarding career and you can do immense good.

I now turn my attention to the bill more directly. At the outset, as a member of the opposition I wish to place on record an acknowledgement that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption and upheaval to the lives of Queenslanders. It has impacted people in every corner of our great state. I want to acknowledge those Queenslanders who have lost loved ones. I want to acknowledge those Queenslanders who have lost their livelihoods. I want to acknowledge those who were forced to close their businesses. I want to acknowledge those who have never reopened. I want to acknowledge those who might still be waiting to say hello for the first time. I want to acknowledge those who never got to say goodbye for the last time.

COVID-19 has taken away many things for many people and it is only proper that this fact be recognised. In this place, regardless of your stripe, we must all be cognisant of that fact when we speak to this bill. Always, members of the LNP have remained acutely mindful of this in dealing with our constituents every day.

As a good opposition should, we have carefully considered the detail of the government's Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. This bill, and the iterations before it, are probably the most significant pieces of legislation that many of us have or will ever debate. The LNP recognises that the provisions contained in this bill are extraordinary. They give unprecedented power to the government with little or no oversight. Because of this, our party has and will continue to treat the passage of this bill, and any others like it, with the appropriate level of respect that is demanded.

The position which Queensland now finds itself in is very different to when this House debated a similar extension in August last year. Things have changed quite remarkably in the last two months alone. However, if members cast their minds back to when this chamber last voted to extend these powers, domestic and international travel was non-existent. A PCR test was the only option to check on mild COVID-19 symptoms. They will remember the vaccine rollout here in Queensland was still ramping up. We were slow out of the blocks and demonisation of the AstraZeneca vaccine and the Premier's refusal to have it played no small part in that.

We have not forgotten that sorry chapter on this side. However, despite that unfortunate episode, now more than 90 per cent of our state's adult population has received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. That is a wonderful thing because we know that it works. Full stop; it works—and I have said that in this chamber time and time again. It is a marvel of modern science. It prevents serious illness, meaning people do not end up requiring treatment in our ICUs or passing away from their illness. That is plain for all to see now, even here in Queensland.

Given the situation we now find ourselves in, it is time for us to look to the future. It is now the responsibility of the government to provide a step-by-step roadmap, grounded in expert advice, that shows Queenslanders the path out of this pandemic. We were told things would be reviewed at 90 per cent. The government have sat on their hands. We still have no clear path forward. Queenslanders should know what that plan is.

We know there will be surges in the number of cases from time to time. We know there will be new variants or subvariants as there are right now. We know we must be prepared for and react to those things, and the opposition acknowledges that, but that should not mean paralysis and we still need to plan. Each day that goes by we are more normalised to living with COVID-19 circulating within our community. Now it is time for the government to tell us how and when these restrictions will be appropriately eased.

Across two years the government has failed to show us a clear and coherent plan, so it is for this very reason that the LNP will move key transparency amendments to this bill. I now table a copy of the amendments which the opposition will move.

*Tabled paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022, amendments to be moved by Ms Ros Bates MP [\[435\]](#).

The government has shown that it is not going to be open, transparent and accountable of its own volition, so we will put it to a vote in the parliament. The government should have a vote on why those very things—openness, transparency and accountability—should not apply to them. The truth is that there is not a valid reason that exists.

The LNP's first amendment would see the extraordinary powers given to the government and Chief Health Officer expire on 31 May 2022. We are saying to the government, 'You have two months to outline a plan for the future.' The opposition and the people of Queensland have played ball. Now it is time the government did the same. The date of 31 May 2022 has been chosen as it will provide the Queensland parliament with the option to scrutinise the government's plan moving forward.

If there was a genuine need to extend the restrictions the parliament could do that. There are two sitting weeks in May when we can vote to extend the powers again if necessary. We understand and we respect the need for the response to be grounded in expert medical advice, but the government must take Queenslanders into their trust.

Our record on this is clear. We back the AHPPC guidelines for frontline healthcare staff and aged-care staff to be vaccinated. We have backed them from the beginning. What this amendment does is set a target for the transition away from restrictions. It says to the government: 'What's your plan for we must have one?' As a parliament and as a population, we have upheld our end of the bargain for two long years. Now it is time the government did the same.

The second amendment to the bill would see that the expert health advice received by the state government which is used as the rationale for implementing public health directions is released publicly. The parliament and the Queensland public have been left in the dark for too long when it comes to this.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the opposition has called for the public release of expert medical advice which is used as the rationale for the COVID-19 restrictions. A good government does not shy away from openness, transparency, accountability and scrutiny. However, this government has. Asking for this advice is not somehow an argument against medical advice. It is about how the government communicates it with Queenslanders.

Releasing the advice that the government receives will allow Queenslanders to know why hard decisions are being made. As an example, meeting minutes and correspondence between the minister and the Chief Health Officer in Victoria are routinely released by the government when new health directives are issued. Go to their website and see for yourself. It is an insight into government decision-making which has been absent in this state.

This level of openness and transparency has been non-existent in Queensland, but it should never have been this way. Clarity around decision-making is essential for public confidence. That is why the LNP is moving an amendment stipulating that the health advice is released publicly. The government should not be surprised by this. We moved the same amendment last time these powers were extended.

Finally, the third amendment which will be moved by the opposition will be to establish a parliamentary committee which would routinely hold hearings with the Chief Health Officer to assess and scrutinise health advice. This layer of parliamentary oversight would be in line with other Australian and international jurisdictions. The opposition believes that the government has not undertaken the appropriate level of scrutiny which is necessary for a bill as significant as this.

In one form or another these powers have existed for more than two years. The government has had ample time to prepare for a proper and thorough review of this bill. Alas, no, the government has done a rush job and that is to the detriment of all Queenslanders.

To provide context, the committee was only given 31 days to examine the bill. Public submissions were open for barely two weeks. The public hearing with Queensland Health lasted one hour—one hour. Based on these facts alone, the government blatantly treated the committee system and the examination of this bill with contempt. It is ironic that the government chose to ram this bill through in such a fashion.

When we last voted on the extension of these powers, the LNP sought to move an amendment that would have brought the extension time line forward. The health minister stood up and exclaimed how inappropriate it would be for such a short time frame to be given for the House to consider the bill. Yet here we are a few months on in a position where the committee was only given—and I repeat—31 days to examine the bill, two weeks for the public to make submissions and one single hour to ask questions of Queensland Health.

This is a case in point for why a parliamentary oversight committee must be established. It is not appropriate that a bill of this magnitude is subject to such little scrutiny. The opposition believes that the current level of ongoing parliamentary oversight for a bill of this nature is insufficient. Under the bill as it currently stands there is no requirement for public health officials to formally answer questions or for the restrictions to be scrutinised by the Queensland parliament. Should the bill pass without amendment, it will mean that the bill is not scrutinised for six months by the parliament, and we believe that to be unacceptable.


The opposition is moving amendments to establish a six-person parliamentary oversight committee, chaired by a non-government member. The establishment of a parliamentary committee would ensure there were routine hearings with the Chief Health Officer and other Queensland Health officials to assess and scrutinise health advice. The committee could, among other things, consider changes to AHPPC advice recommended by the Commonwealth government, deliberate on appropriate quarantine requirements for international arrivals who may be carrying new strains of the virus, and provide recommendations to the government on the suitability of other COVID related restrictions.

Based on the evidence provided to the committee, the committee could also recommend to the government when the public health emergency can be declared over. That power rests solely with the minister unchecked by the Queensland parliament.

The establishment of such committees is not new, having taken place in other jurisdictions such as New South Wales and New Zealand. The opposition flagged this very issue in April 2020 when the member for Kawana raised that a non-government member should chair the committee. I should also note that submissions by the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties and the Queensland Law Society cited a current lack of oversight.

To round out my contribution, I would like to place on the record that the opposition acknowledges the unprecedented legislative changes of dealing with the first two years of this pandemic. That is clear. However, the opposition is also of the view that, in a democracy such as ours, these types of powers should not be in place any longer than necessary.

Over the past two years Queenslanders have displayed an extraordinary level of trust in government by giving up basic rights and freedoms to control the spread of COVID-19. The Queensland public held up their end of the bargain. The opposition is of the view that we, in this place, now have a responsibility to honour this trust by outlining a pathway for the return of these rights and to restore transparency. We believe these amendments will do just that.

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (5.08 pm): I rise to support the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. As chair of the Community Support and Services Committee, our task was to consider the policy to be achieved by the legislation and the application of fundamental legislative principles—that is, to consider whether the bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and to the institution of parliament. The committee also examined the bill for compatibility with human rights in accordance with the Human Rights Act 2019.

Tragically, since the emergence of the virus in Australia in 2020, 718 Queenslanders have lost their lives to COVID. In New South Wales 2,057 and in Victoria 2,727 people have lost their lives to COVID. I note the comments of Mr Matt Dunn of the Queensland Law Society at the public hearing to the bill who referenced that good governance is about finding a balance. Mr Dunn stated—

There is liberty—the opportunity to not be deprived of your freedom—and, at the same time, there is a public health imperative and a public health outcome that needs to be achieved.

Ultimately and importantly, good governance must be about preventing lives being lost and ensuring at the forefront of decision-making is the health of all Queenslanders—the disabled, the aged, our First Nations peoples and other vulnerable Queenslanders. We all know many of those vulnerable Queenslanders. For many Queenslanders who consider themselves privileged, we understand the responsibility and the small sacrifices that come with this privilege.


The Queensland government, by establishing the COVID-19 legislative measures in 2020 and by continuing to govern with a careful consideration for a balance of freedoms and restrictions, brought the Queensland community out of the first wave of the pandemic without extensive loss of life or long periods of lockdown. This approach has been the envy of other eastern states of Australia and has been admired by the rest of the western world. Whilst there have been challenges for Queensland businesses, they have not endured the extent of economic hardship that has been experienced by businesses in New South Wales and Victoria during their long periods of lockdown, restricted movement and the inability to work as a result of high infection rates.

Queensland's economy has outperformed the rest of Australia. The state's domestic economy is 6.3 per cent larger than it was in March 2020, while Australia's GDP is only 3.7 per cent larger. Since the emergence of the virus, Queensland has added more than 150,000 jobs, which is more than the number of additional jobs created in New South Wales and Victoria combined. Queensland's timely and targeted health response has limited the impact of the virus on the state's fiscal position. In the 2021-22 financial year, the Queensland government is forecasting a net operating deficit of \$1.5 billion, relative to deficits of nearly \$20 billion in both New South Wales and Victoria.

The spread of the COVID-19 virus remains unpredictable. As at 28 March 2022, Queensland has 62,299 active cases, with New South Wales at 253,307 cases and Victoria at 56,997 cases. Whilst the Omicron variant is currently the dominant strain, new variants of COVID-19, such as the BA.2 subvariant, continue to emerge. On 24 March 2022, New South Wales recorded 24,803 new cases—the majority of which were the BA.2 subvariant of COVID-19.

Many Queenslanders have enjoyed a lifting of restrictions of late, and I note that the majority of the associated COVID-19 legislative measures are due to expire on 30 April 2022 and these will not be extended by this bill, allowing a return to normal operations. At the same time, the Queensland government recognises that a legislative framework of essential public health measures must continue. Whilst many are focused on the public health restrictions imposed by the state government, it is worth acknowledging that the federal government has a role to play in the continuation of vaccine mandates. This is through both the collective decisions of National Cabinet as well as the requirements they have imposed unilaterally with respect to Australians wishing to undertake international travel.

Medicine is not an exact science, as we know. We must remain agile and responsive to the virus to protect our Queensland community—for this is good governance. On behalf of the committee, I thank the many thousands of individuals and organisations which took the time out of their busy schedules to make written submissions on the bill. Their perspectives and feedback are essential to the decision-making processes of good government. I also thank our Parliamentary Service staff and the Department of Health for their advice during the drafting of the report. As chair of the committee, I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.14 pm): We need to respect the views expressed by the Australian Human Rights Commission, which have increasing concerns regarding lack of transparency and scrutiny of bills such as the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill. The commission stated—

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global challenge that has required extraordinary measures to protect public health. Governments across Australia have acted swiftly to protect everyone's rights to life, health and to an adequate standard of living, while also focusing efforts on groups who are particularly vulnerable at this time.

We have been told over and over again by the government that to protect against the spread of the virus difficult decisions have had to be made about restricting some basic human rights, such as freedom of movement and association. The opposition acknowledges the unprecedented legislative challenges of dealing with the first two years of this pandemic. However, we are also of the view that, in a democracy such as ours, these types of powers should not be in place any longer than necessary.

The position which Queensland now finds itself in is very different to when this House debated a similar extension in August last year. Now, looking to the future, it is the responsibility of the government to provide a step-by-step road map, grounded in expert advice, that shows Queenslanders the path out of the pandemic. Governments tell us they are working hard to protect people, but their actions can sometimes result in limitations of human rights. This can especially be the case when significant decisions have necessarily been made quickly and previously untested policy solutions are implemented. The Queensland Human Rights Commission statements were important during our deliberations. They said—

We have all been subject to significant restrictions on our human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission is very aware of the difficulties and distress these have caused Queenslanders, particularly people whose lives have been severely disrupted by border closures and lockdowns.

Throughout the pandemic we have handled thousands of enquiries and complaints and strongly advocated for improvements to the way the Queensland government responds to the pandemic, including to hotel quarantine, communication about restrictions, and transparency and accountability in how these decisions are made.

The Commission is concerned about the impact on human rights of some COVID response measures, including vaccine mandates.

I want to put on the record the tragic circumstances occurring in my electorate in the last week involving two frontline nurses in Bundaberg. Even though they both have GP and specialist letters and certificates stating the underlying medical conditions why these public servants need to be exempt from vaccination mandates, they have now had their exemptions rejected and second notices to their terminations have been received. This is very distressing for them. A lot of issues need to be resolved there. No-one could think that outcome is acceptable.

These two frontline nurses have raised issues with me about the employment vaccine mandates. They said that those mandates are: removing their human right to provide food and shelter for their families through loss of employment; eliminating access to health care; destroying small businesses and friends; placing unnecessary extreme pressure on families and individuals and creating mental



anguish; leading to poor provision of health care in hospitals and communities; leading to issues in education for their children due to a loss of highly skilled educators; and creating a burnout of staff in emergency and health-care sectors. They wanted to put on record that student nurses, student paramedics and allied health students have been thrown in without required experience, training and mentors, while being expected to work outside their usual scope as we all battle through the pandemic and associated issues.

They also want to raise the issue of discrimination against the unvaccinated through health directives mandated through acts and powers. The government now wants to extend the act further to continue to allow one person, the CHO, to overwrite the human rights of all Queenslanders for a virus that is subsiding quicker than any of the government's computer modelling predicted. This is something we must debate over the next day or so.

The Queensland Human Rights Commission has opposed previous extensions to the bill due to a risk versus benefit basis, transparency and erosion of human rights, which have been ignored. Amnesty International Australia advocates that vaccine mandates legalised through this bill infringe on fundamental human rights and that risk versus benefit does not justify mandating. Social, economic and community welfare is being severely and negatively impacted due to the health directives being legalised through this act and is leading to monumentally higher stressors and loss of financial security for Queenslanders than any concerns regarding health impacts caused by COVID-19.

I acknowledge those thousands of people who have contacted our offices through the committee process who live with the hope that they will be able to return to work one day and resume being an independent individual, living with dignity and being an accepted part of society. I hope that one day we can all come together again as a proud state and not continue to be divided. The mandated restrictions imposed by the government and authorities have impacted greatly on those who work across many sectors, including government, education, emergency services, tourism, retail, hospitality, health, entertainment, construction, transport and personal services. Many of these hardworking Queenslanders have continued to work in their field. They have done the right thing but they have not been immune to the negative impacts of the mandates and restrictions. Some have suffered great loss financially, emotional turmoil, family relationship breakdowns, and loss of friends and family due to suicide and some have suffered vaccine injury.


I hope common sense will prevail as we move to restore Queenslanders' faith in our system of government, and we can allow these temporary management provisions to expire in April as we all agreed was the right course of action in August last year. With the calls for transparency, I support the amendments proposed by the shadow minister.

I want to talk quickly to the second proposed amendment to the bill which would see the expert health advice received by the state government, which is used as the rationale for implementing these public health directions, released publicly. The parliament and the Queensland public have been left in the dark for too long when it comes to this.

The third amendment is to establish a parliamentary committee which would routinely hold hearings with the Chief Health Officer to assess and scrutinise the health advice. This layer of parliamentary oversight would be in line with other Australian and international jurisdictions. We also seek to increase the level of transparency in government decision-making so that all Queenslanders can understand why certain restrictions are imposed but, more importantly, to give them hope and a pathway out of the pandemic and what these mandates mean.

The need for parliamentary oversight is important because the opposition believes that the government has not undertaken the level of scrutiny necessary for a bill of this significance. To provide context—it has been raised, but as deputy chair I want to put it on the record—I think 31 days to examine a bill like this could be questioned. I think we did a good job getting through the workload, and the report reflected that, but, as has been mentioned, we had only one hour with Queensland Health. I would have loved more time to scrutinise and perhaps get some evidence from the director-general at the time, particularly about the health advice. Under the bill as it currently stands there is no requirement for public health officials to formally answer questions or for the restrictions to be scrutinised by the Queensland parliament.

I welcome the debate over the next couple of days on this very important reform. I thank all those people who put a lot of work into the thousands of submissions in such a short period of time. I thank the committee members for their diligence in putting together this report.

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (5.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. On behalf of my communities, I want to extend my gratitude and appreciation to our Premier and to the former chief health officer,

Dr Jeannette Young, for their strong leadership in making tough decisions under very extreme circumstances to keep Queenslanders safe. With the strength demonstrated by our Premier and the strong health advice from our CHO, the Palaszczuk government took nothing for granted and made sure that no stones were left unturned when it came to making important decisions about how to respond to this global health emergency in a swift and decisive manner. I offer acknowledgement to former health minister Steven Miles, current health minister Yvette D'Ath, cabinet ministers and all members of parliament who stepped up to the plate and were determined to work together to keep COVID out.

Queensland's effort would not have been possible if it were not for our frontline health heroes. Our health heroes stepped up for Queensland and were prepared to be at the coalface of this pandemic to protect and to fight for Queensland. I acknowledge all of the frontline workers in my electorate for their hard work and commitment to keeping the communities in the Cook electorate safe.

From my experience of working across my electorate, people were searching for answers, reassurance and certainty for the future. I think what played out in the media day in and day out swayed the views of many people right across the state. I think the stark reality of seeing mass sickness and death across the globe was just a glimpse of the reality of what could become of our community and our state. We knew that it would be only a matter of time before COVID came knocking on our door, and that it did. Communities in Cape York and Torres Strait were deemed the most vulnerable communities, and the outbreak of COVID-19, exacerbated by distance and isolation, would have had a devastating impact on people living in the region.

On 29 January 2020, Queensland declared a public health emergency under section 319 of the Public Health Act 2005 due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in China and its pandemic potential due to the cases spreading to other countries and the public health implications within Queensland resulting from recently arrived travellers from the epicentre of the outbreak. The public health emergency was declared for all of Queensland under section 323 of the Public Health Act. The declared public health emergency was extended until 31 December 2020 through the making of several regulations and may need to be further extended. In early 2020, the Legislative Assembly also passed several pieces of legislation to support the Queensland government's health response to COVID-19 and to make amendments to chapter 8 of the Public Health Act.


I want to talk about some of the personal experiences across the Cook electorate and the measures that were put in place, supported by this public health legislation, which enabled my communities to be kept safe. We saw snap lockdowns and other restrictions across my electorate. There was a biosecurity restriction in place. I want to thank and congratulate my communities for abiding by the many measures in terms of mask wearing, hand sanitising—all of the practical measures that we were encouraging communities to take. I think none of this would have been possible without the support of all Queenslanders working together to keep each other safe. At the end of the day, I think our role here was to facilitate measures that would only help Queenslanders to do that.

The Public Health (Declared Public Health Emergencies) Amendment Act, which received assent in February 2020, increased powers for emergency officers and the Chief Health Officer to limit and respond to the spread of COVID-19 in Queensland. The Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Act 2020, which received assent on 19 March 2020, enabled the chief executive to delegate their powers to the Chief Health Officer or a person with expertise or experience in public health issues, improving the operation of provisions enabling emergency officers to support the Queensland government's response to COVID-19.

There were many good measures put into place. I respect the views of all of the people in my electorate—those who supported the legislation and those who opposed it. I think the position we are in now, in coming through this global pandemic, is testament to the good job the Queensland government did to protect all communities across the state.

I would like to acknowledge the chair of the Community Support and Services Committee, my fellow committee members, Hansard and the committee secretariat for their hard work in examining this vital bill. It is an important one for Queensland and it is going to further support us in this journey through this global pandemic. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Before I call the next speaker, I want to remind all members that the direction from the Speaker regarding remaining in your own seat due to COVID-19 is still in place.

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (5.28 pm): Queenslanders have done an incredible job over the last two years in keeping our community safe. In particular our thanks go to our incredible frontline health workers who have worked day in, day out doing a remarkable job looking after

Queenslanders in our underfunded and squeezed public hospitals. Thanks to them and the sacrifices and hard work of everyday people all across Queensland and the millions of people who have gotten vaccinated, we have lost far fewer people to COVID than we have seen in other states. My heart goes out to the families of the 727 people who have died and the many people experiencing the effects of long COVID. Sadly, we are not out of the woods just yet.

The virus continues to pose a very real threat to public health in Queensland and particularly for people with existing vulnerabilities, those who are immunocompromised and people with disabilities. It is important that we remain vigilant about the risk of new variants, especially as we approach our first winter with the virus circulating widely in the community. A robust COVID-19 response that keeps those who are most vulnerable in our society safe relies on trust from everyday people. Transparent and accountable government decision-making is critical to maintaining this trust.

It has been over two years since the public health emergency was declared in Queensland, two years since many of the provisions that this bill extends were first legislated.


Debate, on motion of Dr MacMahon, adjourned.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION (REVERSAL OF GREAT BARRIER REEF PROTECTION MEASURES) AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 15 March (see p. 399), on motion of Mr Dametto—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (5.30 pm): I rise to contribute to this debate. I would like to state at the outset that I very much support the shadow minister and the LNP's amendment to this bill. I have spoken many times in this House, outside of this House and all over the state on the Labor government's reef regulations and the impacts on the many primary producers in my electorate. When these laws were moved in the parliament in September 2019 the LNP proposed sensible amendments to introduce at least a 10-year grace period—it should be a lot longer—for the Burnett-Mary catchment area. This was rejected by Labor, even though a former Labor environment minister—I think it was Kate Jones—even proposed that it should not be in the legislation. Since then, I have been continuing to highlight this call, asking for the Labor government to remove the South Burnett and western Gympie regions from the reef regulations or delay their commencement.

Just over a year ago more than 200 primary producers from my region attended a public meeting in Kingaroy to understand the looming reef regulations and how they would affect and impact their business. The Kingaroy meeting had the biggest turnout across the state. Honourable members have to remember this was at the height of COVID. When everyone else was staying at home, these residents of mine were so concerned they came out in droves. There were 200 people who attended at the height of the pandemic to try to understand why they were being impacted—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Member for Nanango, just pause. Members, there is way too much background noise. If you need to have a chat please go outside.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:**—so severely by Labor's regulations in an area and in a part of Queensland that the science says does not go anywhere near the Great Barrier Reef. That is the impact on that greater South Burnett region. Above anything else the main question asked was why the South Burnett is even included in the legislation. Given that water from the South Burnett and the western Gympie regions would only ever reach the sea during times of extreme flood, the regulations that impact these farmers on a daily basis demonstrate that this one-size-fits-all regulation should not be imposed on that region.

Importantly, these meetings exposed the fact that there is no baseline data and no water quality testing is undertaken in the South Burnett. The only monitoring station is located at Mount Lawless, which is north-east of Gayndah and well downstream of the entire South Burnett and western Gympie regions. In June 2021 I asked a question on notice of the Minister for the Environment. The question was why are there no water quality monitoring or paddock monitoring programs in the South Burnett to advise what baseline data is available to determine whether the implementation of the cropping and horticultural standards in the South Burnett is of value to the improvement of water quality for the Great Barrier Reef. What a great question; I thought so. One would assume the Minister for the Environment would take notice and say, 'Okay. Let's have a look into that.'

The answer I received from the minister acknowledged that there was no upstream water quality monitoring prior to water entering the Burnett River. I highlighted for the minister that water from the Burnett catchment starts at the Bunya Mountains, some 215 kilometres by road and, therefore, an even further distance by the time it travels through our rivers and creeks to Mount Lawless, not to mention that much of our water sits in BP Dam, Gordonbrook Dam and Boondooma Dam before it even has a chance to enter the Burnett River. Let's not mention that after this it flows to where? The mighty Paradise Dam! It was the LNP that had to yell and scream to get that fixed. That is where it should sit for quite some time but currently it flows out to sea because it was the Palaszczuk government—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, hold on. Members, I am going to start warning people if the interjections keep up.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It was the LNP that saved Paradise Dam, and that is the water that flows from my mighty region. We saved Paradise Dam after the Labor government tore it down.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, I am going to issue a general warning to everyone. If there are any more of those interruptions I will warn people.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is my mighty area which I have just described that eventually flows down into Paradise Dam. I would say it goes out there a lot quicker now because the dam wall was ripped down by the Labor government, so it actually goes a bit further.

It is also acknowledged in the minister's response that the discharge of sediment from the Burnett River only occurs following flood conditions. This is something that our farmers and producers tried to explain to the departmental staff at the meetings. They know that during major flood in our region nothing will stop the flow of sediment. They also know that water moves laterally across the landscape and can deposit sediment in grass country, not just straight into our creeks. I asked another question of the minister, and that was about waving permit fees for producers in my region to address the negative mental health effects caused by the regulations and to offer them an incentive in good faith to become more engaged in the process. Unfortunately this was not considered. Meanwhile these regulations continue to have a serious effect on primary producers who are languishing under the pile of red tape that this Labor government has imposed on them.

I thank Mr Alan Broome and Mr and Mrs Peter and Margaret Hunt who made a submission to the committee on this bill. They spoke about the need for the South Burnett to be removed from these regulations. Alan, Peter and Margaret are all cattle producers who have land on Barker Creek and Reedy Creek. If water flows from their properties, it eventually runs into BP Dam. This water can sit for many years before a flood spills it into Barambah Creek. It seems wrong that these regulations are therefore being imposed on them. The question to rightfully ask is why.

The role of government should be to work alongside farmers and communities—unlike what they did in Paradise Dam—towards environmental outcomes instead of ramming unworkable laws down their throats. The LNP does believe that farmers and landholders are the true conservationists, the true champions for the land. They need to be viewed as genuine environmental partners. That is exactly what the LNP believes in. That is exactly why we on this side of the House will always stand up for farmers. We do not need to stand up in this House, like the agriculture minister does, and tell everyone that we are the supposed 'farmer's friend'. With the legislation that the Labor government has brought in, he is not the farmer's friend in any way, shape or form.

There is no doubt that the reef regulations brought in by Labor continue to cause farmers a great deal of distress largely because the government has created a perception.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I take that interjection because that member would not even know what graziers are. She would not even understand that these producers are hurting. These producers do not deserve the angst from the Labor government. They deserve to be treated with common decency. They deserve to be treated with respect, and it is only this side of the House that will do that for the primary producers of this great state.

**Ms Pease** interjected.


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

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Let us come to the fake funding that this Palaszczuk government has done towards incentives for reef catchments. It has committed \$10 million. How much do members think that this government has expended? I will tell them—\$3,849 out of \$10 million. What sort of help is that for the farmers in the reef catchments? How about it stands up for the farmers in the reef catchments and stops victimising them? How about the government makes sure and understands that there are more people in Queensland than the people who sit on these benches from South-East Queensland? That is exactly why the LNP will always stand up for our regional producers and will always stand up for regional development.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Lytton, I just warned you a minute ago. You are warned under the standing orders. Member for Cairns, you are warned under the standing orders. Member for Nicklin, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I really do appreciate all of those warnings because it is obvious that we are getting under their skin because they know that they are all talk and no action, and we do not need to look any further than that \$10 million. When those opposite are out there doing their big press conferences and social media posts, they say that there is \$10 million to save the reef. What the heavens is \$3,000 going to do and what is it doing with the rest of it? Spending it on waste! That is exactly what this Palaszczuk government is doing. It does not look after the regions. It is only the LNP and this side of the House that will always stand up for regional Queensland for their rightful place in this state.

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (5.41 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Environmental and Other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill. I was a member of the State Development, Tourism, Innovation and Manufacturing Committee which reviewed the original Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It was certainly a very interesting time going to Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and other areas to talk to farmers and hear about their concerns about the legislation. We all rely on our farmers to produce good quality food, but unfortunately there were some in our community who tried to say that farmers were environmental vandals, and that came from people from South-East Queensland.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Member for Logan, just because you are in the background of the member for Theodore does not mean I cannot hear you. You are warned under the standing orders, member for Logan.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** The problem is that there are many in our society who try to demonise farmers when farmers want to protect their asset, protect their soil and make their properties cost effective—

**Mrs Frecklington:** Including the avocado growers.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:**—including the avocado growers. They see their land as their biggest asset and they must protect their biggest asset. In my speech on the original bill in this chamber in 2019 I spoke about incentives for farmers to help farmers. I am very proud that the member for Bonney has brought forward some amendments that say that best management practice is something that we need to follow, because many of these best management practices are better than the actual regulation. When we were in Mackay I remember speaking to a canefarmer who took great pleasure taking his family out to the reef. He said, 'The last thing I want to do is destroy this reef.' All he wanted to do was be empowered to learn new skills and learn new ways and new techniques of farming, and this is what the member for Bonney is talking about. This is what he is pushing for. Farmers are not environmental vandals. Farmers—

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** I take the interjection from the member for Logan.


**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Logan, you are under a warning. You can leave the chamber for an hour.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Logan withdrew from the chamber at 5.45 pm.*

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** As I was saying, farmers do not want to spend unnecessary funds on their property when they do not need to when it comes to fertilising and protecting their soil. Learning best management practice is critically important for them to remain globally competitive. We are all part of a global economy and we need to make sure that we empower our farmers and not persecute them. In

the debate on the original bill I spoke about dredging that could be dumped on the Great Barrier Reef. That has not been done at the moment, but that legislation allowed that and that was never amended. That was one of my gravest concerns. Even the WWF mentioned it.

It is crucially important that we support the member for Bonney. Empowering our farmers to do best management practice is crucially important for them and for the reef because they enjoy the reef just as much as everybody else. We need our farmers to remain strong and competitive on a world stage. Given what is happening around the world with opening markets, we need to make sure that our farmers can supply an ever-increasing amount of goods for our communities and our increasing populations. I will leave my contribution at that, but I plead with the House to support the member for Bonney's amendments. These are the comments that I made in my speech on the original bill in terms of empowering farmers, because that is the way forward to making a difference and ensuring that the farming sector in Queensland remains incredibly strong.

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (5.46 pm): The Great Barrier Reef is literally one of the seven natural wonders of the world, but at the rate we are going it is a living ghost. On the path that we are on, we are almost certain to hit two degrees of global warming because we are clinging on to the fossil fuel industry and on that path the reef is dead, and that is even without this bill which would set us back even further. This bill would be detrimental for the reef's water quality and detrimental for Australia's international obligations. It proposes to reverse water quality protections for the reef that were put in place just two years ago. To reverse these changes would mean that Australia can no longer meet its goals for the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. We cannot give up on the reef this easily.

There is a point where the climate emergency moves from scientists' predictions right into our lives. It has happened recently with the devastating floods that have levelled homes in Queensland and northern New South Wales and it is happening with the death of the reef. The 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change looked at what would happen if we limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times by 2100 instead of the two degrees agreed to in the Paris Agreement in 2015. To achieve just a 1.5-degree rise, even that requires immediate and drastic action because the current pace of emissions would breach that level sometime between 2030 and 2052. While a 1.5-degree rise will still bring major impacts, preventing that extra half a degree will spare entire ecosystems, cities and vulnerable populations from exponentially worse climate change. A temperature rise of two degrees Celsius would eliminate 99 per cent of the world's reefs whereas 1.5 degrees would save a sliver of them, with losses between 70 per cent and 90 per cent.

The reef is doomed under the Queensland government's targets, which are as bad as the federal LNP's targets. It is seeking a 30 per cent emissions reduction below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050. At that rate we will hit two degrees and the reef will die. Farmers are right to say they feel hard done by. This government is asking them to do the heavy lifting to save the reef where the government will not. Farmers are on the front lines of climate change and, if we did climate action right, climate action would include support and improved prosperity for farmers who care for the land every day. Protecting and restoring our agricultural landscapes, supporting farmers, will require us to draw down carbon from the atmosphere. This is a huge opportunity for farmers. Landholders, including farmers and First Nations communities, could be benefiting from the rollout of clean energy via genuine partnerships with the renewable energy industry.

We are so far from that. We need to cut pollution by 70 per cent by 2030 and completely phase out coal and gas with a transition plan that guarantees jobs and income for workers and communities. Improving water quality for the reef is not enough. For the sixth time in the last 25 years, the Great Barrier Reef is experiencing mass bleaching, the result of heatwaves, rising water temperatures and land run-off. Run-off reduces light available to corals to grow and stresses coral with excessive nutrients. Last year the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority said—

Poor water quality is a major threat to the Great Barrier Reef, particularly inshore areas. Improving the quality of water entering the Marine Park is critical and urgent. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority supports actions that reduce pollutant loads from all land-based sources.

In its submission it wrote—

There is a large body of evidence, over many years, culminating in the Great Barrier Reef 2019 Outlook Report, which identifies land-based run off as one of the highest risk threats to the Reef, specifically sediment and nutrient run-off. This is why both governments are investing to improve water quality.

The Whitsunday Conservation Council in its submission writes—

The overwhelming scientific consensus on the detrimental impacts of poor water quality of GBR is settled.

They also write—

Good quality water is critical for our Great Barrier Reef's health. Urgent and rapid compliance with the Reef protection regulation is required to give the inshore ecosystems of our Reef the quality of water it needs to survive, sustain its Outstanding Universal Value and build resilience to warming waters.

The National Environmental Law Association writes in its submission—

The Bill is inconsistent with the scientific consensus that there is substantial evidence to suggest that land-based run-off affects GBR water quality.

The Environmental Defenders Office writes—

In light of the recent draft decision of the World Heritage Committee to potentially change the status of the Reef to 'In Danger', law reform should focus on further reducing impacts in order to build resilience, not repealing protections.

They also add—

In fact, the 2019 Amendment Act did not go far enough in providing for the strong actions needed to build Reef resilience.

I recently had the chance to visit the Great Barrier Reef with my dad and stepmum, visiting John Brewer Reef off Townsville. It was incredible. We saw reef sharks, fish, jellyfish and an amazing array of coral. To my untrained eye, iridescent white and purple coral looked incredible, but I learned that this is a sign of coral in distress. John Brewer Reef is the same reef that Professor Adam Smith and scientist Nathan Cook from James Cook University recently visited and their findings were dire. They wrote—

Descending beneath the surface at John Brewer Reef near Townsville, our eyes were immediately drawn to the iridescent whites, blues and pinks of stressed corals among the deeper browns, reds and greens of healthier colonies.

They go on to say—

This is the first time the reef has bleached under the cooling conditions of the natural La Nina weather pattern which shows just how strong the long-term warming trend of climate change is. Despite the cooling conditions, 2021 was one of the hottest years on record.

Without urgent action the reef will die. We need climate action. We need to improve water quality. We need to support farmers, the people who feed us.



**Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (5.53 pm): I rise to make a contribution to close the debate on the Environmental and Other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill, the private member's bill of the Katter's Australian Party to wind back the reef water quality protections that have been legislated so recently.

To be clear, I do not support this bill. It represents a huge backward step in the already mammoth task we have of rescuing the reef. I do not think it is possible to overstate the peril that the reef faces at the moment, nor is it possible to overstate the importance of protecting the reef. The ecological consequences of losing it would be absolutely devastating given the fundamental role of reef ecology for the whole of the ocean ecology.

It is fair to say that we probably do not yet understand the full ecological consequences of losing the reef. Countless species who spend part of their lifecycle on the reef are at risk. The intrinsic ecological value of the reef is at risk. This natural wonder of the world that is right at our doorstep and the ecosystem services it provides are at risk. I am loathe to take this frame of monetisation, but for the bean counters and hardheads in the room, we need to recognise that the economic consequences for coastal communities would be absolutely devastating. We have heard plenty of others in the debate talk about the \$6 billion in economic contribution that the reef makes to the state and the more than 60,000 jobs in Queensland that rely on reef tourism. All of that is at risk.

I want to repeat some of the points that my colleague from South Brisbane has made because they have not been made often enough in this debate. Climate change is the real threat to the reef. I can honestly relate to the sense of frustration felt by farmers and sympathise with those who feel they are being targeted in circumstances where the government is not pulling its weight to do what we know is necessary to avoid the impact of climate change on the reef. Our emissions reduction targets are pathetic. As much as this government might want to point to the federal LNP and their failings on climate change, our targets for emissions reduction are the same as theirs: net zero by 2050, 30 per cent reduction by 2030. At these rates there is no doubt that we will hit two degrees and that the reef is dead.

The statistics that the member for South Brisbane gave us are important. At two degrees average global warming we will lose 99 per cent of our coral reefs globally. At 1½ degrees we stand some chance of keeping between 10 and 30 per cent of those reefs alive. But if we do not take the action that the science is saying is necessary on climate change and do it now—deep cuts this decade: 75 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050—the whole reef is cooked. Farmers who see

the science of climate change for what it is can quite rightly feel like they are being targeted. They can feel hard done by about the fact that they are being asked to do the heavy lifting to save the reef when the Queensland government is not doing its job.

It is interesting that we are having this debate this week in the context of another bleaching event, a bleaching event in the La Nina part of the ENSO cycle. That is not something we are used to. This is the coral reef equivalent to watching the Gondwana rainforest burn as we saw in the fires of 2019 and 2020. This is not normal. We will continue to hold the government's feet to the fire and point out their grossly inadequate climate action, but our objective now must be to do anything we can to save whatever is left. Reef water quality regulations are absolutely essential. It is one of the only other steps that we can take to improve reef resilience and to give it a fighting chance if we do ultimately see the kind of action from government that we need to reduce emissions.

Another important point that has been overlooked in this debate is that farmers stand to be major beneficiaries of climate action. Protecting and restoring our agricultural land and natural landscapes, as we need to to draw carbon down from the atmosphere, is a huge opportunity for farmers. It has been a long while since we heard some really deliberate talk and some political will around the possibility of soil carbon and carbon farming. The potential for this to take off was there. In the days when I was working in the office of climate change under the member for Glass House as the then minister—before he turfed us all out on Newman's election—there was some extraordinary work going on on carbon farming and soil sequestration and on the methodologies to measure the amount of carbon that could be sequestered through those technologies.

We call them technologies, but they are trees. If members want to see carbon capture and storage go and look at a really big tree somewhere. The potential for this to happen was squandered by the LNP at the state level. It was squandered by the LNP federally. That image of members standing around on the floor of parliament patting each other on the back and cheering at the repeal of world-leading emissions reduction legislation is burned into my mind. That legislation was passed when a federal Labor government needed to rely on the Greens to get outcomes. We got outcomes: we got world-leading emissions reduction legislation.

Since then we have seen the federal government strip out huge parts of the carbon farming initiative as it turned it into the Emissions Reduction Fund. It took the floor out of the carbon market in Australia and the scope for carbon farming to play a big part in enhancing the economic opportunities for regional Australia. Then there was the latest debacle just this week with news of our emissions reduction minister, Angus Taylor, effectively rorting the market and screwing over countless companies and individuals who had optional delivery contracts under our carbon credit units. The bottom line here is that landholders, including farmers and traditional owners, should be standing to benefit from the opportunities that carbon markets present and from the rollout of clean energy by genuine partnerships with the renewable energy industry and ideally with state owned generators such as CleanCo.

In closing, for me perhaps the most concerning thing about this bill is the way it perpetuates the tendency in our parliaments and our political discourse to devalue and to undermine science. It does not work to come in here and throw some air quotes around the word science and pretend that the scientific method does not actually work. There is a persistent trend for politics to trump good science driven policy, and this is another example of that. This is cherrypicking the perspectives of a single expert. We could just about call this the Peter Ridd bill. It is quite extraordinary to present one person's view and act as though that can somehow undermine or overturn everything that the scientific method demonstrates to us about the risks to the reef, both of climate change and of water quality. As elected representatives, we owe it to the people we represent to respect science and to model our policy on that.



**Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (6.01 pm), in reply: I rise to give my speech in reply on the Environmental and Other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill 2021. At the outset I thank those who have contributed to and given feedback on the bill. I thank everyone who has provided an insight, from the sugar industry through to the graziers. I acknowledge the debate that has taken place in this House over the past three weeks. We have heard from both sides of the House and I have a pretty good understanding of where most people will land on this bill.

When speaking on the bill today I will go through and pull apart some of the arguments made by members from both sides of the House. However, firstly, I acknowledge Professor Peter Ridd for legitimising what the people who have their feet in the dirt—those who work in the agricultural and commercial fishing industries—see every day. They see that there are few problems and we too have



seen that in a practical sense. I am always interested when people talk about the economic benefit of the reef because no-one seems to talk about the economic benefit of reef science. Over \$2 billion has been spent on that lucrative business so it is understandable that people are interested in it.

The Health and Environment Committee scrutinised the bill. Once again I share my disappointment that we did not take this back out on the road on the basis that a similar bill was debated in 2019. Having already been out to talk to the farmers was good enough for the committee. The reality is that none of those—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): I remind members not to walk between the Speaker and the member on their feet.

**Mr DAMETTO:** Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. I saw straight through. I did not even notice. It was like a guidepost.

As I was saying, it was disappointing that farmers could not turn up to the committee hearings. The reality is that in 2019 they were able to tell the committee how hypothetically they thought the reef regulations would affect them. The previous bill went through the committee process and the farmers have now had to live with the regulations for two years. They could have told us what it is like to live with the current reef regulations.

Once again I acknowledge Burdekin Canegrowers, Burdekin Shire Council, Kalamia Cane Growers Organisation, Pioneer Crane Growers Organisation, Property Rights Australia, Australian Cane Farmers Association, AgForce, Queensland Farmers' Federation, Green Shirts Movement and the member for Callide, Colin Boyce, who made a submission—bless him in his endeavours. Submissions were also received from individuals such as Annette Marriott, Paul and Mario Quagliata, Peter and Margaret Hunt, Jonathan Hunt, Alan Broome and Margaret Lee-Madigan. Of the 32 submissions to the bill, it was heartening to see that 60 per cent supported it passing. It is unfortunate that the committee could not find the same place to land.

This is the farmers' bill. I travelled around not only my own electorate but also electorates up and down the east coast of Queensland that are involved in the six reef catchments area and farmers called for this bill. I will come to the contributions of individual members later in my speech, but I want to thank the member for Nanango for her contribution. She said that areas within her electorate and that of the member for Burnett should never have been included. If this bill is supported, section 65 would see us go back to the original three reef catchment areas, taking out their graziers and farmers. We need to acknowledge that.

No-one in the sugar industry or the grazing industry backed the bill scrutinised by the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee in 2019. In its submission on this bill, Canegrowers Queensland stated—

CANEGROWERS opposes regulation of farm practices as successful farming cannot be based on rigid rules imposed by Governments.

Things change every day when you are farming. The rain falls differently every year. You have to deal with floods some years and drought the next. You cannot have rigid rules around grazing and horticulture that stipulate exactly how you should be running your business. There is not a computer program where you can input a heap of data and it spits out the same thing every year. There are many variables. I do not think the 2019 legislation allows for any of that. That is why we introduced a repeal bill based on what growers asked for. In their submission AgForce said, 'Queensland Government's current Reef regulations impose onerous record-keeping and regulated minimum practice Standards on commercial Reef farmers'.

We have seen the amendments that the member for Bonney put before the House. It is probably the first time I have ever seen amendments that omit a whole bill, so I congratulate him for that. I think you broke ground there, member for Bonney.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Through the chair, member for Hinchinbrook.

**Mr DAMETTO:** In saying that, I have to say that not one farmer I spoke to said, 'We want to go above and beyond the regulations.' Even the ones who have been peer reviewed said, 'We did it out of fear that the government would come after us if we didn't. We didn't want to do it. We didn't believe in it.' A lot of them did not believe that what they were doing was necessary but out of fear they took on BMP, even though it was a voluntary process.

I will refer to some of the contributions made by other members. The Minister for the Environment linked the issue back to the UN. It is timely that we had UNESCO doing some runs on the reef to see whether or not they will classify it as 'in danger'. I saw the member for Bonney and the shadow minister for agriculture in Townsville this week. I thought they might have been trying to catch up with the UNESCO guys for a cup of coffee and to swap notes. You never know. Tying this to how international bodies feel about our Great Barrier Reef is ludicrous. Should we let the rest of the world dictate how we look after the Great Barrier Reef? Who better to look after the Great Barrier Reef than the people who deal with it and care about it every day!

The minister also said that the reef regulations have been front and centre of submissions made by the Commonwealth government, the colleagues of those opposite, to the World Heritage committee. I table the state party report for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Extract, dated 22 February 2022, from the *Record of Proceedings*, of a speech during the debate on the Environmental and Other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill 2021 by the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs, Hon. Meaghan Scanlon, page 90 [436].

Basically it says that what is going on right now with our reef regulations is also endorsed by the federal government and being used to predicate a good news story to UNESCO. This should come as a great shock to anybody in agriculture, because traditionally the National part of the LNP has stood up for growers. It seems now that the Liberal Party side, whether at the state or the federal level, has taken over the party.

**Mr Knuth** interjected.

**Mr DAMETTO:** I take that interjection from the member for Hill. We watched one of the last Nationals walk out of the House today as the member for Callide resigned this morning. We also heard the member for Lytton refer to the member for Hill's contribution, basically saying that he was using fake facts and trying to tie some of what he said earlier that day back to the COVID argument he put forward. I think it is absolutely shameful that the member for Lytton would try to put that across and call out the member in such a way.

Once again we heard from those opposite about how much they love the Great Barrier Reef. This is not a debate that should be fought on ideology. We heard, 'We have to listen to the science consensus.' I may be wrong, but I did not hear one person opposite stand up and predicate the science that they are more than happy to never question.

The member for Bonney said in his contribution—

From the outset, I make it clear that the Liberal National Party will not be supporting this bill, but we will be moving an amendment. It is unusual because it omits the entire Katter bill ...

That is very interesting, especially as this bill was put together by growers. I acknowledge the maturity of the member for Nanango's speech earlier this afternoon. She did not attack the KAP and she stood up for farmers. I really wish that, after she tried to contact our office towards the end of last term, she had written back to us. If she did, I think we could have worked on something a little bit better than what has been put forward by the current LNP.

The member for Bonney also referred to the current maximum penalties of \$228,000. That is ludicrous. That is the kind of fine you would impose on a mine site for doing the wrong thing. I remind everyone that, if it were supported, our bill would have repealed that. Instead, the LNP has decided to enshrine in legislation—that would be the case if their amendment was agreed to—the BMP program, which is above and beyond the regulation. I have not heard one farmer out there say, 'You know what, Nick? I want you to go into that Queensland parliament and tell them that I want them to do bigger and better things than the Labor state government is asking me to do.' No-one wanted that. This is what is being carried around and predicated on farm sites at the moment.

One opposition member referred to my claim during the committee hearing that there should be an independent review of the science. It is absolutely what we have been talking about. We would love to see an office of science independence set up so that we can audit and check the science. The member then said that the science had been peer reviewed. That is really interesting. Peer review seems to be the gold standard of science these days. The best way I like to describe peer review—

**Mr Katter:** It is an echo chamber.

**Mr DAMETTO:** I take the interjection from the member for Traeger: it is an echo chamber! Peer review is like a classroom full of children marking each other's exams and then putting forward their mark—if they received an A, B or C. Of course they will all say they are doing well.

Peer review will actually get quite interesting, because right now DAF is dealing with an issue with the Spanish mackerel fishery in terms of stock assessment. They have used different modelling to figure out whether or not the mackerel fishery is safe at the moment. As it has gone through the working group process, it has been peer reviewed. Guess what the person who peer reviewed it said? They said—

I am unable to support the conclusions regarding future harvest levels for the east coast Spanish mackerel stock until reservations regarding the most appropriate central value for steepness for the base-case are resolved.

He has peer reviewed that this is bad, but the government is saying so. Everyone is watching this one to see what happens next, because this guy has probably just ended his career. He had better give Peter Ridd a call. Very soon they might have to hang out together for going against the grain.

**Mr Katter:** They don't tolerate any deviation.

**Mr DAMETTO:** That is right. I take the interjection from the member for Traeger. I come back to the contributions from members of the opposition. The member for Gympie said—

Canegrowers' Smartcane BMP is just one of these programs. It goes beyond reef regulations and generates better overall outcomes.

I thought to myself that there might be a few in the Gympie electorate who are BMP approved—and they are probably very proud of it because they are being left alone at the moment—but I highly doubt that any of those graziers or growers would say, 'We want you to enshrine this in legislation so we are protected from the government.' Once again, members of the LNP stick true to their core values—that is, privatisation of everything. Instead of having the department come on to your farm now, they would like one of the grower co-ops to come down and do the tick and flick. It is almost as bad as peer review. You are going to pay the people to do the checks and balances in terms of what is going on on the farm. The state government will never agree to that. It is ridiculous.

I get wound up about this because, like I said, every farmer who is BMP accredited is saying to me, 'Nick, if even the best of us, who have done the right thing to become BMP approved, stuck to every single thing they asked us to do, we would not be growing sugar cane.' There are plenty of farming programs right now that are dangling the carrot right there in front of growers, saying, 'We will give you \$25,000 and you can implement things with it, but there is a cost to it. The cost is: you need to show us that you are able to use less nitrogen.' Guess what will happen?

The state government made a very pointed statement towards the end of the original 2019 reef debate: 'We are not going to change these regulations for five years. In five years we will leave the farmers with these regulations.' That is what scares people the most and is part of the reason we have included some provisions in our bill, especially around an independent regulator.

We are already three years down the track. In two years—surprise, surprise; just before the next state election—the chief executive officer will review the regulations, just in time for this new data to come in proving that certain growers have been able to use fewer nitrogen fertilisers, phosphorous and nitrogen. Guess what will happen? We will screw it down a little bit more on farmers. That is what will happen.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Member for Hinchinbrook, I think that is unparliamentary and I ask you to withdraw that.

**Mr DAMETTO:** I withdraw. We will ratchet it down a little bit more on farmers. That is what will happen out there. That is why growers are scared. That is why they have asked for an independent regulator. Mr Boyce, the member for Callide, spoke about his intentions.

**Mrs Gilbert:** Former member.

**Mr DAMETTO:** I take that interjection.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr DAMETTO:** I take that interjection, too. The former member for Callide stated his intentions quite clearly, not only in this House publicly but also privately, that he would cross the floor and vote for this legislation. It is alarming and it makes me wonder what kind of internal pressures forced him to quit this morning.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, order!

**Mr DAMETTO:** There is a huge question mark over what sort of coercion was happening in the background. It is a question that people in the electorate will ask for a long time to come. One wonders why someone flew all the way down here for the morning.

The former member for Callide stated some great facts during his speech on this bill. He referred to Senator Susan McDonald's ploy at a federal level to get the reef inquiry up. Surprise, surprise; I think that was another political stunt finishing just before an election campaign. It could be carried around as a tool. There is plenty of information in that that would endorse what we are saying with our reef regulations and the former member for Callide spoke about that in his speech. If the state LNP is not going to follow what was said in that report then once again we wonder whether it is just a shiny bauble to throw in front of farmers. Is it something to gather dust forever and a day? It is surprising.

I will turn to the member for Miller's contribution. The member for Miller basically said that this is a great wedge. He said—

This bill is just political posturing and positioning from the Katter party in their ongoing and clear strategy to cause damage to the LNP ...

I took offence at that. The fact of the matter is that we care about the place that we represent. I am scared that I am going to lose a sugar mill if we lose any more production in the Herbert district. Mill workers, AWU workers and metal worker union and electrical union members are scared of losing their jobs because we may lose tonnage in the Herbert district. That is a real fear if we start using less and less nitrogen. If we cannot produce sugar cane, we cannot run sugar mills. To be fair to the member for Miller, though, that seems to have caused some controversy. We do not often see a member of parliament willing to cross the floor. We should not be throwing this issue around like a political football and it should not be made out that it is.

I will turn to the contribution of the LNP member for Burnett. The member for Burnett whispered to me a number of times, 'I really think you are doing the right thing with this bill.'

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DAMETTO:** I hear some jealousy from those on the opposite side the House. The member for Burnett made it very clear that he was not going to support the bill. He also said that the Burnett river system should not be caught up in the 2019 legislation. Once again, section 75 of bill would have got them out of that. Then we would be back to three reef catchment areas. The member for Nanango and the member for Burnett would have been able to go home to their electorates as heroes saying, 'We did everything we could to get you out of the reef catchment areas.' But unfortunately they did not do that. I thought it was ludicrous for him to cite that the bill retains the extreme penalties of \$13,000. That was manageable—\$229,000 is not manageable. Voting against our bill endorses the Labor Party's 2019 legislation. You can put lipstick on a pig any way you like, but it is not going to sell out in the grazing or cane growing areas of Queensland.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DAMETTO:** I have plenty more. But wait there is more. I want to thank the member for Mirani for his support for the bill. Once again, he is on the same page as us. One only has to look at that gentleman's margins going up every time he goes back to the polls. People out there like the member for Mirani. Members might not like the side of politics he sits on, but his constituents love him because he gets out there, listens to them and comes in here and represents them time and time again. Whether we want to hear their views or not, he stands up for them. I thank the member for his contribution.

I will now get to the member for Burdekin's contribution. From the outset, I need to remind the member for Burdekin that there are four collectives in his electorate, not one. We have been told time and time again by people that the member for Burdekin is not engaging with certain groups. These four collectives are being labelled as the rogues and the troublemakers. Guess what? They account for three quarters of the member's area when it comes to cane production. The member for Burdekin said—

It is a disgrace that the Katter party are using our farmers and graziers as pawns in this debate.

We listened to our farmers. They did not want the legislation in 2019 when the member stood up with a megaphone at a rally and said that he would stand shoulder to shoulder with them. Given the opportunity, unfortunately, the LNP has crumbled on this one.

They have talked down some of the other amendments such as the ones around the independent regulator. It has been said, 'We know what kind of person you want'—and I think some people have said—'The kind of person Peter Ridd is.' He would be absolutely perfect for the job, if you ask me, but there is a criteria to satisfy. It is not tick and flick. The minister does not get to award the job to whomever he likes. The LNP tried to predicate that the amendments would mean someone extreme and green would be thrown in there. Obviously they did not go through and have a good look at the criteria. They have to be independent of government and someone who has not been involved in reef science attached to federal or state government funding. It would be very hard to find someone like that, but there is one out there still.

Was the member for Burdekin using people as a pawn when he said he was going to stand shoulder to shoulder with them? Was Senator Susan McDonald using them as a pawn when she was telling them that they were going to do everything they could at a federal level? Instead, all we have seen is another billion dollars committed to the over \$400 million already committed to help with, once again, water quality. I have been easy on the member for Burdekin, I will tell him that. I would rather rise above some of what has been put out.

The Labor governments says they want to look after the reef. Apparently the biggest threat to the reef is climate change. We are hearing that all the time. We have heard the Greens talk about that tonight. We have heard the Labor Party talk about that. We even heard the opposition talk about climate change in this House. We acknowledge that there are some forces on the reef because of that, but the reality is that the second thing they talk about is water quality. How far back is it second?

They talk about sediment run-off. Let us talk about sediment run-off for a second. I walk the banks of the Herbert River. I know the member for Hill walks along the Russell River system. The Burdekin River is a river that I frequent as well. Members should take five seconds to understand the amount of erosion from the high banks. These are high banks that have 60 or 70 metres of tree line to hold that together. There are football fields worth of dirt going out every flood.

I have a section on the Herbert River which is 600 metres long and 20 metres high and about 40 metres of dirt is missing. If any farmer lost that kind of dirt from their property they would never be able to afford to fill the hole, let alone find the dirt to do so. If sediment is such a problem, why is the state Labor government not addressing what is being lost from our river systems? They say, 'That is natural. If it is natural it is all right.' I disagree. If sediment run-off is a big problem then let us address it from all angles.

In terms of science, I want to talk about some of the arguments put forward. It is almost like science is faith based. It is like we are back in the Dark Ages. Science is the new religion in many places. If anyone questions that they will be burnt at the stake like a witch. That is what has happened to Professor Peter Ridd. He was brave enough to stand up and say what needed to be said.

Despite all this, when Minister Enoch introduced this legislation in 2019—legislation which we now seek to repeal—she said that there were two main causes, and one of them was climate change. In all the speeches from those opposite that talked about climate change, no-one talked about run-off and the effects of that. Going back to the climate change argument, we produce 1.3 per cent of global emissions. We are trying to do everything we can to stop something that we do not have a lot of power over. Is this just to make ourselves feel warm and fuzzy or is it to win green votes in inner-city Brisbane? That is a rhetorical question.

In regard to sediment run-off and chemicals, there is no baseline. I heard the member for Nanango bring this up earlier. There is no baseline for measuring the nutrients in our river systems and what makes it to the Great Barrier Reef. In just eight hours the Pacific Ocean flushes the Great Barrier Reef with as much water as that which comes down those river systems in a whole year. The three per cent of the reef that they are seeing affected is the inner reef, so 97 per cent is unaffected even if sediment run-off, nutrients and pesticides are making it to the reef.

AgForce and the Green Shirts Movement have been very vocal on this. They even wrote a briefing paper for the LNP. AgForce pointed out that not only do they support this bill and the repeal of the government's legislation but they went on to pull the amendments apart and gave reasons as to why the LNP should be backing this bill. We are resigned to the fact that the Labor Party will never vote for this bill because it calls for the reversal of their bill, but this is drawing a line in the sand.

I must go down a Roman history track now just to keep Mr Katter happy. What we are about to do is cross the Rubicon. Caesar crossed the Rubicon. If you do not know the story, Caesar said, 'The die is cast,' as he crossed the Rubicon, knowing that he was going to either win or be thrown out as a traitor. This is an opportunity for the conservative voters to stand with farmers and not back Labor's 2019 legislation. This is an opportunity to stand with growers and vote for the KAP bill.

*(Time expired)*

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


Resolved in the negative in accordance with special sessional orders.

## PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (EXTENSION OF EXPIRING PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 689, on motion of Mrs D'Ath—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (6.37 pm), continuing: To pick up where I left off, a robust COVID-19 response that keeps those who are most vulnerable in our society safe relies on trust from everyday people. Transparent and accountable government decision-making is critical to maintaining this trust.

It has been over two years since a public health emergency was declared in Queensland, two years since many of the provisions that this bill extends were first legislated, two years since the government was rushing to respond to a then largely unknown pandemic. After two years, we have now experienced the first wave of uncontrolled community transmission in Queensland. The dominant strain in the community has shifted to one that is less severe than the Alpha or Delta strains. We have also now passed the 90 per cent double-vaccination target and many people have now had their booster shots. By all accounts, after two years, we have moved beyond the initial emergency phase of the pandemic.

This in no way means that we should remove all restrictions. Measures like masks, vaccines and contact tracing have helped keep people safe. People working in aged care, hospitals and disability services absolutely need to be vaccinated. This does mean that, in 2022, it is well beyond time that this government introduced fit-for-purpose pandemic legislation that is transparent, accountable and more compatible with human rights. Two years in, it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify the extension of the same emergency powers created in response to an unprecedented and poorly understood pandemic.

Extending these emergency powers has lost the support of the Queensland Human Rights Commission, which does not support this bill and has called for 'comprehensive, human rights compatible pandemic legislation'. In its submission to this bill the Commission wrote—

As a community, we have learnt about the impacts of quarantining conditions on people's mental health, the human rights limitations arising from public health directions that confine people to their homes and the mandating of vaccines. Powers imposing such significant human rights limitations cannot continue without proper oversight, transparency and external review. Otherwise, their compatibility with human rights is at question.

As the Human Rights Commissioner does not support this bill in its current form, neither can the Greens. We cannot keep kicking this can down the road and extending what was meant to be a temporary framework. It is time to develop a framework that acknowledges that COVID-19 may be circulating in the community for a while and gives us a robust framework for making ongoing health measures.

We will be moving extensive amendments to bring the health directions under democratic oversight and make the legislation more accountable, transparent and compatible with human rights. I table these amendments.

*Tabled paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022, amendments to be moved by Dr Amy MacMahon MP [\[437\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022, explanatory notes to amendments to be moved by Dr MacMahon MP [\[438\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022, statement of compatibility with human rights to amendments to be moved by Dr Amy MacMahon MP [\[439\]](#).

Our amendments are based on the model recently implemented by the Victorian Labor government, which is what the Queensland Human Rights Commission has been calling for. Because of the very real threat that the virus continues to cause in public health in Queensland—particularly for people with existing vulnerabilities, those who are immunocompromised and people with disabilities—the ability to make public health directions remains incredibly important. Among other things, our amendments would ensure that the advice given by the Chief Health Officer would be available to the public, allow social and economic factors to be taken into consideration and provide an assessment of any human rights that are limited by pandemic orders.

These amendments replace the proposed temporary framework with transparent, accountable and human rights compatible legislation, requiring that the Premier is responsible for declaring, extending and ending a public health emergency. The Premier can only do this if satisfied that there is

a public health emergency and it is necessary to use this power to prevent serious adverse effects on human health. The Premier must consult with the health minister, the chief executive and the Chief Health Officer at the time of doing so. There are new requirements of the Premier in extending a public health emergency, including the need to table a report in parliament about any extension.

If such a declaration has been made, the minister for health may make public health directions to protect public health. The minister must consider advice from the Chief Health Officer before doing so and may consider additional advice on things like social and economic factors to the community. These directions must be accompanied by a statement of reasons explaining why the direction was reasonably necessary to protect public health, the Chief Health Officer's advice and an assessment of any human rights that are limited by the directions. These measures must also be disallowable by parliament.

As the member for Maiwar has been proposing since 2020, these amendments include setting up a standing COVID-19 oversight committee, created to conduct a rolling inquiry into the government's response to COVID-19, including border closures, lockdowns, quarantine, contact tracing, hospital capacity, economic support for workers and renters, and National Cabinet decisions. It would also have the power to recommend that a pandemic order be disallowed or varied.

We want to restore accountability and ensure that it is the Premier and the health minister who ultimately own these decisions and ensure that the government is up-front about the human rights implications of health directions. These measures would help build trust. As the Queensland Human Rights Commission pointed out in its submission on the last version of this bill last year, government decisions have already resulted in massive limitations of human rights in Queensland. This has included: families being separated, sometimes when a loved one is terminally ill; detention of people in hotel accommodation that may not be fit for purpose, which exacerbates mental health issues; and significant restrictions in many areas of Queensland, including the greater Brisbane area being locked down on a number of occasions.

There has also been a mismatch between the health directives and the support offered to Queenslanders, such as the lack of support for small business and the short duration of the eviction moratorium. For many in the community, particularly for people with disabilities and First Nations communities, the vaccine rollout and the sharing of information were not up to scratch. From talking with members of the disability community, it is clear that many of the public health directions have a huge value in protecting the community and making people feel safe. It is critical to this community that there is long-term trust and faith in the health directions, and this cannot happen if the government continues to make opaque and undemocratic decisions when it comes to COVID-19.

This government needs to be up-front about the fact that managing a pandemic involves political decisions. These decisions are not made in a vacuum and their merits depend entirely on what else the government is doing. They heavily depend on how much the government is willing to fund our public health and hospital system. The government made a choice to not spend big on things like HEPA filters for every state school classroom and to not massively expand and improve hotel quarantine systems when it needed them the most, and it chose not to distribute free masks and give positive incentives for vaccine uptake.

While we are looking for ideas for the government from interstate, including Labor counterparts, I wonder if the government has noticed that South Australian Labor is putting a billion dollars into the health system now that it has won government. When I proposed a similar measure last year to boost health spending funded by a bank levy, the government argued that the idea should not even be debated in parliament.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Member for South Brisbane, I bring you back to the long title of the bill.

**Dr MacMAHON:** What we have been left with is an underfunded and under-resourced public health system that is just scraping by, where our health workers are beyond exhausted and people have to go without crucial elective surgeries. It is time for the government to justify why they make particular decisions and not others when it comes to public health. These amendments move towards creating trust in our public health system, which is the crucial thing we need to keep people safe.



**Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (6.46 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. I would like to reply briefly to the last contribution and say that it is not only the state's responsibility; it also falls in the federal realm. There should also be notice of that.

In Queensland we are thankful to have been shielded from some of the worst impacts of the pandemic thanks to the swift actions of our chief health officers, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeanette Young PSM and Dr John Gerrard. We have a long history in this state of taking matters of public health seriously, with records dating back to the establishment of the first Central Board of Health in 1865, the first Health Act 1872 and the appointment of our first commissioner of public health, Dr Bertie Burnett Ham, in 1901.

In response to the arrival of the bubonic plague in Queensland, Dr Ham quickly went about establishing a compulsory notification of diseases system. This system required local authorities to notify the commissioner if patients were found to have any of the infectious diseases listed at the time, which included plague, cholera, smallpox, scarlet fever, diphtheria, membranous croup and various fevers among others. The system continues to this day and has played an important role in helping authorities control outbreaks of infectious diseases right across Queensland. In taking on the task, Dr Ham is reported as saying—

Should I, in the course of my duties have to deal with vested rights and properties, I shall do so with careful consideration, mindful of the interests involved; but, where I find danger to the public health or gross insanitary conditions, I shall take no half-hearted measures, no halting decision as to the means to be adopted to have those defects remedied.

It is in the spirit of Dr Ham's work that we now work to ensure our government and the public health system have the legislative authority to continue keeping our communities safe. In response to a venereal disease outbreak in 1917, the Health Act was amended to ensure patients suffering from the disease were obliged to continue treatment until a cure was affected. Medical practitioners were obliged to notify the commissioner of public health those names of patients who failed to continue treatment and suspected patients could be forced to undergo treatment.

Without the various public health and other legislation amendment bills, our state would have been powerless to stop COVID-19 running amok through our towns and suburbs. Without the legislative powers provided by the public health and other legislation amendment bills, our CHOs would have been unable to act in the manner they did to limit the spread of COVID-19, leaving Queensland vulnerable to the ravages of this insidious disease.

In Queensland we went early and we went hard, ensuring our vulnerable communities and individuals were kept as safe as possible. Our state was first to declare a public health emergency, on 29 January 2020, in response to the global outbreak.

The intention in extending the time of this bill is due to the uncertainty in spread and effect of the COVID-19 virus. As it stands, there are other variants that have been detected in addition to winter looming which increases the risk of this and other viruses like the flu.

The state Labor government has entrusted our lives and our health to our professional health service and they have not let us down. In contrast, it took the federal government an additional two months to recognise the seriousness of this virus and declare an emergency. The inability of this federal government to implement a national strategy and secure appropriate resources has been disappointing and confusing to citizens and to governments in the different states and territories. The COVID pandemic has been challenging for everyone, not only in Queensland but also in the entire world.

I will talk to the bill by providing some comparisons in the management of the pandemic by different jurisdictions. Here are some available stats as of 28 March 2022. In Queensland we have a population of 5.2 million. We have 723,930 cases to date. We have had 716 deaths, or 138 deaths per million population. I could go on, but only one jurisdiction fares better than us in fatalities and that is Western Australia.

With regard to the confusion, too, I have heard people opposite talking about mandatory vaccination and this public health bill in a similar vein, and that is not the case. As I pointed out, historically we have always taken that approach. I draw everyone's attention to the Australian vaccination schedule and the requirement that you comply with that or you are ineligible for Family Tax Benefit or childcare support, to encourage vaccination rates. That was a policy of the then federal government and that was a different type of federal government. However, it has been a resounding success and my kids do not have a chickenpox scar like I do.

There have been different approaches taken in managing the effect of the pandemic. The data that I wanted to share would have painted a brief picture of similar populations, but it is too tragic and does not do anyone justice.


The pandemic is not an inconvenience: it costs lives and livelihoods. The Palaszczuk Labor government has been committed from the start to minimising the impact on Queenslanders. There have also been a lot of opinions that have been masqueraded as fact and this has eroded public confidence.



I am disappointed that some in this House and others continue to peddle misinformation and incite antisocial behaviour in our communities. Adherence to the health advice has made a difference in Queensland. It is an example of our sense of community and our resilience. Thankfully it is only a small and vocal minority who continue to misinterpret the intent and outcomes of this bill and the work of our health professionals.

I would like to thank the committee secretariat and Hansard. I thank the members of the Community Support and Services Committee—the chair, the member for Mansfield; my colleague the member for Cook; the deputy chair, the member for Burnett; and the member for Scenic Rim at the time—for considering the considerable volume of submissions. I would also like to thank those who contributed a submission and were available for public hearings.

Historically, the provisions of this bill have been extended for a period of six months each time and if extended again today will allow our health department to manage the difficult period ahead in a responsive and timely manner, as has been the case throughout the COVID pandemic. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (6.54 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. The COVID-19 health pandemic has caused and resulted in significant disruption to our way of life, with the health, social, financial and economic impacts being experienced by nearly every Queenslanders.

I wish to acknowledge and express my appreciation to the thousands of frontline health professionals, medical colleagues, as well as hospital and community health workers who continue to respond to each and every challenge that has been experienced throughout the COVID-19 health pandemic. I also want to thank our frontline police and emergency services personnel, as well as school and education staff, who have been asked repeatedly to go above and beyond on behalf of all Queenslanders.

This pandemic has resulted in significant health and economic harm to many Queenslanders. As the state member for Moggill, I understand the enormous impacts that the COVID-19 health pandemic has had on local constituents, whether it has been mild, moderate or severe disease experienced, the impacts on businesses and economic livelihoods, or simple freedoms and democratic liberties which were once taken for granted, such as visiting a relative in residential aged care or attending a funeral or wedding. In many instances, these freedoms and liberties have had to be curtailed. Also there have been the restrictions at times to cross-state jurisdictional border movements.

It has to be said that our national, state jurisdictional and global efforts to understand, contain and combat the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic have been immense. Human history will certainly record the incredible efforts and scientific achievement by many to develop and implement targeted COVID-19 vaccines. There can be no question that vaccines are clinically efficacious and effective, along with other measures including masks, social distancing and hand hygiene, which have contributed to suppressing COVID-19 transmission. It remains critical that Queenslanders receive their vaccinations and also boosters when recommended and eligible to do so. COVID-19 vaccinations remain one of our strongest lines of defence in suppressing and containing the community transmission and individual health impacts of COVID-19. There is also significant work still to be undertaken when it comes to vaccinating children and students in Queensland.

Queenslanders and Australians are to be commended for their overall commitment to the importance of vaccinations as a public health strategy and ensuring that both they and their relatives are vaccinated. In the strongest possible terms I again implore those who are yet to be vaccinated and/or receive a booster, according to ATAGI, TGA and professional medical advice, to please contact their local general practitioner, community pharmacy or Queensland Health vaccination clinic and receive a COVID-19 vaccination and/or booster if they are eligible and it is clinically recommended to do so.

Despite the significant global effort to combat the COVID-19 health pandemic and the significant scientific knowledge already discovered, there remains significant health issues that are not known, particularly with respect to the persistent, chronic and complex health effects of having contracted the COVID-19 virus. The causes and symptoms of post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2, more commonly known as long COVID or post-COVID syndrome, continue to be researched and evaluated. As the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, within the Johns Hopkins University, has identified, whilst it is clear that those with certain risk factors including high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes and obesity are more likely to have a serious episode of COVID-19, there is still yet to be a clear link between such risk factors and chronic persistent health issues.

That being said, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine has outlined some of the known long-term effects of COVID-19 infection including: respiratory symptoms such as shortness of breath and the development of interstitial lung disease and associated scarring to the lungs; heart problems, including ongoing inflammation of the cardiac muscle; a persistent loss or distorted sense of smell and taste; neurological problems including headaches, dizziness, fatigue and cognitive impairment; the increased potential of postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome affecting blood circulation; as well as ongoing mental health concerns, with some instances being recorded of people who have survived COVID-19 being left with lingering anxiety and depression.

Further, it has been shown that patients who were hospitalised due to COVID-19 often have a particularly challenging recovery, with post-intensive care syndrome putting COVID-19 survivors and other people who have spent time in the intensive care unit at a higher risk of problems associated with cognitive, mental health and physical recovery. Such chronic health issues underscore the need to contain and suppress COVID-19 by ensuring high optimal community levels of COVID-19 vaccination coverage.

A current renewed vaccination effort and booster strategy is even more pertinent, given the forthcoming winter and flu season in Queensland and across Australia. As communicated by the federal government's Department of Health, whilst there has been a lower exposure to influenza virus over the COVID-19 pandemic, now with increased and re-established travel, mobility and also borders reopening, there is the potential for a resurgence of influenza during the winter season of 2022. That is why being vaccinated against influenza this year is even more important than ever.

In turning to the detail of this legislation, and also the amendments proposed by the Liberal National Party, I wish to reaffirm my support for all COVID-19 health directives and mandates. I support and accept all the public health advice and determinations in good faith, as has been determined by Queensland's Chief Health Officer and the relevant public health officials in Queensland Health, as well as Australia's Chief Medical Officer and the federal Department of Health. Also, as a specialist physician, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic I have assisted with public health efforts including providing COVID-19 clinical screenings and efforts to vaccinate Queenslanders.

I also wish to reaffirm my continued support for the determinations made by, and advice provided, under the auspices of the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, various professional medical and health bodies as well as the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, including the AHPPC's vaccination mandate for frontline health, disability and aged-care staff. As with all legislation before the Queensland parliament, the Liberal National Party opposition has carefully considered the detail of this legislation. The circumstances of the COVID-19 health pandemic have been unprecedented, and the extension of extraordinary powers contained within this legislation being granted to the state government is being done again without the implementation of independent bipartisan parliamentary committee oversight. This is unacceptable for the following reason.

The position that Queensland now finds itself in is far different to when the Queensland parliament debated similar legislation in August of last year. There is no doubt that a significant failing of the Palaszczuk state Labor government throughout the COVID-19 health pandemic has been a complete lack of openness, transparency and accountability with respect to the extraordinary measures and powers that have been enacted by the state Labor government. It is for this reason, and more, that the Liberal National Party has foreshadowed key amendments to this legislation in order to improve the transparency and accountability for all Queenslanders.

The first amendment would seek to only allow the extension of the extraordinary powers granted to the Queensland government, and the Chief Health Officer, to 31 May 2022. Queenslanders have done all that has been asked of them by the Queensland Labor government, and they were told by the Labor government that a clear plan for the future would be provided. Queenslanders are still waiting on such an open and transparent plan and a clear path forward. The extension to the end of May of this year would provide the Queensland state Labor government ample and sufficient time to finalise and release its plan for the future of any COVID-19 related measures. Of course, should circumstances change and a further extension be required, the Queensland parliament, being the appropriate democratic institution, could further consider any relevant extensions during the May sitting of the Queensland parliament.

Secondly, the Liberal National Party will also move to ensure that the expert health and professional advice that is provided to the state Labor government, and used as the rationale for implementing public health directives, is publicly released. The importance of this amendment cannot be overstated. Queenslanders deserve openness and transparency with all decisions that are taken


and measures enacted in their name as Queenslanders. Such transparency must also be provided in order to ensure full public confidence in the state government's COVID-19 response and non-political decision-making. The Liberal National Party understands and respects the need for the state government's COVID-19 response to be grounded in expert medical and health advice, but it is equally important that the state government takes all Queenslanders into their trust and that the state government is open, transparent and accountable.

Importantly, the Liberal National Party has also foreshadowed an amendment to establish a parliamentary select committee, which would routinely hold public hearings with the Chief Health Officer to assess and scrutinise the relevant health advice and state government decision-making as it pertains to COVID-19. Such a bipartisan parliamentary select committee would give openness, transparency and scrutiny to decision-making and advice and provide a level of parliamentary oversight that has been lacking throughout this pandemic. Such a parliamentary select committee is also important, particularly given the impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of Queenslanders.

Having further engaged with Queenslanders through my appointment to the Queensland parliament's Mental Health Select Committee, I and other members of the committee have heard firsthand the reports of the mental health impacts that have resulted from the COVID-19 health pandemic. A robust bipartisan parliamentary select committee to oversee COVID-19 management is absolutely needed to provide proper scrutiny to state government decision-making and the unintended mental health and social impacts of certain state government decisions.

Whilst health mandates and directives are necessary and evidenced based and continue to be an important part of the COVID-19 health response, the implementation of such health directives cannot be taken without an open, transparent and accountable assessment of the social, economic and mental health impacts on individuals, communities and also our entire Westminster democratic system of government.

This pandemic is certainly not over. There is still plenty that remains unknown, and the future is not certain. I support the entire public health vaccination program, all health directives and mandates and the expert public health advice, and I will continue to do so. I also support greater openness, transparency and accountability from this state Labor government.

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (7.04 pm): I rise today in support of the extension bill before the House. I always volunteer to speak on this bill because I find it interesting to look back on the last time we spoke on the bill and reflect on where we were at that particular point in time and where we are at now. There have been some significant changes over the last few years. I always find it really illuminating to do that and I always enjoy speaking on these extension bills.

It is fair to say—and I think many members have already touched on this fact—that the world has been on an absolute roller-coaster over the last two and a bit years during the COVID global health pandemic. We have seen weddings postponed or scaled down, family members who could not visit each other in different countries and in some cases, including in my family, people who have not been able to meet new family members at all. The number of people allowed into the birthing suite was limited in some cases and at some points in time.

I have said it before in this House and I will certainly say it again: the people of Queensland have stepped up in such a huge way and over a really long period of time. That has been tough. I do not know a single Queenslanders who has not made significant sacrifices. I want to acknowledge that sacrifice at the outset of my contribution. I am really glad that since my last contribution a number of restrictions have loosened, which is always wonderful to see. Later on I will touch on some of the other ones. I am going to start with the borders.

I know that borders reopening under the directives have made a huge difference to many families, certainly including mine. The borders were closed to New South Wales for what felt like large parts of last year. Late last year I got to see my nieces who live in northern New South Wales for my niece's birthday in December. It was really special. I still remember when my niece clapped eyes on my kids at the park and just how excited she was to have us there. I know those kinds of scenes would have been playing out right across Queensland and northern New South Wales late last year.

We actually got to spend Christmas as one big happy family in Murwillumbah late last year and Elyse got to spend her first Christmas with her cousins. I was worried that might not be a possibility, but it was so wonderful to do that as a family.

As members of this House would be aware, my father is from New Zealand, like many members of the Queensland community. Queensland has more Kiwis than any other state in Australia. Right before COVID hit I took my then partner to meet my grandparents. I figured if he still wanted to get

married after that, he was a keeper because my grandparents are really terrifying people. My grandparents missed our wedding. If you met my nanna you would understand; she is a wonderful woman.

**Mr Stevens:** What happened to your then partner?

**Ms PUGH:** He is my now husband. I was getting to that, so thank you for that interjection. My grandparents met my then partner. Now we have been married for two years and they still have not met our daughter or my sister's daughter, Banksia, who is coming up to 2½. This is a really common story right across Queensland and Australia.

We know that the New Zealand government is closely watching the health policies and the COVID responses of Australia and the different states in Australia. They did close the bubble last year. The bubble was there for a while and then sadly it closed. They pushed back the opening of the border this year and they will do it again if they think opening that border puts their citizens at risk. I understand the Ardern government is doing it to protect vulnerable New Zealanders, like my grandparents Murray and Margaret.

We need to remember that our health response and our health policy does not exist in a vacuum. Our government policy impacts on whether hundreds and thousands of Queenslanders who have overseas family members will be able to go and see their relatives overseas. Governments of other countries will decide whether the borders are open based on how concerned they feel about our policy. A flight to New Zealand was once as easy as taking a trip to Sydney except you needed a passport. Of course, since COVID it has not been easy. We as a government have a duty to ensure that Queenslanders, wherever possible, can see their family. That means we have to get the health response right and keep our COVID numbers as low as possible.

Right now my family are very excited. Hopefully, it will be just a few more weeks till those borders are open, but those boundaries have been moved before. We have our fingers and toes crossed. At this point we are planning on a family reunion for Nanna's 90th birthday this December. We are really hoping to get over there to celebrate that.


In previous contributions on earlier iterations of this bill I have reflected that my daughter received her vaccine, and I am pleased to update the House that over the school holidays my son, Heath, was able to get his first and second dose of the Pfizer vaccine at Growlife Medical. He found \$10 on the ground on the way in to get his first vaccination, so he has a really positive memory because he found \$10. He was very happy about that. He went straight home and spent it on Robux, so he is a great advocate for vaccination because you might find money on the ground outside. I know that the Premier, the health minister and those on this side of the House have been encouraging parents of that age cohort between five and 11 to consider getting their young children vaccinated. I can report that after both vaccines I checked in with my son the next day to see if he was feeling tired and if he might try to get a day off school, but he just laughed at me and said, 'No, mum, I'm fine, but thank you.' My daughter tried to prenegotiate a day off school before she even got the vaccine. She said that she could be tired—she was not—and I refused her offer, but nice try, Allegra.

Members of the House would be aware that I actually did need a week off school—off parliament—because I have recently had COVID. I did a RAT test the Sunday before parliament was returning for the first time this year to ensure that I was fit and healthy and ready for duty. I had had a negative RAT test on the Thursday but felt fatigued, which I initially put down to being a mum of three with a busy job. However, I did wake up that Sunday morning with a runny nose and this time the line on my RAT test came up positive straightaway. I consider myself incredibly lucky: because I had recently had my booster, my chief symptom was fatigue and a sniffle, as I mentioned, for just a few days. I do consider myself to be very lucky, but I know that the symptoms are different for everybody and it is something to be taken really seriously. I consider my experience a great reason why people should definitely get their boosters because I really believe it made a difference in how I experienced the virus.

I want to thank the hardworking frontline workers of our magnificent Queensland hospitals, both in the COVID wards and beyond. I also thank the pharmacists and GPs who assisted so mightily with the rollout of the vaccine. We had so many doing the boosters in particular in my electorate. I got my Moderna booster on 10 January at the Darra Chempro. That was the first day I was eligible. I had made a lot of seniors calls earlier this year to make sure people had the opportunity to get their booster shot. I spoke to a couple of residents in Darra who told me that they were initially quite sceptical of getting the vaccine but that they had had a great chat with their pharmacist and he talked through all of their concerns at length. I think it was a pretty lengthy conversation with the both of them. He talked them

through step by step, piece by piece and they decided to get the vaccine. They told me that their friend had the virus and he was quite sick, so they were really glad that they got it. They wanted to especially thank that hardworking Darra pharmacist, Andrew, who talked them around. When we consider that this kind of conversation must have happened thousands of times right around Queensland, it is just so incredible and it is a tribute to the caring and dedicated natures of our frontline health workers—our doctors, our nurses, our pharmacy workers.

I do not have much time left, but I did want to reflect on some of the changes that we have seen over the last few years in terms of restrictions being lifted. There are still many restrictions in place, but we have been able to lift the wearing of masks in large part whereas just a few months ago we were wearing masks pretty much everywhere. That said, I would certainly encourage people where they feel it is necessary in crowded spaces and when they cannot socially distance that they definitely should be wearing a mask. There is the fact that our borders are open and that is allowing those all-important family reunions and people do not have to do hotel quarantine because we have a purpose-built facility for that. Just a few months ago the Qld Check In app was in high usage and now we have been able to scale that right back. We are on the right path and we have the Chief Health Officer and the Premier working on making those determinations. I certainly commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (7.13 pm): I think we all should acknowledge the significant disruption and upheaval to the lives of Queenslanders that the COVID-19 pandemic has had. People have lost loved ones; people have lost livelihoods. It is a significant event in world history and, no matter your views on these laws and the measures that flow out of them, people need to recognise that significant impact. Just the other day I was visiting a young couple in my electorate who had purchased a property at Mount Barney, the Barney Creek Vineyard Cottages, last year, outside of the lockdown time. Then there was a lockdown imposed and they could not enter Queensland from New South Wales. They had paid a significant amount of money to buy that business and were unable to tend to their guests and to their property. On a number of occasions they tried to enter Queensland. They drove from Coffs Harbour with two young children in the back of the car but were turned away at the border because they had the wrong permit. That is an impact that they will never forget and an impact that was borne out of a bureaucratic system that did not work for all Australians and did not work for people who wanted to come here and build a business in Queensland. I think about the impact that it had on a local farmer in my electorate who owned a farm just across the border in New South Wales, but he had to sell that farm. His wife was living there while he still had a residence in Queensland because he had a fly-in fly-out mining job. The border restrictions that were in place simply did not allow him to keep both the farm and the mining job. Even when he sold his property in New South Wales and brought all of his equipment and stock back to Queensland, he was hindered in doing that at the border crossing for no good reason.

I think about the Queenslanders who were stuck in Murwillumbah after the borders were locked on two hours notice and the impact it had on those people. I want to thank members of my electorate who worked very hard to highlight that issue and to also fundraise to support those people. This pandemic and the impact it has had on people's loved ones and the impact it has had on people's livelihoods should not be forgotten.

It is not often that I agree with the Human Rights Commissioner, Mr Scott McDougall. In fact, I voted against the bill establishing his commission. I voted against the bill establishing the Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Act because—

**Mr Fumer** interjected.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I hear the member for Ferny Grove chortling over there about the Human Rights Act, but the Human Rights Commissioner and the Human Rights Commission deal with issues of grey all of the time when it comes to human rights—issues that should be rightly debated in this chamber, not by the Human Rights Commissioner. However, on this occasion I find myself in agreement with the Human Rights Commissioner. Scott McDougall himself seems like a nice enough guy and I voted against his institution, but on this occasion I think he might be right. We need to move past the free pass that this government keeps giving itself when it comes to rules and regulations about imposing restrictions on people without any explanation, without any oversight and without any review. We need to have restrictions and regulations that can be reviewed by parliament through a committee and hopefully, if necessary, by this House as well. I know that the member for Mudgeeraba is going to be moving amendments that will set up such an oversight committee with a non-government chair. We need to have a committee where the government and its officials must answer questions about these rules and regulations, unlike the former director-general for health, John Wakefield.

**Ms Bates:** He cut and run.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I take that interjection from the member for Mudgeeraba. When he appeared before the Community Support and Services Committee, a simple question was asked of him about whether he would provide expert health advice to the committee which underpins the restrictions that are imposed through this bill and through its predecessors. He outright refused to provide that. He said, 'That's a matter for government.' Here was the director-general—a representative of the government—before a committee asking and, by extension, asking the parliament for an extension of powers and he just said, 'No, we're not going to give you any advice,' treating the committee and treating the parliament with absolute contempt in refusing point-blank to provide any of that advice. The people of Queensland would have a lot more confidence in the measures imposed by government and by the CHO if they could see that advice and if that advice could be reviewed. They could have confidence in those measures in terms of the advice stacking up with the measures that are being implemented. A point-blank refusal does not allow that. The amendments being moved by the member for Mudgeeraba go to those issues.

We need to see some common sense restored when it comes to some of the restrictions imposed. I talk specifically about restrictions imposed on show societies and showgrounds where volunteers for show societies are subject to restrictions but people who go there for another purpose may not be. That just does not make sense. When it comes to shows, the costs put on show societies to police restrictions create an enormous burden and it does not seem to stack up when one considers the restrictions placed on similar large events. The restrictions on small businesses, especially cafes, pubs and other hospitality businesses, do not make sense. When there is a situation where cafe seating in a shopping centre is subject to restrictions but common seating two or three metres away is not, cost and angst go with regulating those restrictions for cafe owners—and for what? It just does not make sense and it does not stack up.

It was pleasing to see that the CHO, Dr Gerrard, said that a lot of these restrictions were under active consideration. In respect to show societies I asked him to get on with the job pretty quickly because people need certainty when they are making decisions about whether or not to hold their local shows this week. Other groups in our community have been severely affected by these restrictions. They need transparency around the reasons for them. They need to know whether there is a light at the end of the tunnel when it comes to these restrictions.

I am vaccinated and I encourage others to get vaccinated as well. In fact, on Australia Day this year, in between citizenship ceremonies in Beaudesert, I went and had my third vaccination. I thank the workers at the clinic that was there on Australia Day. It was run by a private company. I thank them for the work that they have done. I also want to thank all the GPs and pharmacists who have helped with the vaccine rollout and also the mobile vaccination clinics that have moved around the Scenic Rim electorate. It took a bit of it lobbying to get it, but it is pleasing that we got it.

I encourage others to get vaccinated, but I also understand that some people cannot be vaccinated for a range of reasons, health and religious reasons among them. Some of those people are wondering and some of them ask me how long will the restrictions that are in place at the moment be placed on them. This is a seriously challenging issue for the government and one that requires the balancing of rights and responsibilities across a whole range of different parties. It should be dealt with openly, with accountability and transparency. So far this government has failed on so many counts to deal with this very sensitive, important issue with those hallmarks of transparency and accountability. I thank and fully support the amendments to be moved by the member for Mudgeeraba.

Interruption.

## DEPUTY SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### Error in Division



**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Before I call the next speaker, I have been advised by the government whip that there was an error in calculating the votes in division No. 3 earlier this evening. The division was on the second reading question for the Environmental and Other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill. The error does not affect the outcome of the vote; however, the record does need to be corrected. The result of the division was, in fact, ayes 4 and noes 81.

## PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (EXTENSION OF EXPIRING PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 708.



**Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (7.23 pm): I rise to support the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. This legislation continues the vital measures the Palaszczuk government has put in place through the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. At each and every step we have had the health, safety and wellbeing of the Queensland people at the absolute forefront. I acknowledge our frontline workers—our health professionals, our police, our retail and transport workers—who kept Queenslanders safe. I congratulate the member for Mansfield as the chair of the committee in terms of her stewardship of the report that was handed down by the Community Support and Services Committee and, in particular, for her leadership in the examination of the bill and thank all the other members of that committee for their excellent work. I note the committee's recommendation that the bill be passed as the only recommendation of this committee.

One thing we have heard over and over again from the Palaszczuk government is that we have followed the health advice during the COVID-19 pandemic. When you go to your GP you follow that advice. You do not go out and seek other advice, whether it be on the internet or in other places, to find a different opinion. Pragmatic people do that. People with common sense do that. That is what the Palaszczuk government has done on this occasion.

Across the world we have seen all too many times examples of where the health advice has been followed only to an extent and been undercut or ignored by too many. We only need to look at our friends in the United States to see how politicisation of the COVID-19 response has ended in copious numbers of sickness, in tragedy and in death in that nation.

In Queensland we have been led in so many ways. Led by the Premier, by our world-leading advice and action from Queensland's health authorities, we saved thousands of Queensland lives. We have stood strong against political opportunists trying to exploit the frustrations of restrictions for political advantage only to see it blow up in their faces as a new wave of the deadly virus took hold in 2020.

The Palaszczuk government had the courage to stand strong, the courage to lead and the courage to stand up for the health and safety of Queenslanders. As much as we would wish it to be otherwise, the pandemic is still with us today and that is why we cannot afford to become lax in our approach. This bill extends provisions of the Public Health Act that are still important to manage and minimise the impact of COVID-19 on Queensland. As they have done through the course of the pandemic, these provisions enhance the powers of emergency officers and the Chief Health Officer to limit the spread of the virus, authorise information sharing for contact tracing where necessary, provide penalties for contraventions of public health directions and makes arrangements for aspects of quarantine where that is necessary.

As we continue the work of returning to a more normal life as Queenslanders know it, other measures that were designed to provide regulatory relief for institutions and businesses early in the pandemic will expire in accordance with sunset provisions made by the parliament in September last year. I understand that some argue that the pandemic is in the past, that we do not need these provisions any more. That is not the case. If one looks at the figures reported yesterday, there were 10,326 cases and nine deaths. We have seen through the most recent wave of Omicron that new variants can emerge quickly and have devastating impacts on families both here and across the world. We do not want to dismantle the legislative and regulatory apparatus that has been so carefully put in place to deal with this pandemic and risk leaving us flat-footed in the face of the next variant that comes along. The Chief Health Officer has made it very clear that it would be a mistake, indeed reckless, to withdraw all our public health control measures at once.

In my portfolio area of agriculture the Palaszczuk government's pandemic measures proved critical in ensuring that supply lines could remain open, that our farmers could keep working and that the great tasting produce for which Queensland's reputation is famous continued to be enjoyed by millions of people around the world and throughout this nation. We moved quickly to declare agriculture an essential industry. We moved quickly to form the Agriculture Coordination Group so that key stakeholders and producers could directly advise government of the issues they were facing and we could quickly respond to those. Those telephone conferences included senior representatives from health, police, TMR and, of course, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. They had over 100

industry stakeholders and we also invited the Commonwealth government on occasions to take part in those meetings. The federal agriculture minister preferred to take pot shots at Queensland in the media rather than take part in helping this industry.

We facilitated on-farm quarantine facilities—leading the nation once again—to ensure that more than 5,000 Pacific Labour Scheme workers could enter safely through federal schemes, all while taking every measure possible to keep communities where they worked safe from COVID-19. On many occasions they were quarantining on-farm, working at a distance from other workers. A prime example was in Emerald where PLS workers were picking table grapes at the same time people who were completely vaccinated were working at a safe distance.

Members do not need to take my word for it; they can listen to the words of industry that found us the best to deal with of all the Australian states. AgForce said that our work to improve border crossing exemptions and special conditions for farmers, farm workers and harvest crews were ‘especially vital for many grain growers looking to harvest their best winter crop in years.’ They went on to state—

Agforce would like to thank the Government for working with us to ensure that agriculture kept moving while restrictions were in place, as well as members for their compliance and patience during tough times.

Richard Shannon, from Growcom, also assessed the Queensland government's performance. He said that his group appreciated the work on the seasonal workers framework. He said it was ‘implemented better than any other state or territory’. He said that the common view among lobby groups working across many jurisdictions is that Queensland was doing a far better job than any other state or territory in agricultural support throughout this pandemic.

Joe Moro, the chair of the Queensland Horticulture Council, with whom we will be engaging next week as head of the fifth Queensland Horticultural Council established by this government, said—


We are grateful for the continued guidance and support from your Department as the horticulture industry navigate this most difficult period, and for the quick actions by the Premier and Queensland Government to ensure our ongoing food security.

We did not put these measures in place to earn praise. We did not do it for politics and we did not do it to control people's lives. We did it because it is the right thing to do. We did it because we believe in keeping Queenslanders, and our food supply chains as well. We did it to save lives and the livelihoods of Queenslanders. We did it because we know that agriculture has always been essential in the Queensland economy.

I spoke earlier about the Pacific Labour Scheme and the Seasonal Worker Programme. This Commonwealth government is lacking in terms of its programs and its ability to get seasonal workers from other countries. The Commonwealth indicated that, through their agriculture visa program, those workers would be available by Christmas last year. That has not eventuated. Still farmers are calling out for labour and support, but time and time again the Commonwealth government proves to be lacking. This evening I am waiting to hear what they will do in the budget and whether they will deliver on the promise around Christmas last year. I think we will still be waiting to see whether anything eventuates at Christmas this year.

All of these provisions have been about keeping people safe, healthy, employed and ready to bounce back when we can put the darkest days of the pandemic behind us. I love hearing the adulations of those opposite. It never fails to amaze me that they have lost touch with the bush. That is why they call them ‘the doormats’. The doormats have vacated the bush and left the farms and the regions to the Labor Party. That is our true origins. It is where we come from. We will look after our farmers, as we always will do.

*(Time expired)*

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (7.33 pm): It is with great pleasure that I make my contribution with the Labor Party mantra of yesteryear—

It's time for freedom,

It's time for moving, It's time to begin,

Yes It's time

It's time for old folk,

It's time for children,

Time for freedom,

Yes It's time

...

...

...

...



It is time to realise the pain and the agony that businesspeople, communities and individuals have been through over the past two years of the COVID pandemic. We have the Delta strain, we have the Omicron strain and now we have Omicron 2 sneaking through the corridors. We need to be cognisant of the pain that has been felt over the past two years and how people have suffered. People need to look to the horizon for freedom for all their normal activities and business. People need to get back to normality as quickly as possible. What we have in this extension bill is a further impediment to the hope that people have for getting back to a normal life. That is not fair.

One of my constituents is a teacher who is now suspended. He has been a teacher for 10 years but has been suspended because he will not get vaccinated. I am triple vaxxed and I do not necessarily agree with his stance on the matter. However, his job—his life—has been put in limbo. With the extension of the extraordinary measures through the bill that is before the parliament tonight, he worries for his good teaching career. His employer has said that when this matter has been finished with they will welcome him back as he is a good teacher.

As I remember it, our committee dealt with this matter to 30 April. That is my recollection of the time when the current rule expires. The shadow minister has proposed that we extend it to 31 May, at which time we can revisit the matter. That is a very fair and reasonable proposal because we can come back if there are further outbreaks. I note that the health minister herself said today that we would have to have an urgent meeting. I have seen plenty of urgent bills pass through this parliament so that is not an impediment—particularly late at night with 18 minutes notice. Where is the member for Sandgate? The bottom line is that we can do that. If there is another outbreak, we can bring in all the necessary measures to handle it.

We need to give the business community, sporting communities and individuals hope that this horrible pandemic and the rules and impediments imposed because of it are coming to an end, as they should. We have seen the borders opening up. I have a family full of teachers. They have kids running left, right and centre with COVID, people are staying home and so on. My son's family has had COVID. We have all had an experience of COVID. I sat next to a COVID guy for a week and I did not get it. I must be immune to the member for Southern Downs.

We have all had a COVID experience and everybody is over it. I can assure the House that the businesses of the Gold Coast, particularly the restaurants, cafes and the entertainment industry, are very much over this pandemic. We want to get back to normal and we want a reasonable approach, just as the shadow minister has proposed, to address any outbreaks that should come from Omicron 2 or whatever Greek letter comes after Omicron. I do not know, I am sorry, but there will be a Greek letter to follow Omicron.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** I am not sure, member for Nicklin. The bottom line is that it is time to give confidence back to our communities. It is not right and proper for us to extend these enormous powers. The member for Scenic Rim referred to the Human Rights Commission being unhappy about them being extended. It is important that we give people hope that this matter is coming to an end. I cannot believe that anybody in this place would not support getting back to normality as quickly as possible. The very threat of continuing these existing extraordinary powers—and I think everyone on the other side would agree that they are extraordinary powers—puts a dark cloud over business, sporting communities—and we all love and support our sporting clubs—and individuals. I believe thousands of public servants have been affected. The people working for the government have been affected by vaccination issues and other issues. They would like some hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel in relation to the end of this devastating period in our history in terms of the COVID virus.

I am absolutely sure that we can seek our outcomes with the shadow minister's amendments to this bill that will give oversight and protection, should it be needed, if there are further outbreaks. I can assure that everyone, even in schools, are treating COVID now as, 'Oh, so what?' The people in the restaurants are treating it as, 'So what?' The people at sporting clubs—and I will be at the mighty Burleigh Bears this Saturday where I hope they win—will be treating it as, 'So what?' We need to be realistic in our approach and not go for the big stick approach in terms of putting in further extensions out there that frighten everyone in relation to this bill. We must understand that we can put in measures, as the shadow minister suggested, to ameliorate that fear and ensure that the community has confidence in the way we go in the future.

I take this opportunity in the last couple of minutes of my allocated time to address another matter. If you will excuse me for one minute, it does not relate to this bill. It has been brought to my attention that I may have unknowingly breached the confidentiality provisions of the Economics and Governance Committee. If that is the case, I sincerely apologise to this House.



**Mr SMITH** (Bundaberg—ALP) (7.42 pm): Sing it again, Ray. Sing it again. I rise to contribute to the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. It is important to frame the beginning of this speech in the context of COVID across the world. When we look at the data from the World Health Organization, since 2020 there have been over 480 million confirmed cases and over six million cumulative deaths. As at May 2021, just over a year of living with COVID across the world, it had spread to 153 million confirmed cases and 3.2 million related deaths. The World Health Organization estimates that the average annual mortality burden of influenza is 250,000 to 550,000 deaths. A 2017 study suggested a high rate of 290,000 to 650,000 deaths on average a year from influenza. It is important to make this comparison because sometimes we hear those opposite, but also those out in the community, say, 'Oh, this is just like a flu. Oh, it's just a normal sniffle.' It is clearly different. The World Health Organization's data clearly shows how serious COVID is.

**Mr Stevens:** So what?

**Mr SMITH:** I take that interjection. The member for Mermaid Beach, in response to over six million deaths, said, 'So what?' That is what he thinks: so what? There have been six million deaths. The Palaszczuk government took the right response, the strong health response, and delivered a strong economic recovery plan. The first step to that was closing the borders. It was a strong step, but it was the right step. Closing the borders was so important. We know that those opposite did not like that. They called 64 times for the borders to be opened. They even put up billboards saying that the borders needed to be opened, but Queenslanders did not want a virus killing people down south and all across the world entering Queensland, because that is where they live. That is where their families and friends live. They support the Palaszczuk government, the bills we are putting forward and the extensions because they know that they need a government that keeps them safe. That is what the Palaszczuk government is all about.

Of course, lockdowns were very hard for us all, for the mental health of many people and for our businesses. I know that in the south-east corner it was a lot harder in terms of lockdowns and that it was very difficult on businesses. Lockdowns in the south-east corner of Queensland prevented the virus from spreading to regional businesses. If Bundaberg had lockdowns for six weeks or a situation similar to New South Wales and Victoria, those businesses would not still be there. Those businesses would have crumbled if the virus had been allowed to run rampant throughout regional Queensland. The Palaszczuk government protected those businesses by making sure that the tough calls were made to suppress the virus and all of its variants. What about masks? No-one likes to wear the masks, but it is important that we do because they keep us safe. By wearing masks, Queenslanders rewarded themselves because they kept us safe and helped suppress the virus.

All of these measures and the extension provisions of this bill are about conviction. Conviction is something about which those opposite really need to learn a couple of lessons. I refer to conviction based on the health advice of the Chief Health Officer. We saw what happened early on when the virus spread throughout Queensland. I mentioned billboards and 64 calls for the borders to be opened, but two shadow frontbenchers were attacking the then chief health officer, questioning her health record and her health advice—even to the point where one of those members accused the most senior health official in our state of being punch-drunk.

**Mr Power:** Saved the lives of Queenslanders.

**Mr SMITH:** I take that interjection. That is what those opposite stand for. We just heard it when the member for Mermaid Beach in terms of COVID-19 said, 'So what?' It sums up what they are all about. Queenslanders trusted us at the 2020 election. Those opposite might want to say it was a referendum on COVID. It was a referendum on COVID. Queenslanders overwhelmingly backed the party that took the strong measures that are in this bill to keep us safe while those opposite proposed a couple of hundred bucks for car registration. That is what members opposite feel about COVID-19 and about keeping people safe. That is their record in those terms. The government needed to make sure that we kept our population safe, because we did not have a vaccine. An unvaccinated population must be made safe. It was the extraordinary powers that enabled this government to keep people safe.

Once we finally were able to take over the vaccine rollout—the Morrison government could not roll it out quick enough so, again, it was the Palaszczuk government that had to do the federal government's work—and once the Queensland government had Queenslanders vaccinated, without help from the federal government, we were able to take back some of those restrictions. It is clear that that is what will happen with this bill being extended as well. When it is safe to do so, restrictions will be pulled back. That is what is important and that is why Queenslanders trust us, because they are measured and necessary responses. In the end, that is what this bill is all about.

In fact, those measures were so effective that in Bundaberg before 17 December last year constituents would come up to me and say, 'Gee, aren't we lucky that we have never had a case in Bundaberg?' We actually had 22 in our hospitals. I made sure to let people know that, because COVID-19 is very real and it still is. I reflect that the Christmas and New Year period was the first time that Bundaberg really had its first wave of COVID-19. COVID-19 dispersed throughout the state, but it hit Bundaberg in a very large way. During that Christmas period, over 600 people a day were getting tested at our hospital. As people needed to wait 36 to 48 hours for their PCR test result to come back, we potentially had 1,000 people a day off the streets of Bundaberg. This means that people not going into the shops to support our businesses, because—

**Mr Crandon:** Fearmongerer.

**Mr SMITH:** I will move on from one of the characters of *The Muppets* opposite. The people of Bundaberg have since made sure they get out there and support—

**Mr Crandon** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Member for Coomera, I ask that you stop your interjections.


**Mr SMITH:** I was happy for him to go on. He was embarrassing himself. The people of Bundaberg rolled up their sleeves and were vaccinated. That is what was so important. I thank everybody in the Bundaberg community and all across the Wide Bay. Right now, the first-dose vaccination rate of the Wide Bay is 99 per cent.

I give special mention to Jorja Logan and Cristian Zandona, the school captains of Shalom College. They stood up with me in front of all the press—Channel 7, *NewsMail* and *Bundaberg Today*—and said, 'We should go out, roll up our sleeves and get vaccinated.' They both made it onto the state news bulletin that night. Not only did they get Queensland kids on track to get the vaccine, they encouraged everyone across the state to get the vaccine, which is absolutely fantastic. I know that the member for Maryborough was on radio saying, 'Go and get the vaccine.' The member for Hervey Bay was out there saying that. I was out there saying that. We were all out there making sure our people got the vaccine.

There were crickets from the LNP. Let us talk about fearmongering. There was fearmongering from the LNP. The federal member for Hinkler was saying that it is all right for New South Wales to have a vaccine mandate, but Queensland cannot have one. It is all right for New South Wales, backed in by Scotty, to have mandates to make sure they can look after their people, but when it comes to Queensland we should play politics with people's lives. That is what the LNP is all about. All they do is try to play politics.

In the time remaining, I pay tribute to our frontline staff—our health workers. Imagine doing 600 tests a day over the Christmas and new year period. What our health workers did was absolutely outstanding. At one point across the Wide Bay area, due to COVID-19 infecting people and then the rules around close contacts, we had over 100 staff not able to go to work. I thank all of our health workers who stood up during those hard times and who are still standing up because it is still around.

It is not so what to those people who have COVID. It is not so what to those people who are dying from COVID and their families. It is definitely not fearmongering, that is for sure. We know that the LNP might want to fearmonger. We know that the LNP might want to try to buy elections with \$300 registrations, but when it comes to COVID-19 we stand up for Queenslanders, we keep Queenslanders safe and we do not fearmonger like the LNP.

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (7.51 pm): I rise tonight to speak on the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. It is without doubt that the last two years have been unprecedented in my lifetime. It is something that has had a devastating effect on our state, on our nation and, in fact, on the whole world. It is nothing that we have seen for over 100 years.

It is important at this time to acknowledge those families who have been impacted greatly by coronavirus—those who have lost loved ones and those who have fallen very ill. There is no doubt that it has had a devastating effect on families in Queensland but also families all around the world. I also want to acknowledge those who have lost their livelihoods. Many businesses, particularly those in the travel and hospitality industries, seem to have been struck by blow after blow due to the restrictions that applied at the time and the disruption to everybody's everyday lives. I acknowledge those who could not be with their loved ones at a time when they were most needed—when they were ill or dying. I acknowledge those who could not attend funerals and those who could not have weddings the way they always dreamed of. I acknowledge the enormous disruption it has been to every aspect of our society.

I pay tribute to our health workers—the nurses and doctors. I pay tribute to those working in our vaccination centres that have been crazily busy for months and months on end. I can only imagine the stress that they went through. It is important that we pay tribute to those people.

There is no doubt that these have been extraordinary circumstances. Extraordinary circumstances require an extraordinary response. I am not sure what the government has been raving on about, but that is why the LNP opposition has supported the laws that have been in place over this period of time giving unprecedented powers to the government and the Chief Health Officer. These were powers that were necessary for the circumstances of the day. These were powers that were necessary to maintain public health standards. These powers were always meant to be temporary. As much as these powerful laws were necessary, at some stage they must come to an end.

The position that Queensland now finds itself in is very different to when the House debated the extension of these powers in August last year. At that point the vaccine rollout in Queensland was still ramping up. The legitimate cry went out for people to be vaccinated. The target was 90 per cent—90 per cent of the state's adult population to have a double dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Queensland public responded to what was asked of them. They were assured at the time of the request that this 90 per cent threshold would provide the protection that the community needed. The Palaszczuk-Miles-Dick government asked the Queensland population to show goodwill. What we are now asking of this government is that it extend that goodwill back to the Queensland public. It is time for the Queensland government to fulfil the commitments that it made to people when it made this request for people to be vaccinated. They stated that once we got to the 90 per cent double vaccination rate there would be a review of these restrictions. It is now time to look to the future. It is the responsibility of this government to provide a step-by-step road map, grounded in expert advice, that shows Queenslanders a path out of this pandemic. Queenslanders still have no clear path forward. Queenslanders deserve to know what the plan is.

That is why the shadow minister will move very reasonable amendments—amendments that are all about transparency and all about accountability. As has already been mentioned by previous speakers, the first amendment would see these extraordinary powers given to the government extended for another two months. The government then has two months to outline to the Queensland public what a way out of this pandemic looks like. That is a reasonable request.

The second amendment would be, for once, to see the expert health advice received by the Palaszczuk-Miles-Dick government which is used as the rationale in this public health discussion. The third amendment—again, a very reasonable amendment—is to establish a parliamentary committee which would routinely hold hearings with the Chief Health Officer to assess and scrutinise health advice. This is something that has happened in other jurisdictions both in this country and overseas. These amendments set a deadline for the transition away from restrictions.

There is an argument that the Palaszczuk-Miles-Dick government has become comfortable with these powers and does not want to relinquish them. One only has to look at the process for this bill to come to that conclusion. Despite these powers existing for more than two years and with ample time to prepare for a proper and thorough review of the bill, the government has chosen to undertake a rushed process. The committee was given only 31 days to examine the bill. Public submissions were open for barely two weeks and the public hearing with Queensland Health lasted just an hour. Based on these facts alone, the government blatantly treated the committee system and the examination of this bill with contempt. Under this bill, as it currently stands, there is no requirement for public health officials to formally answer questions or for the restrictions to be scrutinised by the Queensland parliament. Should this bill pass without amendment, it would mean that the bill is not scrutinised by the parliament for six months. We believe that to be unacceptable.

With the controversy that has been uncovered in recent months about the integrity of this government, the Queensland public has reason to distrust this government. When we see the issues about the State Archivist, the Integrity Commissioner, the private emails by ministers, chiefs of staff getting government grants, Labor lobbyists and unions having undue influence, contracts awarded without proper procurement processes, is it any wonder—

**Mr FURNER:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order pursuant to standing order 236. I ask you to bring the member back to being relevant to the bill.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): There has been some latitude given in this debate. There is no point of order at this point.

**Mr MANDER:** The point I am making is that this is about trust. This government is asking for an enormous amount of trust to be placed in it. The government's track record, which has been uncovered of late but we have known about it for seven years, shows that they cannot be trusted.

The opposition acknowledges the unprecedented legislative challenges of dealing with the first two years of this pandemic. However, the opposition is also of the view that, in a democracy such as ours, these types of powers should not be in place any longer than necessary. Queenslanders have displayed an extraordinary level of trust—an extraordinary level of trust—in government by giving up basic rights and freedom to control the spread of COVID-19. The opposition is of the view that we have a responsibility to honour this trust by outlining a pathway for the return of these rights and to restore transparency. We believe that it is only by approving and voting for the amendments that will be moved by the shadow minister that this can be achieved.

Debate, on motion of Mr Mander, adjourned.

## ADJOURNMENT

### Burleigh Electorate, Old Burleigh Town Bus



**Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (8.01 pm): In 2019 I tabled a number of petitions in the Queensland parliament calling for a bus service to Old Burleigh Town in my electorate. Those petitions were completely ignored by the minister. He did respond to me and I table a copy of the response.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 2 June 2019, from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Hon. Mark Bailey, to the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, regarding petitions 3135-19 and 3088-19 [\[440\]](#).

The minister came back to me and said that the people in Old Burleigh Town—and 1,068 of them signed the petition—needed to catch a cab or walk but there would be no bus service provided. If those people chose to catch heavy rail from where they live, the TransLink page says that their first option of getting to the Varsity Lakes train station is by walking 2,564 metres to the nearest bus stop!

**Mr Crandon:** That's all right for young people.

**Mr HART:** I take that interjection from the member for Coomera. That might be okay for young people but it is not suitable for some of the elderly in Old Burleigh Town. The minister said that the roads in Old Burleigh Town were not wide enough for a bus, yet there is a student bus service in that area. We see heaps of buses going through there. At the moment with the M1 being widened, we are seeing B-doubles going through that area.

I have written to the minister a couple of times since then, so I was a bit surprised to see that his mate the member for Gaven now has an on-demand service in Nerang, Highland Park and Pacific Pines. While he ignores me—and I am the first to admit that I am not a friend of the Minister for Transport. He does not overly like me. Obviously he likes the member for Gaven.

**Mr Power:** No-one likes you.

**Mr HART:** I am sad that, according to the member for Logan, apparently nobody likes me. Never mind. I urge the minister to consider expanding that trial to Old Burleigh Town so that the people in my electorate do not have to walk 2,564 metres to the nearest bus stop. It cannot be that hard for the minister to assist a member from the other side while he assists a member on his own side in the process. I have written to the minister and I have asked him to expand this particular service to my electorate. What have I heard back? Crickets. Nothing. Nada. I urge the minister to consider that.

### Health System



**Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (8.04 pm): I rise tonight to talk about what we heard earlier today. We heard the LNP trot out that old line again—that the health system would be better off under the LNP. It is like they saddled up an old racehorse and they are going to send it around the track again, hoping that this time it might do well, that it might get up.

I remind the House what the Leader of the Opposition said today. He promised 'better resourcing' for the health system—not more resourcing but better resourcing. I am not sure what that means. He tried to undermine confidence in the Queensland health system for political advantage again. He said, 'I will never play politics with health.' He said that from the heart.

I do not think this line is going to work again because there is a problem with what they are doing, and that is that no-one believes them. Voters do not trust them with the health system. I will give one example. It will not work because Queenslanders know what has happened under Scott Morrison. We can see what they have done to GPs. Queenslanders know that it is harder to get into a GP. They are not producing as many GPs as they should and the rebates they get are stuck in the 20th century. We also know that Scott Morrison has made a mess of aged care. Aged-care workers cannot get a decent wage. It is underfunded.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Lui): Order, members to my left!

**Mr WHITING:** There are a lot of Queenslanders in hospitals who should be in aged care. Hundreds of beds are being taken up.

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member for Buderim!

**Mr WHITING:** Queenslanders remember what happened under the LNP last time—4,400 workers were sacked, including 1,800 nurses. People in pathology and allied health care were sacked. We all remember what they did to the Barrett centre and the effect that had on those young Queenslanders.

Today I remembered something that Chris Davis, the former assistant minister, once said. He said that there was an underinvestment in public health and claimed that the new \$1.4 billion Children's Hospital booked patients using an antiquated 'DOS based software system'. I had forgotten all of that. I table that document.

*Tabled paper:* Article, dated 22 January 2015, from the *Guardian* online, titled 'Queensland government "deceiving voters on hospitals", says former assistant health minister' [\[441\]](#).

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Everton, cease your interjections.

**Mr WHITING:** Queenslanders know that only Labor can be trusted to deliver a better healthcare system. Today we heard that they can expect to see an extra 9,745 workers in this term. We are rebuilding Logan Hospital and Caboolture Hospital, and we have built a new hospital at Kingaroy. That is why we cannot trust the other side on health.

*(Time expired)*

### **Burnett Electorate, Small Business**



**Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (8.08 pm): Earlier this month owners of small businesses in Burnett and Bundaberg met to share their despair and frustration over the impact of restrictions that affect their day-to-day business, worker shortages and spiralling confidence. While every small business is doing it tough, hospitality has had to carry the burden of policing the green tick of double vaccinations et cetera. They can see that there is no end in sight for the uncertainty and there is no assurance from this government that things are going to improve.

Queenslanders in the Wide Bay have done what they were asked—99 per cent of eligible people are now single vaccinated. Small businesses in my electorate ask: 'What more can we do?' If mandates do not change, small businesses are going to go to the wall. They will have to close, with no answers to the shortages of staff, the lack of customers and the lack of clarity from this government.

**Mr POWER:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. We have a bill before the House where these issues are being canvassed. The member is pre-empting that debate and he should wait until he has his opportunity to contribute to that debate.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Lui): I will get some advice. Member, I remind you not to anticipate details of the bill.

**Mr BENNETT:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your guidance. Following the business confidence meetings in Bundaberg on 10 March, I note that this group wrote to the Premier and their local member for Bundaberg appealing for help. They tell me that neither the Premier nor the member for Bundaberg has answered them. The member for Bundaberg spoke last sitting week and tonight on small business issues and COVID in this place. He spoke about the importance of small businesses for Queenslanders, but he did not support them in either of those contributions. Job opportunities will not be there—

**Mr POWER:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Bundaberg is flagrantly disregarding the rules. He actually made reference to a speech in the debate, further advancing the debate that the member for Bundaberg had made. It is flagrant.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I will get guidance.

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

**Ms SIMPSON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am getting advice from the Clerk at the table and I will ask everyone to come to order while I get that advice. Member for Burnett, I caution you to not anticipate debate.

**Mr BENNETT:** Thank you.

**Mr SMITH:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I actually attended that business meeting so therefore I take offence. I have the draft letter ready to go. I take offence and ask the member to withdraw.

**Mr BENNETT:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I note that the member for Bundaberg quoted two businesses from my own electorate—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Burnett, the member for Bundaberg takes personal offence to your comments. Do you withdraw?

**Mr BENNETT:** Can I seek clarity on the personal offence? I do not think I mentioned a personal offence. Is it just a vindictive and disruptive point of order? I am just clarifying that.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will seek advice.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Burnett, the member for Bundaberg has taken personal offence. Can I please ask you to withdraw?

**Mr BENNETT:** Of course, under your guidance.

**Mr HART:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I did not hear the member for Bundaberg take personal offence. He did not say those words.

**Mr BENNETT:** I have withdrawn, if that clarifies it for the House. We all want to go home.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Burnett, you have the call.

**Mr BENNETT:** Thank you. I note that the member for Bundaberg quoted two businesses in my electorate of Burnett—and I acknowledge the Windmill Cafe and the Seafood Smokery—yet the member for Bundaberg failed to represent his own businesses which attended the business confidence meetings where he was present, despite those hardworking families and owners writing to him in desperation.

**Mr SMITH:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This is the same subject that I took personal offence to. I take personal offence and I ask the member to withdraw. They are not true statements.

**Mr BENNETT:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I withdraw, but I will write to you and clear this up at the end of this sitting.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr BENNETT:** I do not need coaching from you, Linus. That is for sure. Let me put that in your head. Bundaberg is not alone—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Burnett, I ask you to withdraw unconditionally.

**Mr BENNETT:** Absolutely, but I am not sure what I have done to upset everyone. I unconditionally withdraw my statements. Bundaberg is not alone. Fraser Coast businesses held meetings with frustrated hospitality owners about the impact of mandates on their trade. They echoed similar messages to those shared with the Premier in the letter dated 11 March from Bundaberg, Burnett and Childers businesses. They are not alone. At the same time, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland issued a desperate plea to the state government for a review into restrictions and a clear way forward to recovery.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Logan.

**Mr HART:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I understand that the member for Logan is under a warning already, yet he is interjecting. I ask you to rule on that.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Mr BENNETT:** What I might do is move to the hardworking volunteers in rural and remote Queensland who faithfully arrange shows and agricultural events and who are feeling unfairly targeted by this government. Agricultural shows remain subject to these mandates, and they are cancelling and postponing events that are crucial to the small towns and communities—

**Mr POWER:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Burnett spoke on this very bill this afternoon. He is absolutely aware that this debate is ongoing yet he continues to debate it.

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

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Buderim, I ask you to take a seat and I will deal with the first point of order.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** It is in relation to the point of order that was raised by the member for Logan.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** What is your point of order, member for Buderim?

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I note that the member for Burnett has not referred to what bill he is discussing, but if we consider the COVID emergency bill that is before the House, that deals with the head of power—not with mandates in any regard whatsoever. I would contend that the member is not anticipating debate. I would also observe that the member is referring to the Small Business Commissioner Bill, which is now finalised, and contributions that were made to that bill. I would contend there is no point of order from the member for Logan.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I will seek advice from the Clerk. There is no point of order.

**Mr BENNETT:** It is an important time to talk about small businesses in our community. They are important to economic and sustainable outcomes. While I have a few minutes left, I will talk about the great businesses that provide so much to our communities. Those businesses need support. I guess it goes back to backing up the leadership team who have been calling for support for small businesses over a long period of time. We need to acknowledge the heartache. We need to acknowledge the deals we have to make. We need the government to give them respect and empathy. The small business community has come together in my community over a number of forums in Hervey Bay, Childers and Bundaberg. They are trying to express an opinion and trying to get people to listen. The Premier and the member for Bundaberg, who attended—

**Mr Smith:** I was there, mate.

**Mr BENNETT:** You were there, but you have not backed them up and that is the problem. That is why I am on the record tonight to say that it is enough. It is time for the people who make these promises to our community to back it up and stop squibbing their opportunities. When members speak in this House, they need to speak for the people they represent.

### Cooper Electorate, Ithaca War Memorial



**Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (8.17 pm): Baxter, Bridge, McFarlane and Walker—these are some of the names etched on to the Ithaca War Memorial on Enoggera Terrace in Paddington. Designed and built between 1921 and 1925, the Ithaca War Memorial is modest and unique and accordingly was added to the Queensland Heritage Register in 1992. Starting off in 1916 as an honour board, a year later the community had mobilised and developed a public memorial proposal. Despite struggling to attract a funding commitment from the council at the time, the memorial proposal pushed ahead with locals fundraising through donations, fetes and concerts. By 1921 the community had raised the £650 required to engage council, and the decision was made to design a monument which would have the names of the fallen engraved upon it.

The Ithaca War Memorial was unveiled on 25 February 1922 by the Governor of Queensland, Sir Matthew Nathan. The stone memorial honours the 130 local men who died on active service during the First World War. Each year my office—under myself, Kate Jones before me and Andrew Fraser before her—coordinates the Anzac Day service at Ithaca. However, this year is a special year. It is the centennial anniversary of the memorial. We put it out to our community partners to see if there was interest in holding a special event this year—which really was a rhetorical question to ask because of course they were exuberant about the opportunity to celebrate this important aspect of our local history.


Along with our community partners, we are now driving our 100 stories for 100 years project, bringing into the light the names, faces and stories that sit behind our historical suburb of Paddington. We are encouraging anyone with a link to Ithaca to please get in touch. We have a Facebook group, the Ithaca War Memorial Centenary 2022. I want to acknowledge our wonderful supporting agencies: the Ashgrove and Bardon RSL; the Ithaca Presbyterian Church and the Boys Brigade; the former member for Ashgrove, Andrew Fraser; the Rosalie Baptist Church; the Jubilee Catholic Parish; the Bardon Girl Guides; the Bardon Scouts; Bardon State School; Ithaca Creek State School; Women Veterans Australia; the War Widows Guild; and the councillor for Paddington ward, Peter Matic, and the Brisbane City Council.

I particularly want to acknowledge Paddington Then and Now, a local small business focused on historical preservation and celebration and the organisation we have contracted to work with us on this project. Paddington Then and Now are driving the 100 Stories 100 Years project, and have already partnered with groups like Brisbane Urban Sketchers to capture this nostalgic node in Paddington.



The Ithaca Anzac Day Centennial event will go ahead on Anzac Day from 7.15 am on Enoggera Terrace. We welcome anyone along to the event. There have been many different types of war memorials erected in Queensland; however, clock towers are comparatively rare. The memorial at Ithaca is the earliest of this type of memorial and is the only one of its type in Brisbane, so it is well worth prioritising for your Anzac Day service.

### Western Queensland, Tourism

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (8.20 pm): I rise to draw attention to the importance of tourism in the Western Queensland economy and ask that the Labor government supports the industry in the seat of Gregory. COVID-19 travel restrictions in the previous two years have seen western drive tourism expand from a well-established grey nomad market to include a family holiday market, which is fantastic. I am keen to see the expansion sustained and I am keen to see that we continue to support our Western Queensland tourism industry.


The tourism industry in Western Queensland is a product that is unrivalled by any product in Australia. We have so much to offer and we need to continue to support that. We also need to see the widening of accommodation choices. We have seen that the accommodation choices are getting better and better in Western Queensland and, of course, we have the world-class glamping and farmstays in addition to caravan parks and motels.

We desperately need to offer some expandable travel choices. The iconic Spirit of the Outback from Brisbane to Longreach in an obvious starting point. Visitors remark on the difficulty of booking sleeper berths. This highlights the urgent need to expand the option and better meet that demand, so we need to continue to expand the Spirit of the Outback. I urge the Labor government to commission the construction of more sleepers, both double and single berths, and to examine ways of allowing travellers greater flexibility of leaving and rejoining the train. As tourism operators can now offer four-wheel drive experiences to nearby attractions and activities, travellers should be able to plan their trip that sees them break from the journey at stations such as Blackwater, Emerald or Barcaldine and enjoy the sights of those locations.

The other issue requiring government attention is the workforce—the difficulty of tourism and hospitality operators finding staff to operate, let alone expanding these businesses. Part of the problem is the severe shortage of rental properties for staff to live in. I urge the Labor government to build new accommodation in western communities for government employees. This will not only allow the government to better recruit and retain public servants in frontline roles such as in teaching, police and health; it will also see rental accommodation currently held by the state government returned to the private rental market.

The other key area is vocational and hospitality qualifications for young people. I am most grateful to the education minister for funding the long overdue maintenance of the Big Red Truck, as we call it; however, the necessary work required will see the Big Red Truck taken off the road for almost a year. We need to get the Big Red Truck back on the road. We have the Olympics coming in 2032, so let's get the hospitality industry going and back to work.

### Tonga Volcano, Pasifika TV and Radio

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (8.23 pm): On 15 January, a volcano erupted off the islands of Tonga that sent shock waves around the world and defied scientific expectations. Most of this volcano lies under the water. It rises more than 2,000 metres from the sea floor. The volcano took everyone by surprise when it spewed forth fresh magma which had risen quickly from the buried underwater magma chamber. The volcano sent a plume of ash soaring into the upper atmosphere and triggered a tsunami that destroyed homes on Tonga's nearby islands. Reverberations from the eruption circled the globe multiple times.


Here in a small neighbourhood Brisbane street, the community Pasifika TV and Radio station's team were about to become known across the world as well. The Pasifika TV and Radio station was set up to create an online Tongan media platform for the local and global community so they could tell their stories from a Tongan perspective. The station is affiliated with a sister station in the Kingdom of Tonga.

At the time of Tonga's volcanic eruption and tsunami, there were an estimated 150,000 Tongans living overseas. Of these, close to 5,000 Tongan workers were employed across Australia and New Zealand, not counting the Tongans who now call Australia home. For Tongans who were living offshore as well as those at home, the volcano eruption and tsunami were devastating and heartbreaking.

Communications with Tonga broke down after damage was done to the sole optic fibre carrying all of the communication channels that service Tonga. This left many Tongans living overseas in the dark and not knowing whether or not families were safe. For those Tongans living away from Tonga was the added burden of not being able to provide physical or emotional support to their families or be able to fulfil their social obligations. Even as communication lines slowly resumed, news from families still in Tonga was difficult with many family members not having mobile phones or phones being lost or damaged in the disaster.

The Pasifika community radio and TV station was overwhelmed with callers and messages from around the world from Tongans wanting information and also sharing their thoughts, prayers and hopes for family back home in Tonga. In the weeks leading up to the volcano eruption, Mr Suli Layt, who is the founder and executive director of Pasifika TV and Radio, had been in contact with my office and invited me to attend their 2020 Pasifika TV and Radio Awards evening. I have known Suli for a while, so he kept me informed on what the community radio and TV station was doing and the concerns of the families back in Tonga. The Pasifika TV and Radio provided ongoing tsunami coverage in the Tongan language to the large global Tongan diaspora.

### Moggill Electorate

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (8.27 pm): As the state member for Moggill, I rise to acknowledge a number of local residents, events and community organisations as well as various contributions which continue to be made right across the electorate of Moggill.

Last Friday I joined the federal member for Ryan, Julian Simmonds MP, as well as students, teachers, parents and staff at a very special Kenmore State School assembly to acknowledge and farewell the school's officer Mr Wayne Amos, who is retiring after 20 years of service to the school community. I certainly wish Wayne and his wife, Jill, all the best. It was terrific to present a Moggill electorate community service award but particularly at the afternoon ceremony, seeing what high esteem he was held in by both current and former students and also teachers, parents and the P & C. It was a testament to his hard work over many years.

Last Saturday there was the inaugural Sugarwood Music Festival held in Bellbowrie, a terrific community event with some great music acts and bands. I offer my congratulations to all members of the Kenmore Rotary Club as well as to Councillor Greg Adermann and Brisbane City Council for all of their hard work.


Also last Saturday, after more than 10 years, the Moggill Markets were re-established. They were attended by many local residents. There was a terrific range of quality produce, gifts, food and coffee and plenty on offer for families. These markets will complement what exists in Brookfield at the Brookfield Showgrounds and also the markets which run at the Pullenvale Hall. I know that you, Madam Deputy Speaker Bush, have attended a number of those events previously as well.

Last Sunday I also held the first of a number of local thankyou community events for State Emergency Service volunteers, Queensland Police Service officers, first responders, community volunteers and various organisations to acknowledge their contributions during the recent severe weather and flood event. The first community thankyou event was held in Bellbowrie, and we have other ones planned for Mount Crosby and Brookfield as well. It is very important to acknowledge the contributions of many people throughout that period of time.

There have also been a lot of local school parents and citizens AGMs on, including at Mount Crosby State School, Kenmore State School, Brookfield State School and Kenmore South State School. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the collaborative work of parents, teachers, staff and volunteers at all of those schools and many more.

Finally, the Moggill Cricket Club Awards evening was held at the Moggill District Sports Park. I would like to acknowledge President Michael Childs and all of the people on his committee and parents for all the important work that they do. I am very fortunate to live in an area with a great spirit of volunteerism.

### Stafford Electorate

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (8.29 pm): I was pleased this week to welcome both the Treasurer and the health minister to the wonderful Stafford community. More specifically, it was great to have the Treasurer and health minister visit the campus of the Prince Charles Hospital, a truly iconic institution on Brisbane's north side. We took the opportunity to thank the thousands of workers who play such an important role in our community—the doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and operational and administrative staff who work so hard for our community.

In addition to the world-class health services they provide day in, day out, the Prince Charles Hospital was also one of the first Queensland hospitals to treat large numbers of COVID patients. They stood up a large testing clinic and then set up an effective vaccination hub. I and my family know how great those services are. That is on top of the busy emergency department, the specialist paediatric emergency department and the world-leading medical research being undertaken on site, often in partnership with the charitable arm of the Prince Charles Hospital, the Common Good. Those frontline medical and operational staff and the researchers can go to work each day knowing that the Palaszczuk government has got their back.

As we sit here tonight, the federal government is bringing down their budget. They need to prove that they have the back of our hardworking health workers. We do not need more flashy announcements. We do not need the Prime Minister pretending to be a hairdresser or a welder or a driver. We need real, systemic investment in health from the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth is, of course, the level of government that takes in the vast bulk of taxation across the country. Specifically, the Commonwealth needs to step up and actually deliver what they have previously agreed, and that is to match health funding fifty-fifty. The hardworking staff at the Prince Charles Hospital deserve it, our patients deserve it, and residents across the north side—indeed across the state—deserve it.

Locally we know it is hard to get into GPs, let alone one that will bulk-bill. Parents are just trying to do the right thing and they face the question of whether they go to the ED, adding pressure to our hospital, or whether they can wait two or three days and risk the health outcomes of their kids getting worse. I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government that is investing in health. We need the federal government to come to the party.

In the remaining time, I want to thank and reflect on how fantastic and proud I am to be part of the government that is delivering Skilling Queenslanders for Work. I give a quick shout-out to Anthony and the team at Active Queenslanders Industry Alliance, who bring young Queenslanders on site to local community sporting clubs, upskilling the kids and delivering improvements for local clubs. It is a real win-win. Recent examples include the mighty Kedron Lions AFL club and the Chermside Bowls Club. Thank you also to Jeannie Mok OAM and her wonderful team at the Multicultural Community Centre for their great partnership with the state government through Skilling Queenslanders for Work, giving newer Queenslanders from a range of diverse backgrounds a 90 per cent success rate in getting jobs. That is a truly wonderful achievement.

### Boyce, Mr C



**Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (8.32 pm): I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to my good friend Colin Boyce, the former member for Callide, who today tendered his resignation to the Speaker. Colin is a man of few words; I am sure we would all agree with that. His parting words I think are a mark of the man; he did not want to make a great deal of fuss. I thought it would be fitting to reflect on him, the man that he is and the ways in which he has helped me as a friend.

Members would be aware that about a year ago I took some time off. I went to hospital and got myself sorted out in terms of some mental health challenges. I thank members for the courtesy and support they have shown me in relation to that. Colin Boyce went beyond that. He let me go and camp on a remote mountain on his very large property near Taroom. For a week I had absolute solitude. I lived like Daniel Boone and it was wonderful. It was a really important part of my recovery. It was very kind of him. I was able to catch up with his wife briefly because Colin was away.


Colin taught me how to weld better. He is a welder, an engineer, a fabricator, a farmer and a truck driver. All of those things have been very interesting to me. When I have to weld a fence or repair something on one of my kids' motorbikes it is a big deal because I was hopeless at it. Colin's advice as an expert welder has helped me and that is a skill I will never forget.

Colin unashamedly took his internal values to his electorate. As I said, he is a man of few words. He spoke little, but when he did I found that what he had to say was generally very interesting. I bet penny to a pound that the good electors of the seat of Callide who have met Colin and know of his honest representation of what he sincerely felt were the views of his electorate would agree with me on that.

I did hear some mirthful and some less mirthful quips today about the manner of Colin's departure. All I can say is that he has now focused himself entirely on the campaign that awaits him in Flynn. He certainly has my best wishes in that endeavour. I am sure if he is successful he will be an excellent federal member for that area. I would like to assure everybody that I also did not get a chance

to say goodbye to him properly today, but I will certainly be having a beer with him at the earliest possible opportunity. On behalf of those of us who saw Col as a friend, I say that we should wish him well. I very much hope to run into him again shortly.

### **Mount Ommaney Electorate**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (8.35 pm): As I said during the last sitting week, we all know in this House that when there are flood-affected communities there are so many people we need to thank when it comes to flood recovery. What we so often see is that there are wonderful local small businesses who help out. It is so often those small businesses that get in there and quietly do what they can to help out in times of disaster. Today I want to shine a spotlight on just a few of those in my community. Again, I must stress that this is not even close to an exhaustive list.

However, I would love to shine a spotlight on just a few of those small businesses starting with Darra Bakehouse. They called me and the federal member Milton Dick really early to provide some pies and other baked goods to the people who were staying at the Riverlife evacuation centre. Curry and Cask organised themselves to go out and provide hundreds of hot, delicious curry meals to the good people of Oxley and Corinda each day as they were cleaning up. I have no doubt the clean-up was all the quicker for their assistance. The Australian Fundraising corporation, which is based in my area, helped out with the clean-up at the Jags. Sheana's coffee went out and provided free coffees from their mobile coffee van. They took the coffee van to the people and the caffeinated clean-up meant it went so much faster.

Actively Balanced Kids is a business that operates out of Sherwood State School. They were able to provide bags for flood-affected families. Like the Darra Bakehouse, Middle Park Bakery provided free baked goods, which was incredibly helpful for those families who needed something to eat and did not have a kitchen. Licketysplit Cafe were doing free baked goods, German Sausage House provided hundreds of free meals and Delightful Moments & Balloons provided hampers for flood-affected people.

As I said, there are just so many businesses that helped out during the floods, just as they do all the time. It is our small businesses that sponsor our school fetes and our sports clubs—and I have spoken in this House about the sports clubs that were impacted—and they give those vouchers for events. Several small businesses in my electorate were impacted by the floods. Specifically, the Jindalee Allsports centre was completely inundated and a lot of those businesses are out of those premises and are waiting to go back in. They are doing that work now.

Finally, I give a huge shout-out to my Centenary Chamber of Commerce which is organising a flood relief dinner at the Jindalee Golf Club tomorrow night, which I sadly will not be able to attend. That club was also impacted by the floods. As we know, recovery is a marathon, not a sprint. There are lots of different people and businesses ready and willing to help. I am so blessed in Mount Ommaney to have so many small businesses pitching in and playing their part.

The House adjourned at 8.38 pm.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Andrew, Bailey, Bates, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Boyce, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Camm, Crandon, Crawford, Crisafulli, D'Ath, Dametto, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gerber, Gilbert, Grace, Hart, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Janetzki, Katter, Kelly, King A, King S, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lister, Lui, MacMahon, Madden, Mander, Martin, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mullen, Nicholls, O'Connor, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Skelton, Smith, Stevens, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Watts, Weir, Whiting