



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Hansard Home Page: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-assembly/hansard>

Email: hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au

Phone (07) 3553 6344

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Tuesday, 19 March 2024

Subject	Page
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT	619
Absence of Ministers	619
PRIVILEGE	619
Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Contempt of Parliament.....	619
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT	619
School Group Tours.....	619
PETITIONS	619
TABLED PAPERS	620
MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS	622
Inala and Ipswich West Electorates, By-Elections	622
Cost of Living	623
Olympic and Paralympic Games, Infrastructure	623
ABSENCE OF MINISTERS	624
REPORT	624
Office of the Leader of the Opposition	624
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Public Report of Office Expenses for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023.....	624
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	624
Bates, Mr R	624
Bates, Mr R	624
Miles Labor Government	625
Bates, Mr R	626
Cost of Living	626
Logan Hospital	626
Worker Protection	627
Health System	628


Table of Contents – Tuesday, 19 March 2024

Health System.....	628
Olympic and Paralympic Games, Infrastructure.....	628
Speaker’s Ruling, Question Out of Order	629
Electricity Prices	629
Olympic and Paralympic Games, Infrastructure.....	629
Coal Industry, Royalties.....	630
Hinchinbrook Electorate, Road Infrastructure.....	631
Emerging Industries.....	631
Olympic and Paralympic Games, Infrastructure.....	632
Housing.....	632
Electoral Laws	633
Women.....	633
Electricity Prices	634
MOTION	635
Business Program.....	635
Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to	636
Resolved in the affirmative.....	636
FORENSIC SCIENCE QUEENSLAND BILL	636
Second Reading	636
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Article from ABC News online, dated 31 October 2023, titled ‘Queensland Health’s Forensic and Scientific Services lab criticised over DNA testing automation’.....	649
Consideration in Detail.....	656
Clauses 1 to 69, as read, agreed to	656
Schedule, as read, agreed to	656
Third Reading	656
Long Title.....	656
PHARMACY BUSINESS OWNERSHIP BILL.....	656
Second Reading	656
MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST	658
Miles Labor Government, Performance	658
Liberal National Party.....	660
Miles Labor Government, Performance	661
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Extracts, dated 12 March 2024 and 19 March 2024, from various newspapers, depicting the member for Caloundra, Mr Jason Hunt MP, the member for Cairns, Hon. Michael Healy, and the member for Barron River, Mr Craig Crawford MP.	662
Liberal National Party.....	663
Bates, Mr R	664
Liberal National Party.....	665
North Queensland, Water Infrastructure.....	666
Leader of the Opposition, Performance.....	667
Miles Labor Government, Integrity.....	668
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Brochure from the Legalise Cannabis Party relating to the Ipswich West by-election..	668
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Leaflet relating to the Legalise Cannabis Party.....	669
Electricity Prices	669
PHARMACY BUSINESS OWNERSHIP BILL.....	670
Second Reading	670
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Article, dated 6 March 2024, titled ‘Proposed pharmacy ownership laws will create new problems’.....	684
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Article, dated 23 February 2024, titled ‘Draft pharmacy ownership laws bad for consumers’	684
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Article from ABC News online, dated 9 November 2023, titled ‘Red tape, compliance and regulation costs double for Queensland businesses, report finds’.....	685
Consideration in Detail.....	699
Clauses 1 to 240, as read, agreed to	699
Schedule 1, as read, agreed to	699
Third Reading	699
Long Title.....	699
CASINO CONTROL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL.....	699
Second Reading	699
ADJOURNMENT	713
Moranbah Discount Tyres & Mechanical; New Vehicle Efficiency Standard	713
Redland City Council, Election; Redland Hospital.....	714
Liberal National Party, Women; Faith-Based Schools	714
Gladstone, Easter.....	715
Coolum Surf Club; Coolum State School, Road Safety	716
One Nation	716
Children, Gender Dysphoria Treatment.....	717
Stem Cell Donations.....	718
Calliope State School; Maternity Services.....	719
Keppel Electorate, PET Scanner; Dorey, Mr B, OAM	719
ATTENDANCE	720

TUESDAY, 19 MARCH 2024


The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

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


SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Absence of Ministers

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have received advice that the member for Ferny Grove, the Hon. Mark Furner MP, will be absent from 19 to 21 March 2024. I have also received advice that the member for Morayfield, the Hon. Mark Ryan MP, will be absent from 15 to 22 March 2024. The members' notifications comply with standing order 263A.


PRIVILEGE

Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Contempt of Parliament

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 11 March 2024 the member for Kawana wrote to me alleging a contempt of parliament by the Premier for a statement made on 6 March 2024. The member for Kawana's letter to me made no attempt to apply the evidence to each element to be proved. Speakers have long set out the general requirements of seeking a referral of a matter of privilege and the onus on members making the complaint of privilege to provide the Speaker with evidence and analysis of all elements of any allegation of contempt, and I would make reference to speakers Reynolds, Mickel, Wellington, Simpson and myself. Furthermore, the member took personal offence at the time and the matter was dealt with at the time. I am not referring the matter to the Ethics Committee. I am not tabling the correspondence in this matter as it contains unparliamentary language.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

School Group Tours

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I wish to advise that we will be visited in the gallery this morning by students and teachers from the Springfield Anglican College in the electorate of Jordan and Kallangur State School in the electorate of Murrumba.

PETITIONS

The following honourable member has lodged a paper petition for presentation and an e-petition which is now closed and presented—

Gold Coast Fishermen's Co-operative

Mr Langbroek, from 2,719 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the Gold Coast Fishermen's Co-operative retains its current site and current access to waterfront on the Southport Spit [\[384\]](#).

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

Sexually Explicit Publications

Mr Andrew, from 1,823 petitioners, requesting the House to do all within its power to ensure various prohibitions around sexually explicit publications [\[385\]](#).

Fire Service Act

Mr Bennett, from 1,532 petitioners, requesting the House to reject the draft amendments to the Fire Service Act 1990 [\[386\]](#).

Motorcyclists, Protective Clothing

Mr Crandon, from 470 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the usage of protective clothing for motorcyclists and their passengers [\[387\]](#).

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

Shark Nets, Removal

2,493 petitioners, requesting the House to remove shark nets along the coast and focus on smarter technologies [\[388\]](#).

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—

8 March 2024—

- [335](#) Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee: Report No. 2, 57th Parliament—Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2023
- [336](#) Cost of Living and Economics Committee: Report No. 1, 57th Parliament—Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023
- [337](#) Ruling by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt—Alleged contempt of Parliament by the former Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Local Government, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympic and Paralympic Games Infrastructure and member for Murrumba
- [338](#) Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee: Report No. 2, 57th Parliament—Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023
- [339](#) Letter, dated 7 March 2024, from the Manager of Opposition Business and member for Glass House, Mr Andrew Powell MP, to the Leader of the House and Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs, Hon. Mick de Brenni, regarding nomination of non-government members to the Supermarket Pricing Select Committee
- [340](#) Department of Environment, Science and Innovation: Report titled 'Statutory review of the Reef protection regulations', February 2024

11 March 2024—

- [341](#) Letter, dated 8 March 2024, from the Minister for Police and Community Safety, Hon. Mark Ryan, to the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, regarding an amended response to Question on Notice No. 1306 of 2023

14 March 2024—

- [342](#) Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—Annual Report 2022-2023
- [343](#) Magistrates Court of Queensland—Annual Report 2022-2023
- [344](#) Director of Child Protection Litigation—Annual Report 2022-23
- [345](#) Supreme Court of Queensland—Annual Report 2022-23
- [346](#) Queensland Family & Child Commission—Annual Report 2022-23: Deaths of children and young people Queensland
- [347](#) Child Death Review Board—Annual Report 2022-23
- [348](#) Office of the Public Guardian—Annual Report 2022-2023
- [349](#) Public Interest Monitor—Annual Report 2022-2023
- [350](#) District Court of Queensland—Annual Report 2022-2023
- [351](#) Response from the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (Hon. Furner), to an ePetition (3999-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 347 petitioners, requesting the House to amend the Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill with provisions to establish an Animal Management Centre to develop an animal management code
- [352](#) Response from the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women (Hon. Fentiman), to an ePetition (4012-24) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 2,015 petitioners, requesting the House to publish COVID-19 death data at the same time the department provides this data to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which is daily and weekly
- [353](#) Response from the Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice (Hon. Farmer), to an ePetition (4008-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 844 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure that the installation of artificial grass in schools and colleges ceases immediately
- [354](#) Response from the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Innovation (Hon. Linard), to an ePetition (3957-23) sponsored by the member for Maiwar, Mr Berkman, from 2,242 petitioners, requesting the House to protect the health and safety of residents in the Ipswich region and undertake a range of measures in relation to environmental health and air pollution created by the waste industry

- [355](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services (Hon. Mellish), to an ePetition (3915-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 11,435 petitioners, requesting the House to amend random roadside presumptive testing laws to exempt holders of medicinal cannabis prescriptions
- [356](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services (Hon. Mellish), to an ePetition (3936-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 437 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure it is a legal requirement for all bus companies providing TransLink routes to have a GPS unit fitted with the bus routes
- [357](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services (Hon. Mellish), to an ePetition (3973-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 323 petitioners, requesting the House to gauge the support of residents of Moggill, Bellbowrie and nearby areas for the construction of a vehicle and pedestrian bridge between Bellbowrie and Riverhills
- [358](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services (Hon. Mellish), to an ePetition (3979-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 1,029 petitioners, requesting the House to rename the Cross River Rail Albert Street station to Meanjin station
- [359](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services (Hon. Mellish), to a paper petition (4030-24) presented by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(3), and an ePetition (3990-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 202 and 354 petitioners respectively, requesting the House to alter bus route 723 to provide residents of the two retirement villages serviced by the bus route access to the Helensvale Plaza and the Helensvale Library
- [360](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services (Hon. Mellish), to an ePetition (4002-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 1,205 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure that the installation of artificial grass on all public and government land ceases immediately
- [361](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services (Hon. Mellish), to a paper petition (4029-24) presented by the member for Glass House, Mr Powell, and an ePetition (4004-23) sponsored by the member for Glass House, Mr Powell, from 6,235 and 4,566 petitioners respectively, requesting the House to terminate the proposed Bruce Highway Western Alternative Stage 4 Transport Corridor and restart the process with an alternative route that is better suited to long term growth and promotes a true alternative for transportation between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast
- [362](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services (Hon. Mellish), to an ePetition (4007-23) sponsored by the member for Mirani, Mr Andrew, from 2,846 petitioners, requesting the House to refund all fines and reinstate points issued by camera units positioned in contravention of 6.3.2 of the Police Traffic Manual and undertake a range of measures inquiring into the use of these units
- [363](#) Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services (Hon. Mellish), to a paper petition (4028-24) presented by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(3), from 28 petitioners, requesting the House to investigate the existing noise barriers in the electorate of Thuringowa
- [364](#) Response from the Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts (Hon. Enoch), to an ePetition (4001-23) sponsored by the member for McConnell, Hon. Grace, from 6,391 petitioners, requesting the House to remain committed to the full implementation of the Path to Treaty Act 2023
- [365](#) Response from the Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts (Hon. Enoch), to an ePetition (3974-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 6,051 petitioners, requesting the House to cease all further progression of any action in relation to the Path to Treaty Act 2023
- [366](#) Response from the Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs (Hon. de Brenni), to an ePetition (4009-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 561 petitioners, requesting the House to include the carbon emissions from fossil fuels mined in Queensland and burnt elsewhere in the world when calculating the 75% reduction

15 March 2024—

- [367](#) Community Support and Services Committee: Report No. 40, 57th Parliament—Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill 2023
- [368](#) Community Support and Services Committee: Report No. 41, 57th Parliament—State Emergency Service Bill 2023
- [369](#) Community Support and Services Committee: Report No. 42, 57th Parliament—Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023
- [370](#) Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works—Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland, Approved 22 February 2024 [Refer to subordinate legislation No. 14]
- [371](#) City of Brisbane Act 2010, Local Government Act 2009: Local Government Legislation (Councillor Conduct) Amendment Regulation 2024, No. 14
- [372](#) City of Brisbane Act 2010, Local Government Act 2009: Local Government Legislation (Councillor Conduct) Amendment Regulation 2024, No. 14, explanatory notes
- [373](#) City of Brisbane Act 2010, Local Government Act 2009: Local Government Legislation (Councillor Conduct) Amendment Regulation 2024, No. 14, human rights certificate
- [374](#) Ruling by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Curtis Pitt—Alleged contempt of Parliament by the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services and member for Aspley
- [375](#) Response from the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Innovation (Hon. Linard), to a paper petition (4031-24) presented by the member for Hill, Mr Knuth, from 130 petitioners, requesting the House to provide a green waste facility in close proximity to Bramston Beach

18 March 2024—

- [376](#) Response from the Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice (Hon. Farmer), to an ePetition (3989-23) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 1,345 petitioners, requesting the House to require stricter requirements for screening of potential employees in childcare centres and legislate to ensure day care centres install CCTV to cover black spots where offenders can hide with children
- [377](#) Response from the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Innovation (Hon. Linard), to an ePetition (4025-24) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 552 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure its commitment to phase out native hardwood logging within the South East Queensland Regional Plan area, under the South East Region Forest Agreement, by 31 December 2024

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Aboriginal Land Act 1991:

- [378](#) Aboriginal Land (Endeavour River Resources Reserve) Amendment Regulation 2024, No. 12
- [379](#) Aboriginal Land (Endeavour River Resources Reserve) Amendment Regulation 2024, No. 12, explanatory notes
- [380](#) Aboriginal Land (Endeavour River Resources Reserve) Amendment Regulation 2024, No. 12, human rights certificate

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994:

- [381](#) Rural and Regional Adjustment (Variation of Fisheries Structural Adjustment Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2024, No. 13
- [382](#) Rural and Regional Adjustment (Variation of Fisheries Structural Adjustment Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2024, No. 13, explanatory notes
- [383](#) Rural and Regional Adjustment (Variation of Fisheries Structural Adjustment Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2024, No. 13, human rights certificate

REPORT BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Clerk—

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

Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2023

Amendments made to Bill

Short title and consequential references to short title—

Omit—


'Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2023'

Insert—


'Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024'

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Inala and Ipswich West Electorates, By-Elections

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Premier) (9.34 am): Today I would like to formally welcome the two newest members of the House, Margie Nightingale, the new member for Inala, and Darren Zanow, who will be representing Ipswich West. They will officially join us as members of parliament next sitting. The voters in Inala and Ipswich West have had their say. I would like to thank them for the time they spent talking with me when I visited their homes, visited their shops, saw them at pre poll and on election day. Their message was clear: we need to do more and we need to do better. We have to deliver cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders, we have to focus on improving community safety and work hard to deliver more housing. Every member of my team will heed this message. We will redouble our efforts on the issues that matter to Queenslanders, like delivering help with household bills, money off electricity bills, freezing rego, making kindy and TAFE free. We will make sure there are more resources to support our police and roll out increased resources for free public health care and more homes. We have established the supermarkets inquiry because we are determined to see real action on food prices for Queenslanders and for farmers. We will work with our new Acting Police Commissioner and back police with the resources they need because community safety matters to us.


Cost of Living

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Premier) (9.36 am): Queenslanders tell me cost of living is the No. 1 issue they are facing. It is what families and friends are discussing at the dinner table. I hear that message loud and clear. I am willing to make difficult decisions to ensure we can afford to deliver for them. We have a huge \$8.2 billion cost-of-living relief program in place—the largest ever seen in Queensland or the nation—to make transport, health care and education cheaper, to deliver free kindy, free TAFE and free apprenticeships for people under 25, to help renters to stay in their homes and provide bond loan relief and to drive down the cost of electricity bills. Every household in Queensland is at least \$550 better off, while our seniors and most vulnerable have had \$1,072 slashed off their energy bills, which is only possible because we made decisions to keep electricity assets in public hands and because we increased taxes on coal companies.

I am pleased to say our rebates have already had a big impact. Data from the Australian Energy Regulator shows that Queensland is the only state in the National Electricity Market to see payment plans reduced. In real terms, over the last two quarters there was a 40 per cent decrease in electricity payment plans in Queensland. Many households have not even paid a bill since the rebates came into effect. It is proof that direct relief on energy bills makes a difference, which is exactly why these measures will continue.

I commit that in our upcoming budget we will make the tough decisions to deliver more for Queenslanders—for all Queenslanders, including low and middle income households. This budget will respond to what Queenslanders have said to me in the last three months, which is that the most important and impactful thing we can do is put more money into their household budget. This budget will bolster our efforts to alleviate housing pressures through our Homes for Queenslanders plan and help to hire more police, more doctors and more nurses for our growing communities. Those are the priorities of Queenslanders and those are my priorities as Premier, because when Queenslanders say something to me I act on it.

Olympic and Paralympic Games, Infrastructure

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Premier) (9.38 am): One of my first acts as Premier was to order a review into the Olympic and Paralympic Games sports venues. I did that because Queenslanders told me they did not want to spend \$2.7 billion on the Gabba.

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Kawana, you are warned under the standing orders. Treasurer, you will cease your intersections, as will you, Minister for Health.

Mr MILES: I was hopeful the review would identify a better value option. I want to thank Graham Quirk and the other reviewers for their work. In 60 days the panel received more than 900 submissions, held 130 meetings with a range of stakeholders and made nearly 30 site visits. I agree with most of what they found: the Gabba demolition is too expensive and Albion Park is not suitable. My cabinet carefully considered the review and we have decided to accept 27 of the 30 recommendations.

What I could not decide to do is to commit \$3.4 billion of Queenslanders' money to a new stadium. While Queenslanders are struggling with housing and other costs, we cannot decide to spend billions more on new stadiums. I ordered this review because Queenslanders told me they did not want to spend \$2.7 billion on the Gabba. I know they do not want to spend \$3.4 billion on a new venue so I have ruled that out. Instead, we have decided to ensure every additional cent goes to Queenslanders, so we have decided to stick to the existing funding envelope. I could not decide to accept spending an extra \$700 million and probably more once transport and demolition costs were accounted for. That money belongs to—

Ms Simpson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, member for Maroochydoore.


Mr MILES: Instead, we will upgrade three existing stadiums and build the arena, all within the existing funding envelope. That will include upgrading Suncorp Stadium to host the opening and closing ceremonies. We will also make upgrades to the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre. That will all be overseen by the independent delivery authority that I announced late last year.

Brisbane is going to put on the best ever Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our legacy will be upgraded venues across the state. However, the best legacy a premier can leave is making sure each and every Queenslanders has a place to call home, can put food on their table and feels safe. I, for one, am committed to making decisions in the interests of Queenslanders, even when that means making tough calls.

Mr Head interjected.


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

ABSENCE OF MINISTERS

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.42 am): I advise that Minister Stewart is acting for Minister Furner and the Premier is acting for Minister Ryan this week. Minister Ryan and Minister Furner are absent due to medical reasons.

REPORT

Office of the Leader of the Opposition


 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.42 am): I lay upon the table of the House the report of expenses for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023.

Tabled paper: Public Report of Office Expenses for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023 [\[390\]](#).

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, today question time will conclude at 10.43 am.

Bates, Mr R

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (9.43 am): My question is to the Minister for Health. When did the health minister first find out about the treatment and death of Russell Bates at Logan Hospital?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. This matter was brought to my attention yesterday. I understand that Mr Bates's family had written to me about 2½ weeks ago and, of course, as members would appreciate, Queensland Health works with the health and hospital service to prepare a response. It had not yet come back to me for signing off, but I was made aware of the matter yesterday.

My heart goes out to Mr Bates's family. It is a difficult time and I am really saddened to hear that the care provided to their elderly father at Logan Hospital did not meet their expectations. My office has been in contact with Mr Bates's family. As of yesterday, I have offered to meet with them and discuss any concerns about their elderly father's care.

I can advise the House that a full clinical review is underway as well as a root cause analysis, and senior clinicians at Logan Hospital are meeting regularly with the family. I am advised that Logan Hospital will remain in contact to provide ongoing support through the open disclosure process. I am also advised that this matter is being investigated by the coroner. I am also advised that the family have now commenced legal proceedings so, unfortunately, there is not much more I can say at this point.

Bates, Mr R

Mr CRISAFULLI: I have a further question to the Minister for Health. On 27 February, the minister told the media that if any family wanted to talk about their experience with Queensland Health then her door was always open. Can the minister explain why she did not respond to the family of Russell Bates about his death at Logan Hospital after they reached out to her the next day following those comments?

Ms FENTIMAN: Again, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. They did write to me 2½ weeks ago. As soon as I found out about the issue I immediately arranged to meet with them. I understand I am meeting with them in the next two weeks. As members can appreciate, when correspondence comes in to my office the department works—

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I am sorry, Minister. Leader of the Opposition, you asked the question. I want to hear the answer. The minister is being responsive as I hear her answer.

Ms FENTIMAN: So that I can prepare a response, the department works with senior clinicians at the hospital to collate that information. It then comes back to me and we then organise to meet with families. Again I say that if patients do want to meet with me then I want to hear about their experiences, just like when I travel around every part of Queensland meeting with clinicians and patients. It helps me to do my job as the health minister if I can understand the concerns raised by patients.

This is a really sad case. I am always happy to meet with families. As soon as it came to my attention personally I, of course, immediately ensured that my office was in contact with the family. I do want to say that, as I travel right across Queensland, I can see the benefits of the work we have been doing in listening to our frontline staff and listening to patients to make improvements. I am really proud that, despite the fact that our hospitals are under immense pressure, the investment that we are making means that Queensland has some of the best ambulance response times and some of the best seen in the clinically recommended time frames in the nation. I think every Queensland—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

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

Ms FENTIMAN: As we have seen in recent days, the Leader of the Opposition might become the premier as early as October. What are his plans for our health system? Simply saying slogans like 'We're going to put doctors and nurses back in charge' does not cut it. I travel around the hospitals in Queensland. Guess who is running the hospitals? The doctors and the nurses! This Labor government will always back our frontline staff because this Leader of the Opposition is too shifty to tell Queenslanders what his plans are. We can only judge them on their actions.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I am sure you understand what my point of order is about to be in relation to parliamentary language.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Clayfield. You are faster than me on the jump today. Member, can you please withdraw that unparliamentary language?

Ms FENTIMAN: I withdraw. Perhaps I should have said that he is too short on detail to tell Queenslanders what his plans are. We will have to judge the Leader of the Opposition on his actions and that was cutting frontline staff, cutting services and gutting our health system.

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Buderim, I have already given you some caution. You are not using members' correct titles. You are interjecting when there is no-one else interjecting. You are warned under the standing orders.

Miles Labor Government

Mr WHITING: My question is of the Premier. Can the Premier please outline how the Miles Labor government is listening to and delivering for Queenslanders, including in my community of Bancroft, and is the Premier aware of any risky alternatives?

Mr MILES: I thank the member for Bancroft for his question. I know that he has heard from the residents he represents in Bancroft that they want our government to focus every cent and dollar we can on taking care of them. That was particularly clear to me when the member for Bancroft and I visited people living in tents in a park in Rothwell. Once you have listened to people going through experiences like that, you know that you need to make the tough decisions to take care of them. That is why yesterday I rejected the proposal to build a new \$3.4 billion stadium. That was a tough decision, but I was determined to put cost-of-living relief ahead of a new stadium. It may not have been an easy decision, but it was the right decision.

While yesterday we were busy listening to Queenslanders and making tough decisions, the Leader of the Opposition was busy squibbing it. The self-declared premier-elect could not even come up with a position. I have news for Leader of the Opposition: if you want this job, you had better put your big boy pants on and learn how to make a decision, because you cannot do this job with just slick slogans. You cannot do this job with just carefully crafted sound grabs. You cannot do this job with leaflets full of glamour shots of yourself and no plans or no real solutions. You cannot do this job hiding behind the member for Kawana—although you are the only one in this place who could actually hide behind the member for Kawana.

Queensland and Queenslanders need a strong leader who is able to make decisions, who is able to listen to them. The Leader of the Opposition says himself that he is not a strong man. Yesterday he proved that that is the case. He is too weak to lead, too weak to even take a position and so weak that he suggests outsourcing that decision to an independent authority that would support building the \$3.4 billion stadium. Queensland needs someone stronger than that.

Bates, Mr R

Ms BATES: My question is to the health minister. Russell Bates's son says that the minister's office called at 3.30 pm yesterday. Just 45 minutes later, the minister sent a media statement claiming she has been in contact with the grieving family, despite her office knowing about the shocking case since 28 February. Despite being contacted by the family three weeks ago, why did the minister only contact Russell Bates's family 45 minutes before sending a media release yesterday?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for Mudgeeraba for the question. I have answered this question. As soon as this matter came to my attention, I asked my adviser to contact the family to offer to meet with the family. I understand that the family are happy to meet in the coming weeks. Again, I want to pass on my sympathies and condolences to the family. The family did write to my office, as I said, 2½ weeks ago. The health department was working with the HHS to prepare a response. It came to my attention. I immediately asked my adviser to make sure I could meet with the family in the coming weeks.

Cost of Living

Mr SMITH: My question is of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Can the Deputy Premier please outline how the Miles Labor government is delivering record cost-of-living relief, and is the Deputy Premier aware of the risk of any alternative approaches?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question. The member for Bundaberg knows the strong position we have taken to support Queensland families feeling national cost-of-living pressures. I am very pleased to say that in the electorate of Bundaberg householders are receiving \$11.8 million from our \$550 electricity rebate. On top of that, more than 6,000 households in the electorate of Bundaberg are eligible for another \$372, taking their total rebate to \$1,072—6,000 households benefiting from the strongest and most effective cost-of-living relief package in the country. The member for Bundaberg knows how we are delivering those cost-of-living relief measures through things like progressive coal royalties that only the Labor government will support. We know that the Leader of the Opposition will cut those progressive coal royalties and give \$9 billion back to the coal lobby. That is his position. We are delivering those cost-of-living relief measures with the help of GST.

Last week the New South Wales Premier was trying to change the GST distribution formula. I am advised that the reforms promoted by the New South Wales government would have cost Queensland \$10 billion over the past nine years, with millions and billions more at risk in the future. Who was backing the Premier of New South Wales? Who was out there applauding that sort of cut to Queensland? Of course, it was the Leader of the Opposition, who was on *Sky News* saying, 'What Chris Minns is doing is what a state premier should be doing'.

This just demonstrates again that the Leader of the Opposition is a complete economic illiterate and a complete economic vandal. Can members imagine that sort of formula resulting in billions of dollars being cut from Queensland? The weekend shows that David Crisafulli could become the Premier of Queensland. With that disastrous approach to GST, that means Queensland is at risk from even more LNP cuts. We know that is the plan. I am angry at the economic illiteracy and incompetence but also the craven desire to cut—to cut deep, to cut hard and to cut hurtfully on Queenslanders—because that is what Queenslanders get when they vote for the LNP. I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition demonstrating his economic illiteracy and his incompetence but, most importantly, I look forward to him releasing his plans for cuts.

Logan Hospital

Ms CAMM: My question is to the health minister. When the LNP raised questions about Mackay Hospital the Labor government said that we were scaremongering, but a major review found otherwise. When the LNP raised questions about Caboolture Hospital the Labor government said that we were making up stories, but a major review found otherwise. Will the health minister launch a top-level part 9 investigation into systemic issues at Logan Hospital, as requested by the Bates family?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. As I have said, there is a clinical review underway.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members to my left, the minister is barely 10 seconds into a response and already there are questions around whether she is being relevant.

Ms FENTIMAN: A full clinical review is underway as well as a root cause analysis. The matter is before the coroner. If anything comes out of that clinical review or the root cause analysis that would identify that there are systemic issues, of course we will investigate. I understand that the family are with us today and I again want to pass on my sympathies for their loss. Whilst they are at parliament today I am very happy to meet with them and hear their concerns firsthand. I also want to put on the record that between stages 1 and 2 of the investment we are making at Logan Hospital we are putting in a billion dollars for hundreds more beds and hundreds more frontline staff. Anyone who drives on Loganlea Road past that hospital cannot fail to notice—

Mr POWELL: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118(b). The question specifically asked if a top-level part 9 investigation into systemic issues at Logan Hospital would be enacted, as requested by the Bates family.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member. I heard the question. I am aware of the question. I am allowing the minister to answer the question.

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Anyone who has driven on Loganlea Road in the past year cannot fail to notice the huge expansion at the Logan Hospital. We know that it is one of the busiest hospitals. We also know that Logan is one of the fastest growing communities. That is why we are investing in the infrastructure, the beds and the staff that the Logan community needs.

Worker Protection

Mr KELLY: My question is of the Minister for Industrial Relations. Can the minister outline how the Miles government is supporting Queensland workers, and is the minister aware of any risky alternative approaches?

Ms GRACE: As a nurse and someone who has represented workers, the member for Greenslopes knows just how important workers' rights are and what can happen when those rights are not protected. He knows that good governments enshrine those rights in law and never rest on their laurels. One of the best things we can do for workers in this state is to give them a job. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in Australia. That is because of the economy and how well it is going in Queensland thanks to our Big Build, jobs in the regions and the many things that we are putting in place. From an industrial relations point of view, we have a very proud record: the nation's first paid domestic and family violence leave; the first state to introduce industrial manslaughter; nation-leading labour hire laws; the first state to wage theft laws; portable long service leave for the community services sector, mainly women; industrial protections against harassment at work; improved parental leave; pay equity for public servants—just to mention a few.

While this side of the House supported every one of those changes, we cannot say the same for those opposite. The big risk is that, should they ever get elected to this side of the House, we know what the Leader of the Opposition will do. He will set the member for Kawana loose and he will do exactly what he did last time. He sacked 14,000 public servants when they were told they had nothing to fear. For years Labour Day was held in May in this state. In an unbelievably petty act last time, they moved that date to another date. Do you know what we did on this side of the House, Mr Speaker? We reinstated it where it rightly belonged. They stripped away common law rights and health and safety protections. They removed the rights and entitlements for injured workers and they used industrial relations as a political football. Can you believe that they even introduced laws that were unconstitutional? They had to come running into this House at midnight—no wonder they want to sit late—to change the laws because they had brought in unconstitutional rights.

Let me warn the workers of this state, the mighty workers of this state—our frontline services: the ones they sack; the ones we have reinstated—that they and the laws we have introduced to protect them are all at risk because the member for Kawana will be set loose by the Leader of the Opposition and every one of those will be removed. On this side of the House we will fight every day for workers in this state and we will protect their rights. We are very proud of our record.

Health System

Dr ROWAN: My question is to the Minister for Health. Media reports have exposed multiple systemic failures that may have contributed to the death of Queensland grandfather Russell Bates. Given the coroner's report will reportedly take up to two years to finalise, will the health minister let the sunshine in on the health system and launch a top-level part 9 investigation?

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The question refers to multiple system failures. I ask the member to demonstrate that he can authenticate the existence of those.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members to my left. I will wait for silence, members. I will allow the question but I will give the minister latitude in terms of her response. That is a very difficult scenario to have to authenticate given that it is probably a policy driven issue.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members to my right.

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. As previously advised, there is a full clinical review underway as well as a root cause analysis. Let's wait and see what the results of those reviews and root cause analysis come back with. If there is evidence of systemic failures, I can give a commitment to the House that I will absolutely order a part 9 investigation.

Health System

Mr HUNT: My question is of the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women. Can the minister inform the House how the Miles Labor government is delivering greater access to free health care, and is the minister aware of the risk of any alternative approaches?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for his question because, as a tireless advocate for additional free healthcare services in his beautiful community on the Sunshine Coast, I know that he is particularly concerned about the risk of alternative approaches, particularly when we look at the record and the actions of those opposite. Our government, the Miles government, is delivering free high-quality health care closer to home, particularly in some of our busiest suburbs. Our satellite hospitals have now seen over 50,000 patients, diverting people away from our very busy emergency departments, offering free high-quality health care closer to home. We do not just talk about health. We act, we invest and we support our frontline staff.

We know the Leader of the Opposition has been too short on detail to tell us what his plans are for health. He has been too weak to actually release a policy to date on health. We know he has his slick political slogans, but is that enough? We know that he is too weak. Yesterday he would not even front up for the cameras to answer questions about the Olympics. He sent his deputy, who went on and on and on. I do not actually remember what he had to say.

I want to talk about his slogans. He lists them off like the well-oiled politician that he is. When it comes to real solutions and policies, I heard nothing. He says he wants 'more resources'. I am pleased to let everyone know when it comes to more resources we have delivered the largest investment in Queensland Health's history, restoring the resources that those opposite cut. We have recently announced more nurses including dedicated triage nurses in our busy emergency departments, but his slogan is 'better triaging'. I am not sure exactly what he would do.

He says he wants 'more data'. We have released more data than ever before. This next one really gets me: 'putting doctors and nurses back in charge'. I thought it would be interesting to let you know, Mr Speaker, that Queensland Health's Improvement Exchange website actually lists projects that doctors and nurses come up with that are making a difference. Currently on that website—and I encourage the Leader of the Opposition to check it out—there are 489 projects led by doctors and nurses making improvements in our hospitals. That sounds like doctors and nurses are in charge to me. It is absolutely imperative that Queenslanders know what their plans are, otherwise clearly we know there are going to be cuts, cuts, cuts.

Olympic and Paralympic Games, Infrastructure

Mr MANDER: My question is to the Premier. Last year the Premier blamed bad advice as the reason for the Olympic infrastructure review. Did the recent advice to upgrade Suncorp Stadium and QSAC come from the same people who gave you the initial advice to knock down and rebuild the Gabba?

Speaker's Ruling, Question Out of Order

Mr SPEAKER: Member, you have decided to direct that question directly at a member instead of through the chair. I am ruling it out of order.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members. Members, it is important to ensure that people are not directing comments at any particular member. There is a reason and function for the chair.

Electricity Prices

Ms KING: My question is of the Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs. Can the minister update the House on what the Miles Labor government is doing to combat energy prices, and is the minister aware of any other risky alternatives for Queenslanders?

Mr de BRENNI: I thank the member for Pumicestone for her question. Like all members on this side of the House, the member for Pumicestone is always listening to her constituents. That is why she is delivering for her constituents. From places like Beachmere to Bellara, she is delivering nation-leading cost-of-living rebates to every single household. Here is something important about those nation-leading cost-of-living rebates: they are funded. Our nation-leading cost-of-living rebates are fair for all Queenslanders. Our nation-leading cost-of-living rebates are transparent, they are deflationary and they are delivered.

The member asked about alternatives. It has been over 3,330 days since Queenslanders kicked that lot out of office for misleading them, and it has taken them that long to come up with just one single energy policy, after 3,000 days. All they have managed to do is re-release and reannounce a solar for rentals trial that was trialled here in 2020. When the Leader of the Opposition announced this policy, he was not up-front with Queenslanders. Did he tell the 225,000 apartment dwellers that they are not included? Almost a quarter of a million people were not included in his announcement. That small detail was left out of his announcement. Did he tell people that it would push up their rent? No, he overlooked that minor detail. Did he tell the landlords of Queensland that they would be out of pocket as well? No, he skipped that fact. Did he say where he would find the workforce to do this work? No. Did he say how much it would cost? No, he did not want to let on just how big his budget black hole is getting. Did he once say how he would pay for this? No. He hid that, just like yesterday afternoon he hid from questions about the Olympics.

Our cost-of-living rebates are out there for all Queenslanders. They are funded. You do not have to wait years and years for relief like you would under the opposition. The fact is that the Leader of the Opposition is not being, and will not be, up-front with Queenslanders. The fact is that he does not tell the truth. The truth is that he will say and do anything because he thinks no-one will call him out on it. The Leader of the Opposition is tricky. His policies are dodgy and they are shifty. He has had over 3,300 days. It is time—

Mr POWELL: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, you have previously ruled on that unparliamentary language. I ask that the member withdraw that language.

Mr SPEAKER: I apologise to the House that I did not hear the language. Member, if you have used unparliamentary language I would ask you to withdraw it.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Speaker, I said the policies were dodgy and shifty.

Mr SPEAKER: No, member, it is not an opportunity to use them again.

Mr de BRENNI: Sorry, Mr Speaker. I was just clarifying. I withdraw. The Leader of the Opposition must come clean with Queenslanders.

Mr Brown interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Capalaba, that was unhelpful. You are warned under the standing orders.

Olympic and Paralympic Games, Infrastructure

Mr BLEIJIE: My question is to the Premier. On Friday Annastacia Palaszczuk was seen dining with John Coates along with a Labor Party powerbroker. Yesterday the Premier announced John Coates' preferred option for Olympic stadiums. Is Annastacia Palaszczuk still running the Labor government?

Mr MILES: I thank the member for Kawana for his question.

Ms Fentiman: He is running the opposition.

Mr MILES: He is, obviously. I can advise the House that I am unaware of the former premier's lunch plans on Friday or any other day. I do welcome his ongoing obsession with her. I do not know what she had for lunch. I do not know what she is having for lunch today either.

I can assure the House that every single day I will put Queenslanders first. If that means saying no to the \$3.4 billion new stadium then I will say no to that stadium, because that is what strong leadership looks like. It does not look like squibbing it. It does not look like not having a position, as those opposite have said will be their position.

I will stand by and support the proposal that—you are right—was in the submission John Coates made to the inquiry. That is not a secret; he also gave it to the *Courier-Mail*. It was on the front page of the *Courier-Mail*. That is because, speaking as a representative of the IOC, he could be clear about what the requirements for an Olympic and Paralympic Games would be. He wanted to be clear that we did not need a new \$3.4 billion stadium and that we could deliver the games with our existing stadiums. He might have said that at lunch on Friday; I am not sure. He certainly said that in his submission to the inquiry. He has said that publicly. Given that position, I took the decision that it was better to take the additional funding the Quirk review would have had come out of our budget and use it to deliver cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders.

Mr POWELL: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118(b). The question was: is Anastacia Palaszczuk still running the Labor government?

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr Sullivan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, member for McConnel! Member for Stafford, you are warned under the standing orders. Manager of Opposition Business, I am sorry, but I do not see that point of order is relevant. I call the Premier.

Mr Lister interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Southern Downs, you are warned under the standing orders. Premier, you have five seconds.

Mr MILES: For the benefit of the member for Stafford, I suspect she had the fish.

Coal Industry, Royalties

Mrs GILBERT: My question is of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Can the Deputy Premier outline how the revenue raised through progressive coal royalties is delivering for Queenslanders—

Mr O'Connor interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Bonney, I have asked for silence during questions. You are warned under the standing orders. I will make it very clear to the House that standards have not changed since the weekend. Member for Mackay, you can begin your question again.

Mrs GILBERT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Can the Deputy Premier outline how the revenue raised through progressive coal royalties is delivering for Queenslanders, including in my community of Mackay, and is the Deputy Premier aware of the risk of any alternative approaches?

Mr DICK: What a great champion of the resources industry in Queensland the member for Mackay is. She has always supported and championed that industry. She is a great champion of the industry.

We have all seen the ads from the LNP politician Ian MacFarlane when he was CEO of the QRC, dropping \$40 million in advertisements against our progressive coal royalties. We have seen them all on TV. There is one part of those ads I agree with, and that is that our progressive coal royalties are the golden egg of the Queensland budget, delivering for people in Mackay and all around Queensland. In Mackay alone, 23,334 households are benefiting and receiving at least \$550 off their power bills. Those rebates are helping to deliver the cheapest power on the east coast of Australia for those on the national grid. It is delivering for those workers who mine the steelmaking coal we need to build the towers for wind turbines and transmission lines for the entire renewable energy story—not to mention

free kindly for those families in Mackay. We have allocated \$520 million for our low-emissions investment program, which will go into the Bowen Basin to help support decarbonisation. That money is going back into the member for Mackay's region to support jobs and economic development.

The results at the weekend show that progressive coal royalties and everything those royalties deliver will be at risk under the LNP. The Leader of the Opposition could become the premier. That is the reality, and that means that progressive coal royalties are on the chopping block. We know that is the policy. We know that the Leader of the Opposition went down the mine in the Bowen Basin with Ian Macfarlane. What was the deal they agreed to? When will they be cut and what will be the consequences for Queensland? He will not say. He is too weak to say whether he will fund a \$3.4 billion stadium at Victoria Park. It is a simple proposition—yes or no—but no-one in the opposition could say that word 'yes' or 'no' tomorrow.

We know the Leader of the Opposition will not talk about his agenda because what is his agenda all about? It is about cuts. That is the risk that Queenslanders face now in the election. You cannot shred the revenue base, you cannot say you are going to cut debt, you cannot load up more expenditure, like solar for renters, without creating a massive budget black hole. It is the same as we saw under Campbell Newman. They create these budget black holes and then they have to fill them by sacking workers, by cutting infrastructure and by denying Queenslanders the services they deserve. I can assure you, Speaker: we will fight every day between now and 26 October to stop those cuts.

Hinchinbrook Electorate, Road Infrastructure

Mr DAMETTO: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. The Woolcock Street redevelopment project—which takes in the intersection of Ingham Road, Shaw Road, North Shore Boulevard, Deeragun Road and Garland Road—is well overdue. Will the minister confirm the status of the options analysis and confirm if funding has been budgeted to undertake a business case to progress this necessary road infrastructure project?

Mr MELLISH: I thank the member for the question. I am not aware of this one off the top of my head. We have over 1,000 projects in our \$32 billion QTRIP across the state. I would be pleased to have a chat to the member about this project. The member is also welcome to put this on notice, and I am very happy to come back to the member about this particular project.

Emerging Industries

Mr WALKER: My question is of the Minister for State Development and Infrastructure. Can the minister outline how the Miles Labor government is supporting emerging Queensland industries, including in the Townsville community, and is the minister aware of any risky alternatives?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for Mundingburra for his question. When we came to government, the unemployment rate in Townsville was 13 per cent after Clive Palmer shut the nickel refinery and left those workers begging for a job. We put in place a rapid response, we got them jobs and we are very proud on this side of the House that the unemployment rate in Townsville at the moment is 3.4 per cent. That does not just happen. That happens because we have coal royalties that we are spending in the regions. Those regions are benefiting with projects like: CopperString in Townsville; the Townsville University Hospital new clinical services building, with \$530 million and 143 extra beds; the Bruce Highway upgrades; amazing school infrastructure, with halls and classrooms; and, dare I mention, Riverway Drive.

Employment levels in Townsville and the surrounding area have been very strong. The Miles government additionally is supporting the new industries of the future, and nothing is more exciting than what has been done under the current Premier with the unveiling last week of a massive investment on sustainable aviation fuel. In Townsville they have the feedstock to be able to produce this. We have partners now with Qantas, Airbus and Idemitsu from Japan. They have raised \$29 million to advance this potential \$14 billion to \$23 billion industry by 2030. That is what strong leaders do. Strong leaders make decisions. Strong leaders back the industries of the future. Strong leaders back where we are going with the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

We will always back good investment under a funding envelope with that discipline. We will bring in an independent authority but we will not be weak and we will not make a decision on something as important for this state as the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This is a time for us to be on that world stage, and I know that we will deliver the legacy not only in venues for this state but also in the transport networks that are required to deliver a world-class system.

Then we have those opposite. I have never heard someone stand up and say absolutely nothing for about 10 minutes, and obviously hiding behind the member for Kawana was the Leader of the Opposition. If you read the transcript, it is absolutely nothing but dribble. Not one amount of substance was in that response. I invite the member for Kawana—and I will write to him formally today—to come and be briefed. I will give him all the information he needs, all the information on the industries of the future, because we know every single one of them is at risk because of the black hole in their funding.

Olympic and Paralympic Games, Infrastructure

Mr McDONALD: My question is to the Premier. Last year the Premier blamed bad advice as the reason for an Olympic infrastructure review. Did the advice to upgrade Suncorp Stadium and QSAC come from the same people who gave the Premier the initial advice to knock down and rebuild the Gabba?

Ms McMILLAN: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 236. I ask you to deliver your feelings around that.

Mr SPEAKER: Where do I start? Member, I believe I understand where you are headed with that. Given that a previous question was ruled out of order which was of a very similar nature, I am going to allow the question because they got it right.

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Everton.

Mr MILES: I thank the member for Lockyer for his question. As I alluded to in one of my earlier answers, the advice that QSAC was suitable for the Olympic athletics came from the submission from John Coates, the vice-president of the International Olympic Committee. The proposal that Suncorp Stadium was suitable for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics and Paralympics also came from the International Olympic Committee. They identified Suncorp as a suitable venue for those ceremonies. Therefore, we took that advice and worked that submission up into the decision that we made yesterday.

Yesterday we had the choice, which is the same choice that those opposite would need to make. We had the choice between using existing venues to deliver a better value Olympic and Paralympic Games or spending hundreds of millions of dollars, nearly a billion dollars, more. There are no other options so those opposite need to choose one of those two. The question for them is which would they choose. I have been very clear about which choice Labor will make. I have been very clear that we will choose Queenslanders over a new stadium, that we will choose supporting them over building billions of dollars in new stadium, that we will put every cent we can into delivering for them rather than committing nearly a billion dollars more just to deliver a stadium that the IOC in their submission said we did not need. They said we did not need it.

The member asks where I got that advice from. I got it from the IOC. Who knows a bit about Olympic and Paralympic venues? Who has put on a few Olympic and Paralympic Games? Well, the IOC have. When those opposite turn their minds to whether they will choose one of the two options, they should look to what the IOC have said would be suitable and appropriate to deliver the games, just as we did, or do they want to put a billion dollars into a new stadium?

Housing

Mr CRAWFORD: My question is of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works. Can the minister outline how the Miles Labor government is working to deliver more access to affordable homes, and is the minister aware of the risks of any alternative approaches?

Ms SCANLON: I thank the member for Barron River for the question. We were recently in Cairns, where we had the opportunity of meeting Janice, whose public housing home was impacted by Tropical Cyclone Jasper. She was very happy to be back in her home. She now has a new kitchen and bathrooms in just six weeks because of the incredible work that our QBuild teams do. We also had the opportunity to open the new factory in Cairns that will deliver more modular houses, both for government employees and for public housing here in Queensland.

This is all part of the government's plan, which is backed by action and funding. It is a plan that we are very proud of—our Homes for Queenslanders plan, the most ambitious and comprehensive of its kind in the country. In fact, it was even ripped off by the Northern Territory Property Council, which is now lobbying the Northern Territory government for a 'homes for Territorians plan'. It is a plan that will have a meaningful shift in terms of the dial on housing here in our state. All of that work would be

at risk if an LNP government were elected here in Queensland. We know that they have already suggested it is too much—too much funding for homelessness services, too much money for infrastructure, too much money for renters and support for renters, and too much for public and community housing. There is a very real risk that David Crisafulli will become the premier of Queensland—

Mr SPEAKER: Member, I ask you to please use members' correct titles in the House.

Ms SCANLON: I am sorry, Mr Speaker. There is very real risk that the Leader of the Opposition will become the premier of this state. You need only ask those opposite, who already think it is a done deal. That means there is a very real risk of cuts here in Queensland. We know that because they did it last time.

The fact is that they are not telling Queenslanders what their plan is on housing because we know that they will do exactly the same thing as they did last time. You only need to look at the person they appointed to be their housing spokesperson. The Leader of the Opposition made a conscious decision to appoint a man who not only sent social housing backwards by 428 homes but also sacked 1,600 QBuild jobs—the people who build and maintain houses in this state. He gutted funding from rental services that assist some of the most vulnerable people in Queensland—the young people in Queensland—to get the advice they need. Their only plan was to sell and privatise public housing. That was their only plan. That is the bloke the Leader of the Opposition thinks should be in charge of housing in Queensland once again. They are not up for the job, and it is a real risk at the next election.

Electoral Laws

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier initiate an immediate review into electoral laws to prevent third-party groups like the Australian Workers' Union, pretending to be the Legalise Cannabis Party, handing out misleading how-to-vote cards directing preferences to Labor, and when did the Premier first know about this tactic?

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Maroochydore, I believe that the question pertains to party political matters and not to the portfolio responsibilities of the Premier, so I am going to rule that out of order.

Ms SIMPSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The question is with regard to electoral laws.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Maroochydore, you are correct: you have spoken about electoral laws, but the balance of the question I do not believe is in order. I ask you to rephrase the question.

Ms SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Premier initiate an immediate review into electoral laws to prevent third-party groups handing out misleading how-to-vote cards?

Mr MILES: I thank the member for Maroochydore for her question. What I can advise the House is that on this side of the House we respect the rights of unions to speak up for their members. We respect the rights of unions to campaign on issues of concern to their members. Through the imputations of the member for Maroochydore, we can only infer that those opposite do not agree. Every chance they get, those opposite attack unions, take away their rights, attack workers and sack workers, while we on this side of the House support the rights of workers to have a say and the rights of their unions to do so. We also respect that there are other third parties that are entitled to be registered and to campaign in elections. That is entirely legal and appropriate, and we will defend their rights.

Who could forget that those opposite took away the rights of third parties to object to environmental approvals? They took away the rights of landholders, environment groups and members of the community to object to environmental approvals. We gave third parties back those rights and we embedded in our electoral laws the rights for third parties in a free society to speak with the community on issues that concern them. We will not be taking away those rights. We do not gag NGOs. We do not put into contracts as a condition of their funding that they are not allowed to speak out about the government, as those opposite did. As to the other part of the member's question, I first heard about those things on Sunday when asked by the media.

Women

Ms RICHARDS: My question is of the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women. Can the minister outline the importance of governing for women and the risk of any alternative approaches?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for Redlands for her question. What a champion she is for women in her community and them finding economic security. If Queensland women have economic security, our entire state benefits. That is why on this side of the House we are very proud to deliver the Queensland Women's Strategy that has real actions: \$16 million for women's economic security; \$645 million for free kindy; a billion dollars for our Women and Girls' Health Strategy; and over \$1.2 billion to end domestic and family violence.

We have helped over 28,000 women gain employment through Skilling Queenslanders for Work, a program that those opposite cannot stand, that they cut and will probably cut again. Over 30,000 women have commenced free TAFE. Of course, we know that those on the other side of the House wanted to close TAFEs. Almost 10,000 women have been employed under our Back to Work program. We have helped 500 women gain the confidence to rejoin the workforce through our Jobs Academy. That is what real women's policy action and resources look like.

It has been almost three years since the Leader of the Opposition appointed an opposition spokesperson for women's economic security. What have we heard in three years? I was very surprised to see finally, a week ago, a policy from the opposition, and it was about women. I think they were so scared because they voted to decrease access for women's health care last time we were here in parliament. They thought, 'Oh, we'd better find a policy for women.' Unfortunately for Queensland women, the new policy does not add up, because if the Leader of the Opposition thinks \$5 million a year is enough to support tens of thousands of women to return to work after having a child, I think he needs a maths lesson. There are over 60,000 babies born in Queensland every year. Of those new mothers, according to the ABS, about half are expected to go back to work after taking some time off. The LNP's new shiny policy will mean that those women get \$1.50 a week. The press release says that they will be able to get a new laptop. I do not know a laptop you can buy with \$1.50 a week; you cannot even buy a coffee with \$1.50 a week. I am not sure how the Leader of the Opposition thinks they are going to support women. I think we have realised why they do not release policies: they have none.

Electricity Prices

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question is to the Premier. The Australian Energy Market Operator has just released a report stating that Queensland households are set to be slugged with higher power bills while the rest of the country will see a decrease. Why will the power bills of—

Mr Walker interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Mundingburra is warned under the standing orders. Members, it is important to have questions heard in silence. Member for Nanango, please state your question again.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is to the Premier. The Australian Energy Market Operator has just released a report stating that Queensland households are set to be slugged with higher power bills while the rest of the country will see a decrease. Why, under this Premier's watch, will power bills in Queensland go up while they are going down across the rest of the country?

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is referring to the specifics of a report and I ask that she point to and authenticate the specific reference that she is making. I have read that report and I do not think it accords with what she is saying. I would seek she confirms that she is able to authenticate the facts she is relying on.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Speaker, I am more than happy to authenticate my statement. The minister might like to re-read it.

Mr SPEAKER: In this particular instance, the member is making a direct reference to a document. I am satisfied that the document itself is the reference point. It may be a difference of opinion, but I invite the Premier to provide your response.

Mr MILES: I thank the member for Nanango for her question. She knows a bit about increasing power prices. She defended the closure of generators because power prices were too low. The member for Nanango actually said to Queenslanders that power prices 'have got too low, so we are going to turn off some generators and make sure we put the prices up'. It was about the only successful thing she did. They were very successful. They drove up power prices by 43 per cent.

I welcome the contribution of the member for Nanango because she does know a bit about how to drive energy prices up. I can advise the House that the draft determination by the Australian Energy Regulator on the default market offer power price in South-East Queensland ranks Queensland as

having the lowest bills on average for households and small businesses. That means that Queenslanders have the lowest bills even before we apply our rebates. Even before they each receive at least \$550—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Premier is referring to a different report. I asked the Premier to refer to the Australian Energy Market Operator's report that has just been released.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It would facilitate an accurate response from the Premier, or myself, if the member for Nanango could perhaps provide the title of the report. There has not been a report from the Australian Energy Market Operator in the last 40 minutes.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the House.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Pine Rivers is warned under the standing orders. Member for Nanango, you need to provide a particular reference if you are going to validate your point of order. Other than that, I will allow the Premier to continue to respond.

Mr MILES: As I was saying, Queensland has the lowest power prices even before we apply our rebates, which see every household receiving \$550 and some households receiving as much as \$1,070. That is why the Australian Bureau of Statistics ranks Brisbane as having the lowest power prices on the east coast. We have said that we will continue to provide that kind of cost-of-living relief. Even more in our next budget will be dedicated to supporting households because we have heard from them that that is the No. 1 thing they want us to do—they want that to be our priority. When the member for Nanango had the reins she closed power plants to put price—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Premier, please resume your seat.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I would ask that the Premier return to the report, *Default market offer prices 2024-25 draft determination*, released today.


Mr SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, I have already ruled on this point. I will not do it again. Be very careful about making frivolous points of order because you have made your point. I have heard it, and I have ruled.

Mr MILES: The reason we can keep our power prices so low here in Queensland is because we hold those assets in public hands—because we own them. Those opposite hate that we own them, but we do, and that is why we are able to deliver cheaper power prices.

Mr SPEAKER: The period for question time has expired.

MOTION

Business Program

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.46 am): In accordance with sessional order 4, I move—

1. That the following business will be considered this sitting week, with the nominated maximum times as specified:
 - (a) the Forensic Science Queensland Bill, a maximum of 2½ hours;
 - (b) the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill, a maximum of 3½ hours;
 - (c) the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, a maximum of 2 hours;
 - (d) the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, a maximum of 4 hours; and
 - (e) the general business notice of motion, Dissent from Speaker's Ruling, standing in the name of the member for Kawana, shall be brought on for debate after the completion of the private members' motion on Wednesday, a maximum of 40 minutes.
2. The following time limits for the bills listed in 1. apply:
 - (a) the minister to be called on in reply:
 - (i) for the Forensic Science Queensland Bill, 20 minutes before the expiry of the maximum hours for that bill.
 - (ii) for the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill, 20 minutes before the expiry of the maximum hours for that bill.
 - (iii) for the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, 20 minutes before the expiry of the maximum hours for that bill.

- (iv) for the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, 20 minutes before the expiry of the maximum hours for that bill.
3. If all stages of the bills listed in 1. and 2. have not been completed by the specified times, or by 5.40 pm on Thursday, 21 March 2024, Mr Speaker:
- shall call on a minister to table any explanatory notes to their circulated amendments, any statement of compatibility with human rights or any statement relating to an override declaration
 - shall put all remaining questions necessary to either pass that stage or pass the bill without further debate
 - may interrupt non-specified business or debate on a bill or motion to complete the requirements of the motion
 - will complete all stages required by this motion notwithstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders.

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

AYES, 45:

ALP, 45—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Crawford, D’Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Kelly, A. King, S. King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Martin, McCallum, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Mullen, O’Rourke, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Saunders, Scanlon, Skelton, Smith, Stewart, Sullivan, Walker, Whiting.

NOES, 35:

LNP, 30—Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Gerber, Hart, Head, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, O’Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Watts, Weir.

Grn, 1—Berkman.

KAP, 2—Dametto, Knuth.

PHON, 1—Andrew.

Ind, 1—Bolton.

Pairs: Furner, Nicholls; Pease, Molhoek; Ryan, Stevens; Tantari, Crandon.


Resolved in the affirmative.

FORENSIC SCIENCE QUEENSLAND BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 7 March (see p. 611), on motion of Ms Fentiman—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (10.53 am): I rise to speak to the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. The Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee, in its report No. 2 to the 57th Parliament, tabled in the Assembly on 19 February 2024, has recommended to the Assembly that the bill be passed. The purpose of the bill is to ensure high-quality, reliable, independent and impartial forensic services for the administration of criminal justice in Queensland by establishing: an independent statutory position of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland; a government office called the Office of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland, to be referred as Forensic Science Queensland, to help the director perform the director’s functions; and the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council to monitor and review the policies and procedures of Forensic Science Queensland that relate to the administration of criminal justice and to give advice or to make recommendations about those policies and procedures to the Attorney-General and the director. The bill proposes that the advisory council comprise up to 11 members including representatives from Queensland police, prosecution, defence, victim support, independent forensic science and the private legal profession.

On 9 February 2013, Shandee Blackburn was tragically murdered on her way home from work. I want to acknowledge the ongoing advocacy of her mother, Vicki, who, through her courage and commitment to justice for Shandee along with others, including Dr Kirsty Wright, helped uncover some of the issues at the Queensland forensic laboratory.

Our committee report presents a summary of the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee’s examination of the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. During our inquiry the committee heard how deficiencies in Queensland’s current forensic services system resulted in perpetrators perhaps escaping justice. In addition to the ongoing trauma inflicted on victim-survivors, these deficiencies have damaged confidence in forensic DNA testing in Queensland and in our criminal justice system as a whole. If victim-survivors cannot be assured that forensic evidence will be processed

in a professional and efficient manner, they may be less inclined to report their assault to authorities or subject themselves to intrusive and potentially retraumatising evidence collection procedures. The bill will help ensure these events never occur again. Victim-survivors should not be confronted with this trauma.

The bill implements recommendation 121 of the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland, released on 13 December 2022. The commission of inquiry commenced in June 2022 to inquire into the way in which DNA collection and testing for criminal cases was done in Queensland. The report made 123 recommendations to address deficiencies identified by the commission in the methods, systems and processes used in the collection, testing and analysis of DNA samples in Queensland by the forensic DNA laboratory. All of the report's recommendations have been accepted by the Queensland government. Recommendation 121 of the report provided for the creation of a forensic science institute for Queensland with a statutory framework similar to that of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Queensland Health noted—

If the Bill is passed, Queensland will be the first jurisdiction in Australia that establishes, promotes and protects key elements of its forensic services delivery model through legislation.

Additionally, they said—

The Bill will commence by proclamation to manage the transition of Forensic Science Queensland from Queensland Health to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. However, it is intended that Forensic Science Queensland will be formally established within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in July 2024.

The bill establishes the statutory position of the director and also covers the appointment, functions and powers of the director. The director's role requires the incumbent to have a tertiary qualification in a scientific discipline relevant to forensic services and at least 10 years of practical experience in providing forensic services.

The committee's task was to consider the policy to be achieved by 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 its compatibility with human rights in accordance with the Human Rights Act.

In formally establishing the director, the office and the advisory council of Forensic Science Queensland, this bill implements a model of forensic service delivery that is a first in any Australian jurisdiction. Given recent events relating to the administration of criminal justice in Queensland, it is clear that an overhaul of forensic services was required in Queensland. After its inquiry into the bill, the committee is satisfied that the new statutory framework set out in the bill to deal with forensic services is a positive step forward in remedying the issues identified in the report. The committee also considers that the statutory framework largely accords with the recommended approach set out in recommendation 121 of the report.

The draft bill and consultation papers were sent to more than 70 stakeholders external to government for feedback and comment. Stakeholders were generally supportive of the bill. There were some concerns raised by stakeholders that the bill does not provide for a dedicated research and development unit as suggested in the report. In response to these concerns, Queensland Health noted that the bill includes research, development and innovation in the director's functions. It also noted in this regard that the explanatory notes provide—

It is not necessary for a separate research and development unit to be established through legislation. Research, innovation, policy and education activities are dealt with through functions given to organisations or positions in legislation. The Bill gives the Director functions relating to research, development, innovation, partnerships and collaboration ... It is intended that a research development unit will be established within Forensic Science Queensland operationally.


I note that committee members in the opposition in their statement of reservation raised concerns—

... that the Government has moved to alter the formation of an Advisory Board, as outlined ... in recommendation 121 of the ... Inquiry.

In response to these concerns, I would suggest that members of the opposition take the time to read the explanatory notes that were provided to the committee and stakeholders for consideration in conjunction with the proposed bill. Further, I would say that committee members of the opposition should take the time to understand how the committee inquiry process works. Just because they would like to push a political agenda does not mean they are afforded the opportunity to ask whatever thought bubble pops into their focus. The inquiries made by committees into draft legislation have parameters and a defined focus. Questions put to stakeholders or departments should be contained within the purpose of the inquiry.

I am proud to be part of a government dedicated to bringing justice to victims of crime by ensuring that Queensland's forensic services are of a world-class standard and conducted in consultation with forensic, legal, health, police and victim support professionals and in accordance with the latest scientific research and evidence. On behalf of the committee, I thank Vicki Blackburn for her ongoing advocacy along with those individuals and organisations that made written submissions on the bill. I also thank our Parliamentary Service staff, Queensland Health and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. I also thank the former Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for its tireless effort in conducting this inquiry. I commend this bill to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Before I call the member for Theodore, I will remind the House of the members who are on a warning. They are the members for Kawana, Callide, Nanango, Buderim, Capalaba, Stafford, Southern Downs, Mundingburra and Pine Rivers.


 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (11.03 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. At the outset, I want to thank my fellow committee members, even though I joined the committee late in the process before the report. I also want to thank all of the individuals who participated by writing to the committee and expressing their opinions. We stand here today debating a piece of legislation due to the disastrous failures of this government with the handling of our forensic science labs. It has cast a dark shadow over the Queensland criminal justice system. One could ask: how many criminals—rapists, murderers—are walking free due to the systemic failures at a facility that we all place the highest levels of trust in? For many victims this trust has been shattered; their hope that justice has been served all but destroyed.

We are here today debating a bill that cleans up a mess caused by complete incompetence and lack of oversight, yet if it was not for the tireless and brave advocacy of Vicki Blackburn in her search for justice for her daughter Shandee and the efforts of Dr Wright, who sacrificed her career to call out the failures of DNA testing in Queensland, this bill would not exist and we would still be none the wiser about the systemic failures at the forensic science lab. Queenslanders need to be reminded that concerns were first raised in late 2021, around the same time that the *Shandee's Story* podcast first aired. This podcast highlighted failures at the lab in extracting basic DNA profiles. By May 2022 the LNP and many others were calling for a commission of inquiry to start the process to put an end to this miscarriage of justice. These cries were met with resistance from the minister, claiming that whistleblowers and the LNP were playing pure politics. The minister seemed to forget the people greatly affected by this colossal mismanagement—and they are the victims, and these people deserve justice. The commission of inquiry into the forensic DNA labs made 123 recommendations, and only now the minister has finally acted. The government will implement 121 recommendations as a priority.

As of 20 September, potentially 37,000 cases require retesting. That is 37,000 cases awaiting closure. To put this further into context, over 103,000 samples potentially need to be retested, and to all Queenslanders this is completely unacceptable.

The bill will establish the statutory position of Director of Forensic Science Queensland, a supporting Office of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland and the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. It also transfers Forensic Science Queensland from Queensland Health to the department of justice, and this will be done by July 2024. Whilst these changes are welcome, a properly functioning forensic science lab is a critical part of our criminal justice system.

Due to the short time we have to debate this legislation, I have decided to cut my speech short to allow other members to talk on this very important bill that affects the core and critical cornerstone of our justice system. I will therefore keep my comments at that, but it is still appalling that we have come to this and we have had to bring in legislation to fix up a massive miscarriage of justice in this state.

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (11.08 am): I rise to make this brief contribution on the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. As is my habit, I want to thank my fellow committee members: Mr Peter Russo, the member for Toohey, and Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper. Thanks also to Steve Andrews, the member for Mirani; Mr Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore; and, lastly, Mr Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim. Our secretariat, as ever, was incredibly helpful and indispensable to the entire process. The committee made a single recommendation, and that is that the bill be passed. The hearings heard that the bill's policy objectives are to achieve a statutory framework for forensic services to support the administration of criminal justice in Queensland, ensuring high-quality, reliable, independent and impartial forensic services and related advice.


The bill will help ensure the systemic failures never occur again. Victim-survivors should not be confronted with the trauma of seeing their rapist or attacker walk free due to bureaucratic mismanagement and technical incompetence. It was nauseatingly predictable that this week members of the LNP would seek to use these bona fide improvements for political leverage with talk about 'dark shadows', but it does set an interesting standard by which we can pass judgement on the LNP. They were horrified by the term 'debacle' and spoke about failures. If the LNP contention is that the government is directly responsible for bureaucratic mismanagement and technical difficulties then does that not frame the LNP actions around the Barrett Adolescent Centre in a way that highlights both a lasting tragedy and the truly appalling decisions of the government of that time? That was a failing and that was a debacle, because people died.

Queensland Health notes that if the bill is passed Queensland will be the first jurisdiction in Australia that establishes, promotes and protects key elements of its forensic services delivery model through legislation. The bill implements recommendation 121 of the *Final report: Commission of inquiry into forensic DNA testing in Queensland*, led by Mr Walter Sofronoff KC, which recommended that the government should pass legislation to create a forensic science institute for Queensland. The legislation should provide for the creation of an institute as an independent office within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General similar to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; a Director of Forensic Science to be appointed on terms set by the Governor in Council upon advice from the Attorney-General; provisions which protect and promote the independence of the institute and the director as a provider of expert forensic services to the criminal justice system; and the appointment of a chief operations officer who is responsible for the administrative duties associated with operating the institute. It is also worth noting that all of the submitters were generally supportive of the bill, with minimal changes suggested.

The bill establishes a statutory position of the director and also covers the appointment, function and powers of that director. Clause 7 of the bill requires the appointment of the director by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the minister. The director role requires the incumbent to have a tertiary qualification in a scientific discipline relevant to forensic science and at least 10 years of practical experience in providing forensic services. The director has the power to direct the Office of Forensic Science Queensland to provide scientific analysis in non-criminal matters in Queensland and support the administration of justice in other jurisdictions, including in coronial matters. Clause 18 of the bill allows the director to delegate their functions and powers to an appropriately qualified staff member of Forensic Science Queensland. Clause 19 of the bill provides that the director is not subject to direction by the minister.

The bill goes on to establish the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. The advisory council's functions are to monitor and review the policies and procedures of Forensic Science Queensland that relate to the administration of criminal justice and to give advice or make recommendations about those policies and procedures to the minister and the director. This advice is a significant step forward and adds another layer of both quality improvements and accountability to the larger process. Queensland Health provides further information on the advisory council's functions, especially as they relate to the crucial role of the performance of the DNA lab. These broader functions reflect that forensic science covers multiple fields and disciplines beyond DNA analysis. They allow the advisory council to engage more broadly with any policy or procedure, written or unwritten, that may affect the administration of criminal justice. These functions are also broad enough to ensure that policies and procedures relevant to current issues relating to the administration of criminal justice can be considered, such as policies and procedures relating to resolving the testing backlog.

The longevity of the legislation was an important consideration during the development of the bill. Recommendation 121 was made to address some of the failings identified within the forensic services system. The overarching goal of establishing Forensic Science Queensland is to strengthen forensic service quality and integrity, thereby restoring the public's confidence in the role forensic services play in the criminal justice system. While strong forensic services and public confidence in those services will always be critical, other aspects of Forensic Science Queensland's operating context are expected to evolve in the years and decades ahead. For example, it is anticipated that Forensic Science Queensland will need to incorporate new disciplines and adapt some aspects of the organisational model to reflect advances in scientific knowledge and the elements of a modern forensic scientific framework. The Queensland government has accepted all of the commission of inquiry's recommendations. This is a direct, effective and rapid response to identified systemic difficulties and on that basis I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (11.15 am): ‘Playing pure politics’: these are the words of the former failed health minister, the words she gave to Queenslanders when we called on this government to widen the commission of inquiry to include the forensic services lab. She said—

I have no idea why the opposition would be calling for this other than playing pure politics. It is a duplication, it is completely unnecessary.

Tell that to the at least 37,000 victims. Rapists and murderers could be walking free as a result of the DNA lab failures under this state Labor government’s watch. We know that two years ago the Labor government was responsible for the most abhorrent case of maladministration in living memory. As a result of the systemic failures at the DNA lab, rapists and murderers could be walking free for their heinous crimes. Even today we do not know how many victims of this government’s monumental stuff-up there are. The latest update was that there are 103,000 samples and 37,000 cases up for retesting. That is 37,000 victims of crime who may not have seen justice done.

The Forensic Science Queensland Bill is designed to cover up this government’s failures in the DNA lab—failures which have rendered an unknown tally of victims of crime, failures which have rendered them and their families without justice and treated them as collateral damage. These are people’s lives that have been irrevocably damaged and unforgivably up-ended because the government took its eye off the ball. To the 37,000 victims—37,000 people who we already know have been affected by this monumental government stuff-up—and the countless more that we do not yet know about, I say: my colleagues and I hear your pain. We hear your anguish and we will not stop fighting until you get the justice you deserve.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that if it were not for the family of one of those victims we may never have had the two commissions of inquiry into the DNA lab and this bill would not be before us today. Over a decade ago, Shandee Blackburn was the victim of a truly horrific crime and her young life was senselessly and violently stolen, yet today no-one has been convicted of her murder. Shandee’s mother, Vicki Blackburn, has been absolutely awe-inspiring. She has worked tirelessly to bring Shandee’s murderer to justice. I say a massive thank you to Vicki for her committed advocacy, which has shone a light on the systemic failures of the DNA lab and brought lasting change to the entire system—lasting change that would never have happened without her courage, without her strength and without her advocacy. This advocacy was not only for her daughter Shandee but also for other victims and families who will benefit from her legacy. Vicki, the decision you made to put the public interest first, even when this meant constantly reliving the tragic horrors your family experienced, all in the interests of safety and justice, will never be forgotten. Thank you.

I would also like to thank Dr Kirsty Wright, the scientist who put it all on the line and bravely took a public position on a devastating issue even in the face of this government not believing and even in the face of this government saying that we were playing pure politics. Her commitment to transparency, accountability and truth, as other members in this chamber have said, risking her own career, is truly admirable. To all the brave scientists from the forensic lab who, at great personal risk, came forward to share their experiences with the commissioner—to Kylie, Emma, Dr Ingrid, Angelina, Alicia, Rhys, Amanda and everyone else who has had to remain anonymous—we thank you.

This bill is long overdue and the government was dragged kicking and screaming to bring it before the House. The LNP first raised concerns about this in 2021. At the same time, the *Shandee’s Story* podcast went live, highlighting the issues with the DNA lab. Despite the government’s denial and the then failed health minister, Yvette D’Ath, claiming that there had been no evidence of systemic failures in the forensic pathology unit, Shandee’s family and the opposition kept fighting. By May 2022, we were calling on the government to launch a commission of inquiry. Again, the health minister and the then health minister vehemently rejected our concerns saying that we were playing pure politics. Now here we are, implementing recommendation 121 of a commission of inquiry that those opposite never wanted, a commission of inquiry the recommendations of which are not being implemented fully—

Mr Krause interjected.

Mrs GERBER: I take the interjection from the member for Scenic Rim—and a commission of inquiry that uncovered the truth that the DNA lab was failing in its most fundamental task—that is, to actually find DNA.

Finally, we have this bill before us. I have to highlight that this bill will in fact take responsibility from Queensland Health and give it to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, which is headed by the very same minister who oversaw the failed DNA lab and the very same minister who oversaw this monumental stuff-up by the state Labor government. The current health minister does not want any association with the chaos and crisis under the Attorney-General and former health minister, saying,

'Not my circus, not my monkeys', except that it is. While the health minister may have passed the buck, she is still ultimately responsible for implementing the findings of the commission of inquiry, which are not being implemented fully.

The failures of the DNA lab have been the greatest case of government maladministration in living memory. I am going to repeat this because it is so important: at the last count there were 103,000 samples to be retested and potentially 37,000 victims who did not see justice—victims of rape, victims of murder and victims whose perpetrators may be walking the streets as a result of this government's failure.

Mrs Frecklington: Who was scaremongering?

Mrs GERBER: I take the interjection from the member for Nanango.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): That is unfortunate because the member for Nanango is on a warning. Please pause the clock. Member for Nanango, you can leave the chamber for one hour. I was trying to get your attention to remind you that you are on a warning, but that has happened.

Whereupon the honourable member for Nanango withdrew from the chamber at 11.23 am.

Mrs GERBER: My apologies to the member for Nanango.


An opposition member: It was a good interjection, though.

Mrs GERBER: It was a good interjection. We were accused of scaremongering and yet here we are debating this bill and attempting to seek justice. Let us hope that the victims and their families get justice because, right now, those victims and their families are going to have to relive the harrowing memories and experiences that they went through as victims of crime in order for the system to retest—that is, in order for the system to do what it should have done in the first place. Victims of crime and their families from right across Queensland deserve transparency from this government.

The minister must answer these questions. Does the government know the total number of cases that will need to be reviewed? How many cases has the legal-led review assessed to date? Of those cases, how many have been found to have probative DNA samples in need of retesting? How many have been retested and, of those, how many have had profiles found that were not previously found? How many victims have been contacted regarding the retesting of their samples, whether that their samples will be retested or have been retested?

The member for Scenic Rim makes a very valid point: in his address on the bill, the member for Toohey tried to say that none of this is relevant, that victims of crime are not relevant and that none of these questions that victims deserve answers to and that their families deserve answers to are relevant. Have they learned nothing? Even now they cannot admit their faults. The member for Caloundra said that this is political leverage. We are talking about the biggest maladministration in the history of a government and it lies at the feet of this state Labor government.

(Time expired)

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (11.25 am): The role that Queensland's Forensic and Scientific Services lab plays in the upholding of justice cannot be understated. Its sole purpose is to uncover evidence and information for use in the investigation of crime and to provide evidence for criminal trials and coronial inquests. Therefore, trust in that process is very important. Victims of personal, invasive and violent crimes are some of the most resilient people I have met and had the good fortune of working with. They are also very vulnerable because of the nature of events that have occurred that are external to them. When you hand yourself over to this journey it is so important that all of those component parts of the system work both in isolation and collectively. That trust extends further because it relates to the public confidence that we all have in the system. Public confidence matters. It matters for the victims, it matters for the investigators, it matters for the prosecutors and it matters for members of the public. The events that have unfolded have highlighted that there have been some real issues occurring within the administration of justice and it has undermined public confidence. That has been acknowledged by the government and there has been a response to that.

I do know Shandee's case reasonably well. I spoke then about the fact that more work needed to happen and the government has listened to that. I want to say to victims who have spoken out and to all of the public servants who have bravely shared their experiences that the government has acknowledged that there were failings in the lab. We authorised an independent inquiry into that. Recommendations were made to government and those recommendations have been accepted.

During the last sitting week, the House passed legislation to expand the range of criminal charges that can be brought back before a jury on discovery that fresh and compelling evidence was not put forward. It is an historic step for victims of violent crime, particularly victims of sexual violence and the families of manslaughter victims. Through this bill we are taking that reform even further by ensuring that Queensland's forensic health and justice response is one that upholds justice and, importantly, meets community expectations. Victims can be assured that this is nation-leading legislation.

In June 2022, our government announced an independent commission of inquiry into forensic DNA testing in Queensland. The inquiry was established to ensure transparency and to look for opportunities to ensure public confidence in the collection, testing and analysis of DNA undertaken in Queensland and in the criminal justice system more broadly. The commission of inquiry was conducted by former president of the Court of Appeal and retired judge Walter Sofronoff. The commission received thousands of pieces of information and documents, conducted multiple public and private hearings, and importantly spoke to victims about their concerns, views and wishes. The final report provided to the government made 123 recommendations, which the government has accepted.


I want to acknowledge Vicki Blackburn who said, for all the victims who may have been involved in the ramifications of Project 13, that this information should be made public. That is really important. The bill will implement recommendation 121 of the 2022 inquiry that recommended a statutory framework for forensic services similar to that of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Sofronoff found that the location of Queensland forensic services within the Department of Health was simply not effective and in fact was not as focused as it could have been.

The bill will help to ensure we never lose sight of that primary role, purpose and impact of forensic services in Queensland. It sets out the key components of the forensic services system and includes various protections for the integrity of the system. The bill establishes the Director of Forensic Science Queensland to lead the provision of forensic services to the Queensland Police Service, the Director of Public Prosecutions, coroners and other criminal justice entities. Forensic Science Queensland will be relocated within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, as recommended by the Sofronoff inquiry, and will consist of the DNA laboratory, scientists and a range of staff to support research, innovation and administrative activities. An interim Forensic Science Queensland is currently operating within Queensland Health and will be moved to the justice portfolio through administrative processes after the bill has been passed. We heard in committee hearings that work is currently underway to relocate and refocus the service, so victims can be assured there will be no interruption to services.

Further, the bill establishes the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. The council will monitor and review the policies and procedures of Forensic Science Queensland that relate to the administration of criminal justice. The advisory council will be able to give advice to the Attorney-General and give advice and recommendations to the director on its own initiative. The bill sets out mandatory council members to ensure it consists of multidisciplinary representation including police, prosecutions, defence, victim support, independent forensic science and private legal professional representation.

Last year the Bennett inquiry looked further into DNA testing at the Queensland forensic service and, importantly, found no evidence that would undermine public confidence in the current work of Forensic Science Queensland. However, I acknowledge that it will take structural change, appropriate funding, appropriate governance, monitoring and reporting to rebuild the trust between the lab and victims and members of the public.

A lot of work and consultation has gone into this bill, demonstrating the wide range of stakeholders who have skin in the game when it comes to Queensland's forensic lab and the administration of justice. I appreciate that the minister has given both her sympathies and her gratitude to the family of Shandee Blackburn, to the many victims and to Queensland Health staff who bravely shared their experiences in the hope that this would deliver a just outcome for others. I associate myself with those views. It is because of them that we now have such a nation-leading bill before the House, so we owe them a debt of gratitude. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (11.32 am): Following the member for Currumbin's contribution to this bill is difficult because she has covered many of the issues that I would have mentioned, albeit in a far more elegant manner than I could present. I associate myself with her comments about this bill and thank her for her work on the committee of which she was a member until the very final stages of the committee's consideration of this bill.

The murder of Shandee Blackburn was a tragedy, as are all murders, unlawful killings and other violent crimes committed against people, wherever they are in Australia or the world. Crimes like these affect more than just the direct victims of the offences. The families of victims are also victims of crime, as are their friends and the wider community, who have trauma inflicted upon them. We have seen that in the case of Shandee Blackburn. Shandee's mother has tirelessly kept alive Shandee's memory and the tragedy of her death. It is important that we recognise the tragedy that occurs from violent crimes, but the bigger tragedy in the context of this bill is the system that failed Shandee, her family and friends and thousands of other victims of crime.

I do not think the impact can be overstated—37,000 cases that might have been impacted by a failure in a DNA lab. I do not think people really understand the gravity of that situation. For members of the government to come in here and claim some sort of virtue for fixing what was a debacle is, quite frankly, unbelievable. The inquiries we have had uncovered a cultural problem that enabled the failures in the DNA labs to continue for far too long. Being in government and being in public life and allowing cultures to exist where mistakes are made and covered up repeatedly year after year does not provide an opportunity for government members to claim virtue for fixing them—especially when they are members of a political party that has been at the helm of government in Queensland for so long and has seen that cultural problem develop. We have a cultural problem with the Queensland Public Service. Just ask Peter Coaldrake about that.

Mr McDonald: Let the sunshine in.

Mr KRAUSE: I take that interjection: let the sunshine in to the Queensland Public Service.

A government member interjected.

Mr KRAUSE: I take that interjection from the minister. He demonstrates once again the cultural problem by making cheap political comments when I am talking about an extremely serious situation in the failure of a DNA lab. Some 37,000 cases have been caught up in that, and all the minister wants to do is make cheap political comments disparaging Professor Peter Coaldrake, who wrote in his report about problems of people being too afraid to speak up for fear of retribution, demotion and isolation in the Public Service. It is exactly that sort of problem that led to the DNA debacle. I note again that the member for Caloundra took issue with the member for Currumbin calling it a debacle during either this inquiry or the inquiry about double jeopardy laws.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr KRAUSE: It is a debacle, yet members of the government do not want to call it what it is. I do not think the cultural problems in the Queensland government are being fixed at the moment. We saw it from the minister, who is making cheap political interjections. The cultural problems that allowed the DNA debacle to occur need to be fixed. The actions of government members on the committee and of the government in bringing forward this bill show me that they have not been fixed. When we consider the 37,000 cases and 103,000 samples that may potentially need to be retested, it is an absolute debacle. I place it on the same level of maladministration and tragedy for Queensland's confidence in the Public Service and in the administration of justice as the issues outlined years and years ago in the Fitzgerald inquiry. They are different issues and different layers of the Public Service, but they shake to the core in much the same way people's confidence in Queensland's system of government.

Rather than coming into this place and implementing fully the recommendations of former Justice Sofronoff, especially when it comes to recommendation 121 and the advisory panel for the new DNA service, the government has chosen to go its own way. I took issue with this in the inquiry process with the director-general of Health. Given their track record on how they have treated this issue, particularly given their track record on how Dr Kirsty Wright and others in the system were treated when they tried to call out the mistakes being made, when they tried to make things right and when they tried to do the right thing for victims of crime—they were shut down by the government and by some of the same bureaucrats, no doubt, who appeared before us in committee—for them to come in here and say that it is okay to divert from the recommendations of Sofronoff I think is a big mistake, because it shows that the culture of arrogance, of cover-up and of the department knowing what is best at all times simply has not changed.

Sofronoff's recommendations and the recommendations of the other commissions of inquiry should have been implemented lock, stock and barrel—just like Fitzgerald years ago. The confidence issues that came from this debacle are just as great as the confidence issue that came from that debacle all those years ago. There are 37,000 cases involving thousands of victims who never saw justice, and


who may have to go through the retraumatisation of a retrial. In the last sitting of parliament we saw a bill passed from a justice perspective that may enable people to be retried if retested DNA samples lead to potential retrials.

Ms Camm: Double jeopardy.

Mr KRAUSE: That is the double jeopardy bill—exactly. That means retraumatisation of victims, yet the government does not seem to fully acknowledge the gravity of that situation. They should have implemented Sofronoff's recommendations in full. It is not disappointing but frightening that they have not recognised the importance of restoring confidence in the system. People get the feeling that the government has not got the message.

I again want to pay tribute, as others have, to Vicki Blackburn for keeping the memory of Shandee alive. In doing so, she has enabled thousands of other victims to see this bill come forward, to see the two commissions of inquiry be brought about and to see rectification, albeit at a very late stage, of a failed system of DNA testing here in Queensland. I also want to again pay tribute to Dr Kirsty Wright. She put her career on the line, as others have done.

I hope that this bill fixes the problem and that we do not see the emergence again of debacles in DNA testing in Queensland. The government had a job to do in ensuring right from the top that the message of cultural change will be heeded throughout the public sector but especially in this particular government service. They failed to do that. We support this bill and we hope that it fixes all the issues that have been identified.

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (11.41 am): I rise to speak on the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. I applaud the Miles government for taking this bold step to improve and strengthen laws to address deficiencies in Queensland's current forensic services system. Strengthening our laws to address deficiencies means that perpetrators of violent crime, including rape and sexual assault, are held accountable and brought to justice for their actions.

The committee reported that there are deficiencies in the current forensic services system resulting in perpetrators of violent crime escaping justice, adding to the ongoing trauma inflicted on victim-survivors. This government stands with victim-survivors. The steps that we are taking to strengthen our laws are about transferring power back to victim-survivors, giving them confidence that perpetrators of violent crime will be brought to justice.

The changes that we are making today will ensure that forensic evidence will be processed in a professional and effective manner. These measures will allow victim-survivors to report their assault to authorities and not have the fear of subjecting themselves to intrusive and potentially retraumatising evidence collection procedures.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, Shannon Fentiman, who introduced the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023 into the Queensland parliament. The bill will establish a statutory framework for forensic services to support the administration of criminal justice in Queensland.

The framework involves establishing a statutory position of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland, a supporting Office of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland and the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. The bill's policy objectives are to establish a statutory framework for forensic services to support the administration of criminal justice in Queensland ensuring high-quality, reliable, independent and impartial forensic services and related advice.

The bill implements recommendation 121 of the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland, led by Mr Walter Sofronoff KC, released on 13 December 2022. The Sofronoff report made 123 recommendations to address deficiencies identified by the commission in the methods, systems and processes used in the collection, testing and analysis of DNA samples in Queensland by the forensic DNA laboratory.


All of the Sofronoff report's recommendations have been accepted by the Queensland government. Recommendation 121 of the Sofronoff report provided for the creation of a forensic science institute for Queensland within a statutory framework similar to that of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Following the release of the Sofronoff report, the Queensland government announced an initial funding investment of \$95 million to implement the commission's recommendations, including a recurrent funding investment of \$10.2 million for the establishment of Forensic Science Queensland. This has now been established on an interim basis as a business unit of Queensland Health. Adjunct

Professor Linzi Wilson-Wilde OAM, an experienced and internationally recognised forensic science leader, was appointed as its interim CEO and an interim advisory board was also established to oversee implementation of the Sofronoff report's recommendations.

The proposed changes in this bill are truly groundbreaking. If the bill is passed, Queensland will be the first jurisdiction in Australia that establishes, promotes and protects key elements of its forensic services delivery model through legislation. Like I said, this is truly groundbreaking. I am proud to speak on this bill as part of the Miles Labor government, dedicated to bringing justice to victims of crime. Once the bill is passed, it will ensure that Queensland's forensic services are of a world-class standard and conducted in consultation with forensic, legal, health, police and victims support professionals and in accordance with the latest scientific research and evidence.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee, the committee chair, Peter Russo, other members of the committee, the committee secretariat and Hansard. I acknowledge their work to consult Queenslanders far and wide in the examination of the bill. This is a good solid bill. It stands on the right side of history and is another example of this Labor government's progressive movement to serve Queenslanders well. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (11.46 am): I rise to speak on the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. The bill has been introduced in response to the final report by Walter Sofronoff in the first commission of inquiry, COI, into the systems and processes of Queensland's government-run forensic laboratory.

The COI was formed in response to the revelation of the lab's serious shortcomings exposed by the journalist Hedley Thomas and forensic scientist Dr Kirsty Wright. Both are to be commended for the vital work they did in bringing this critical information to public notice. Through their diligent investigation, and the courage and commitment of Vicki Blackburn, it was eventually brought to light that the Queensland government's forensic lab had been making significant errors over a long period of time in the analysis of DNA samples. The concern and the loss of confidence this has caused the public has been considerable and the effects of this will be far-reaching.

The inquiry, headed by Walter Sofronoff KC, revealed that lab managers were focused on speed and 'efficiency gains' rather than accuracy. It took the tragic case of Shandee Blackburn, and the ongoing advocacy of her mother, Vicki, for the disgraceful breakdowns within the Queensland forensic science laboratory to be uncovered.

During the bill's inquiry, the committee heard how deficiencies in the state's current forensic system may have resulted in perpetrators of violent crimes escaping justice. This has severely damaged public confidence in forensic DNA testing here in Queensland and in our criminal justice system as a whole. If Queenslanders do not feel confident that forensic evidence is being processed in a professional and effective manner, they will be less inclined to report their assault to authorities and less inclined to subject themselves to intrusive evidence collection procedures. The government must proactively ensure that these systemic failures never occur again. Victim-survivors should not be confronted with the trauma of seeing their rapist or attacker walk free due to bureaucratic, political and technical mismanagement.

Faulty science has been one of the leading causes of miscarriages of justice in Queensland and throughout Australia for decades, with the most prominent example being the spectacular failure of forensic science in the Lindy Chamberlain case. The bill establishes the Director of Forensic Science Queensland and a new government office referred to as Forensic Science Queensland to support the director.

Clause 26 of the bill establishes the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. The council's functions are to monitor and review the policies and procedures of Forensic Science Queensland, particularly in relation to the administration of criminal justice. The council's functions are broad and will allow it to consider written and unwritten policies, procedures and processes. As pointed out in the Gold Coast hospital's submission, missing from the advisory council member list are clinical forensic medical examiners. This is a critical omission if the aim of Forensic Science Queensland is to give advice or make recommendations about policies and procedures relating to the administration of criminal justice. It would be hard to envisage this working effectively without these key stakeholders being represented on the board.

DNA testing and analysis are a fundamental part of our criminal justice system. It is to be hoped that the mission of the bill's new advisory council will be to identify and eliminate causes of error in the criminal justice system, and you cannot do that without looking at forensic practices. As everyone knows, forensic practices have been abundant sources of error. In this field we have seen questionable


forensic practices around bite mark analysis, hair sample analysis, blood spatter analysis and drug field test kits. DNA analysis has been one of the most reliable forensic practices in the criminal justice system and one of its most valuable tools. It can conclusively identify an offender and it can conclusively exonerate those who have been wrongly accused or convicted. Even though it is often viewed as the gold standard it continues to raise concerns, especially in a situation where a mixture is present.

The newest entry into the field of DNA is automated DNA machines, where analyses are performed by robotic technology. For police and prosecutors this technology holds the promise of nearly immediate results, allowing for the quick arrest of identified perpetrators. As a technology, it has the potential to radically change the way DNA analysis is used. This means that safeguards and oversights are urgently needed. We must ensure the problems we have seen with the introduction of this new technology in the field of criminal justice never happen again. We also need to think about this issue in terms of the proliferation of new, cheap and accessible technology that is being fast-tracked into use by government entities. Some sort of review needs to be conducted to look at how that impacts the way it is being used and what oversight mechanisms have been put in place.

If this technology becomes more and more available, then in terms of frontline investigations these machines could become the baseline for DNA testing and shut out traditional forensic labs. If that is possible, how can we go about preparing necessary guardrails and protections to safeguard that in such a way that is consistent with scientific integrity across forensics? We need the government to put transparent rules and regulations in place. Right now there are none. There are no rules and regulations around what we are doing, and I think that is a disgrace. Given that for nearly two decades we have had more and more people exposed to this technology in Queensland, strict rules need to come out of this. The field of forensics in Queensland is going to have to change its ways. The government is also going to have to pick up its game and make sure our labs are given the staffing, resources and funding they need.

The other problem with this technology is the danger of it being used as a shortcut and a way to close a case. That is why it is critical that more resources are put into traditional investigative techniques. The human aspect is still the most important because, let's face it, DNA is the easiest thing in the world to plant and contaminate. At some point that becomes a real issue. It used to be that prosecutors would not take a case where there was just DNA; you had to have more than that. Now, however, a lot of cases are based on just DNA, particularly the cold cases we keep hearing about. It is all DNA with those cases because no-one remembers the details or has kept receipts to establish a defence. It is impossible to fight. I would like to see much more funding and resources given to traditional investigations and manual testing.

Another point I would like to make is that we still have huge challenges when it comes to getting police, lawyers and the general public to understand what DNA kits and investigative DNA reports from laboratories actually mean. That is an education and training issue. We need to understand how this information is being used. From my reading on the subject, a lot of this has been taken on trust by professionals, juries and the public. What do we know about these machines and whether they are functioning properly? How do we validate standards for calibration and everything that surrounds it? We are talking about people's lives, their futures and their standing in society. The stakes could not be higher.

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (11.54 am): I am pleased to speak in support of the bill before us today because it will restore public confidence in Queensland's forensic services and our criminal justice system. On 9 February 2013, in my home town of Mackay, 23-year-old Shandee Blackburn was viciously stabbed to death. She was stabbed more than 20 times. Her ex-partner, John Peros, was charged with murder. He stood trial but the jury acquitted him. In 2020 a coronial inquiry found ample evidence to show that Mr Peros killed Shandee. Throughout the investigation and trial, concerns were raised about procedures in Queensland's forensic testing laboratory. In early 2020 the coronial inquiry was reopened to further investigate issues around the handling and testing of forensic evidence in Shandee's murder case.

While writing this, I did reflect on the connection between this bill and the bill we passed during the last sitting week criminalising coercive control. The legislation on coercive control was partly guided by the important work that was done by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, which was partly guided by some of these actions.

In May 2022 the Queensland Police Service delivered a written submission to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce asserting its lack of confidence in Queensland's DNA laboratory. This public denunciation of the laboratory by Queensland police was one of the key instigators in establishing


the Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland. It was conducted by Walter Sofronoff KC, the former president of the Court of Appeal and retired judge. It commenced in June 2022 and concluded with the final report released in December 2023. The inquiry released 123 recommendations, all of which were accepted by the government. Over 80 per cent of the 123 recommendations from the 2022 inquiry either have been implemented or are partially implemented.

This particular bill implements recommendation 121 of the 2022 inquiry, which recommended a statutory framework for forensic services similar to that of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The bill will establish a Director of Forensic Science Queensland, who will lead the provision of forensic services to the Queensland Police Service, the Director of Public Prosecutions, coroners and other criminal justice entities. The bill also establishes Forensic Science Queensland, a government office supporting the director and made up of a DNA laboratory, scientists and staff supporting research, innovation and administrative activities. As recommended by the Sofronoff inquiry, this new office will operate under the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

DNA testing is a critical part of our criminal justice system. We need to ensure victims and their families can rely on forensic testing that is high-quality, reliable, accurate, independent and impartial. During the investigation into Shandee Blackburn's death, the mishandling of forensic evidence and testing errors allowed her killer to walk free. For instance, blood samples taken at the crime scene did not return a positive result for anyone's DNA. It was extraordinary that blood taken as evidence at the crime scene did not show any signs of DNA. That this could then be used as a defence argument to help exonerate the accused murderer is a disgrace. Due to the ongoing advocacy of Shandee's mother, Vicki Blackburn, and dogged investigations carried out by Hedley Thomas, a journalist at the *Australian*, and forensic biologist Dr Kirsty Wright, the unravelling of systemic failures plaguing Queensland's DNA laboratory have come to light.

Also to be acknowledged are the scientists employed by Queensland's DNA laboratory who indicated for quite a few years that there was a systemic and dangerous lack of scientific integrity at the laboratory. In his final commission of inquiry report, Mr Sofronoff notes that they took a great risk in coming forward to speak to the inquiry and that they were 'prepared to speak truth to authority'. The Sofronoff inquiry reported that methods, systems and processes used at the forensic DNA laboratory did not measure up to best practice in many ways. The failures found at the laboratory are serious because it ultimately serves the criminal justice system. The errors meant that offenders were wrongfully acquitted of violent crimes, including murders and sexual assaults. This failure obviously presents a serious threat to community safety, and we would be letting down victims and their families if we allowed these DNA testing failures to continue. That is why it is important that this bill is passed.


These systemic failures have damaged public confidence and trust in Queensland's DNA testing and, worse, this trust could prevent victims of violence from seeking justice for crimes committed against them. A world-class DNA laboratory is a fundamental part of our criminal justice system. With this bill, Queenslanders can rest assured that the Miles government is committed to improving the standards of Queensland's DNA laboratory, ensuring the laboratory fulfils its obligations and restores public confidence in its operations. I want to thank the minister, the Attorney-General, for this work. It has been a really important piece of work, and I commend it to the House.

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (12.00 pm): On 9 February 2013 in my home town of Mackay, Shandee Blackburn was murdered. I would like to place on record my very deep and grateful thanks to Vicki Blackburn and her daughter Shannah who have never given up since that fateful night. They have continued to advocate on behalf of not only their own family and the community but all victims of crime across this state. The maladministration that was brought about by the culture and the cover-up of the forensic lab will forever be regarded as one of the biggest malpractices ever overseen by a state Labor government. This is the worst that has been seen not only in the nation but internationally. Our reputation internationally was tarnished, in particular the way it interacts with the criminal justice system. I would like to acknowledge Dr Kirsty Wright for her courage, tenacity and commitment. I would also like to acknowledge Hedley Thomas for his journalistic reporting and his attitude of never giving up.

I would like to place on record my thanks to and acknowledgement of the victims of crime I have met in my portfolio, in particular a young woman I met in Toowoomba whom I will call Rose to protect her identity. I met her after she reached out after what was a very violent rape. I was privileged to be able to sit with her for an afternoon to hear her story and review her police file. After I shared her story in this House, she was contacted by Dr Kirsty Wright, who provided her own expertise to Rose so she could communicate with the Queensland Police Service and seek to have her evidence retested.

Like many others in this state, she has been failed by the forensic lab, failed by the maladministration of this government and failed by the lack of integrity and the toxic culture that has been allowed to breed in the Public Service, particularly in this forensic lab. I would like to thank her and other victims of crime and let them know that we have heard you, we believed you and we took your voices up, but it was only through their courage that we were able to do so. I would like to acknowledge the committee, which sat through significant details that I think would have been hard to hear. In particular, I would like to acknowledge my colleagues for their statement of reservation.

I have very little confidence that this government can oversee all of these recommendations put into place to bring back any kind of sense to the forensic lab. I certainly hope that champions like Vicki Blackburn and other victims, with the advocacy of the Queensland Police Service, continue to hold this government to account just as we here in the opposition do. We will not forget and we will continue to fight and stand up for those victims of crime who were failed by the Palaszczuk-Miles Labor government.


 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (12.03 pm): I rise to support the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. I start by saying that it is disappointing but not surprising that some opposite choose to try to politicise this issue when this bill is a genuine attempt to be effective and provide trust in our important forensic science work. This bill implements recommendation 121, which is that the Queensland government pass legislation that creates a forensic science institute. The legislation creates: the position of a director; an office within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, similar to that of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which is independent but still within government; senior staff of the office; a research and development unit within the office; and a non-executive advisory board with specific members. It also recommended provisions to protect and promote independent and expert forensic services to the criminal justice system. We know that this is important, not just for the protection of victims but to make sure we get it right when it comes to those who are incarcerated. Every incarcerated person who is wrongly convicted means a perpetrator gets away, and that is another cruel element for victims themselves.

The bill establishes: the Director of Forensic Science Queensland; an office called Forensic Science Queensland that will be administratively placed within the justice portfolio once the bill is passed; and an advisory council. The bill includes various clauses promoting the independence and integrity of this framework, such as by emphasising these features in the purpose of the bill and the director's functions. It sets out clearly how that structure is to work. The bill also includes the eligibility criteria for the appointed persons. The bill enshrines in legislation a requirement for forensic science services to be high quality, reliable, independent and impartial, playing their own crucial role in the criminal justice system. It establishes key elements of Queensland's new forensic service delivery model to ensure this requirement is met.

The bill establishes the position of director, who will be responsible and accountable for forensic service delivery. The bill has clear requirements for the high-quality standard needed in the director's appointment and conduct. The advisory council also contributes to public confidence in Forensic Science Queensland by providing a mechanism for independent review of policies and procedures. Confidence in the process is important to encourage victims to come forward, for police to investigate independently and for prosecutors to run cases appropriately. We need that confidence in the system and I think this bill goes a long way to deliver that.

Some of these policies and procedures will relate to rectifying issues identified by the commission of inquiry. I want to thank those commissioners, particularly Walter Sofronoff for his extensive work. The variety of members on the advisory council with experience in different aspects of the criminal justice system will assist to ensure that the ultimate purpose is the administration of criminal justice where faith in the system is core. Again, it will allow people to come forward and be treated respectfully through investigations and the work of detectives and the police force, and then of course prosecution. This goes a long way to providing that faith and that core element in the system.

I want to thank the committee for their work. I want to thank the Attorney-General for her extensive work in this space. I look forward to continuing to work with her, assuming the bill is passed, in establishing and implementing this important reform. As I said, this will provide a strong structure for restoring faith in this important element of the criminal justice system. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (12.08 pm): I rise to speak on the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. I note the contribution of the member for Stafford, who said that whenever the opposition asks about something in a negative way it is seen as politicising an issue. We saw that over the weekend as well in election results—that supposedly raising issues on behalf of our constituents is

politicising issues. This forensic science bill is a classic example of the opposition having raised issues for some time. We heard contributions from others that these issues were raised and then dismissed by the government as political opportunism, yet significant inquiries have shown that there were issues that needed to be dealt with. As we heard from the member for Currumbin and others, that is why 37,000 cases have to be looked at again. That shows it is not about politicising—just as the issues that were decided on the weekend were not about politicising issues but those in the opposition standing up on behalf of Queenslanders for the issues they raise with us. That is our job—to hold a government to account—and that is why this Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023 is proof positive that the issues that we have raised from 2020 and 2021 have significance.

That is why now the government is struggling to bring this in so that we can actually deal with some of these issues and so that Queenslanders can rely on their justice system. To have those opposite try to paper over it and say anything about politicising shows that they just do not get it, just as they did not get it on the weekend, or subsequently with today's performance. They just do not get the messages they are getting from Queenslanders. Queenslanders must not forget that this bill lies in the dark shadow cast by the failures of the Palaszczuk-Miles government in addressing critical issues within the DNA lab. We cannot ignore the reality that these failures have rocked the very foundations of our criminal justice system.

We have heard from others that the tireless advocacy of individuals like Vicki Blackburn—as we just heard the member for Whitsunday mention—the mother of murdered woman Shandee Blackburn, and forensic scientist Dr Kirsty Wright brought to light the true extent of these failings and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their courage and persistence.

I refer to an article in *ABC News* dated 31 October 2023 titled 'Queensland Health's Forensic and Scientific Services lab criticised over DNA testing automation'. According to this article, Dr Kirsty Wright told the commission of inquiry that practices at Queensland's forensics lab were 'appalling and reckless'. Dr Wright told the commission the scientists at the lab lapsed in their responsibilities, saying—

To introduce an incomplete method, that was demonstrated to not be performing, and apply those on precious crime scene samples, they must have known that some of those samples would fail.

I table that article by Alex Brewster.

Tabled paper: Article from *ABC News* online, dated 31 October 2023, titled 'Queensland Health's Forensic and Scientific Services lab criticised over DNA testing automation' [\[391\]](#).

It is a fundamental principle of our legal system that justice must not only be done but also be seen to be done. As opposition members, we endeavour to raise pertinent questions regarding the extent of cases necessitating forensic retesting and the number of cases affected by previous substandard testing, leading to potential retrials or reopening of cases. Despite the opposition's repeated calls for a commission of inquiry into the DNA laboratory—along with calls from the media, experts and victims of crime—we were consistently dismissed or sidelined by the Labor government. Queenslanders rightfully expect transparency in the administration of justice, and the absence of such information prompts legitimate concerns about the integrity of the process. Since the emergence of concerns regarding failing forensics services, Brisbane Labor's response has been at best sluggish and at worst dismissive. It is deeply regrettable that it took considerable time for the government to acknowledge the issue adequately and initiate corrective measures.

Whilst the opposition acknowledges that the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023 aims to address the issues unearthed by the commission of inquiry, it is imperative to emphasise that a properly functioning forensic laboratory is indispensable to ensure the integrity of our state's criminal justice system. All stakeholders, including those within the system and those seeking justice, deserve nothing less.


The time line of events leading up to this moment paints a damning picture of the Miles Labor government's inaction and disregard for the voices of the victims. From the initial questions raised by the LNP in December 2021 to the subsequent revelations uncovered by the *Shandee's Story* podcast, it is clear that the government's response has been woefully inadequate. In February 2022, the then minister for health stated—

There has been no evidence of systemic failings in our forensic pathology unit.

Only one month later she initiated an external review. It then took until June 2022 for the government to cave and announce the commission of inquiry. The interim report subsequently revealed shocking findings, including that 1,840 court statements made were not true and had to be changed, along with the minister saying that 30,000—now 37,000—cases would need retesting.

The commission of inquiry led by Walter Sofronoff delivered a scathing indictment of the failures within the DNA lab and, despite the findings, the government's response has been lacklustre at best. The decision to omit key recommendations from the bill, such as the appointment of a chief operations officer, is troubling and indicative of a broader pattern of negligence.

Victims deserve justice and the people of Queensland deserve a forensic laboratory that operates with the utmost integrity and accountability, and the opposition will continue to push for greater transparency and oversight within our forensic services.

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (12.15 pm): Today I rise to speak on the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. I was a beneficiary of the massive investment from the Beattie government into biotechnologies all those years ago—I think it was \$1.5 billion—when doing my biotechnology studies at QUT next door. I really enjoyed my time studying in those labs, in particular the biotechnology field. We are here today to ensure forensic science in this state goes forward and we learn from the mistakes of the past. No more Queenslanders should fall victim to the mishandling of DNA lab samples. That is why, following extensive consultation and inquiries, our government is enshrining an independent forensics office in legislation.

The main objective of the bill is to implement recommendation 121 of the Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland, which recommends we introduce a new statutory framework for Queensland forensic science services. What this means is that, similar to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, forensic science services will be overseen by an independent office separate from the government health department. This change will ensure Queenslanders are receiving high-quality, reliable, independent and impartial forensics services. We want to restore the public's faith in our forensics processes and understand the unfavourable view of Queenslanders following the widespread failings. This independent office will report any findings or future policy recommendations directly to the Attorney-General for consideration.


The 2022 inquiry identified opportunities for service improvement to build public confidence in the collection and testing of DNA in Queensland. Since then we have implemented or partially implemented over 80 per cent of the 123 recommendations. This comes after the Queensland government promised to accept all of the final report's recommendations. Today we are here to implement recommendation 121 by restructuring how forensic services are delivered in Queensland.

The inquiry outlined suggestions for what the Queensland government should pass into legislation for this new framework. This includes establishing a Director of Forensic Science Queensland. The director will lead the provision of forensics services to the Queensland Police Service, the Director of Public Prosecutions, coroners and other criminal justice entities. The director will be appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Attorney-General. The director must have the relevant tertiary qualifications and at least 10 years of practical experience in forensics. They cannot have a conviction for an indictable offence or be an insolvent under administration. This is appropriate given the director's important role of overseeing a critical part of our criminal justice system.

Another suggestion made was the establishment of the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. The council will monitor and review the policies and procedures of Forensic Science Queensland that relate to the administration of criminal justice. It will provide advice and recommendations to the Attorney-General on these policies and procedures. The advisory council will also be able to give advice and recommendations to the director on its own initiative. Additionally, we have included parameters to ensure council members are representative of a wide range of criminal justice perspectives. The bill sets out mandatory council members to ensure there is police, prosecution, defence, victim support, independent forensic science and private legal professional representation on the advisory council.

This legislative requirement will improve reporting on the performance of DNA labs and ensure checks and balances are happening so that we can avoid any potential future problems. The Miles government is committed to ensuring we have a strong forensic service that Queenslanders can rely on. Whilst we understand the damage that has been done, we are here today to fix the mistakes and ensure it does not happen again.

This bill must be passed to ensure no more Queenslanders suffer from compromised forensic science. An independent office that is able to investigate evidence for our criminal justice system is the best way to ensure we have a completely nonpartisan and fair process. We understand that nothing we do can fix the mass failings of the past, but the Miles government is 100 per cent committed to righting the wrongs and ensuring no more Queenslanders fall victim to the mishandling of forensics. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (12.21 pm): I rise to address the debate on the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. On 29 November 2023, the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women introduced this legislation into the Queensland parliament where it was then referred to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for further examination. As outlined, this legislation will establish a statutory framework for forensic services to support the administration of criminal justice in Queensland. Accordingly, this framework will see the establishment of a statutory position of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland, a supporting Office of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland and the creation of the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council.

Whilst the creation of a legislated framework for the provision of forensic services in Queensland has been portrayed as a standard, reasonable—if not overdue—step forward for Queensland's criminal justice system, the hard truth for this state Labor government is that it has taken unimaginable pain and systemic mismanagement to expose the many failings within Queensland's forensic services system under this state Labor government. So catastrophic have these failings been that it has required this legislated intervention in order to fix the failure that has been the provision of forensic services in Queensland.

The genesis of this legislation is really the story of the tragic murder of Shandee Blackburn and the subsequent and unwavering pursuit of truth and justice by her family, scientists and experts, led by Dr Kirsty Wright, and, of course, journalist Hedley Thomas of the *Australian* newspaper. I acknowledge not only Shandee's family but also the leadership and diligence that was shown by both Dr Kirsty Wright and Hedley Thomas—without them, many of these circumstances would not have been brought to the fore.

It must never be forgotten that when legitimate concerns were first raised about the failings within Queensland's forensic sciences and DNA laboratory, the Palaszczuk-Miles state Labor government brushed these concerns aside, virtually denying that such systemic issues even existed. Indeed, as articulated by the Liberal National Party's member for Theodore and member for Scenic Rim in the statement of reservation accompanying the committee's report on this legislation—

It must be noted that repeated and increasingly desperate calls for a Commission of Inquiry into the DNA Laboratory by the sections of the media, experts, victims of crime and the Opposition were repeatedly ignored, and at times even mocked, by the Government. The failings of the Forensic Services Laboratory marked one of the most significant cases of government maladministration in living memory. It has fundamentally shaken the foundations of the criminal justice system in Queensland, with the long-term ramifications still largely unknown. From the moment concerns about failing forensic services were raised, the State Government has been at best slow to act, and at worst dismissive. It is deeply regrettable that it took so long for the issue to be properly acknowledged by the State Government, and for changes to be made.

I want to briefly reflect on the examination of this legislation via the former Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, now the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee. I wish to acknowledge how this committee heard directly about the deficiencies within Queensland's forensic services system and the devastating impact this has had on families and communities right across Queensland. These deficiencies have resulted in perpetrators of violent crimes, including rape and sexual assault, escaping justice. What is more, these deficiencies and the long process to ensure the restoration of justice have had an incredible impact on victim-survivors and the unimaginable trauma they have continued to endure.

In the chair's foreword to the committee report it was rightly stated—

Victim-survivors should not be confronted with the trauma of seeing their rapist or attacker walk free due to bureaucratic mismanagement and technical incompetence.

However, in addition to bureaucratic mismanagement and technical incompetence, it should also be stated that victim-survivors should not be confronted with further trauma due to ministerial incompetence and failures of government oversight. In having to rectify the mess that has been forensic sciences in Queensland and the administration of the DNA forensic laboratory, Queenslanders deserve nothing less than full transparency and accountability from the Palaszczuk-Miles state Labor government. Not surprisingly, such transparency and accountability has not been forthcoming from the Labor government. Liberal National Party members of the committee sought important answers on matters including the number of cases which would require forensic retesting, as well as how many cases had, or are likely to be, re-litigated or reopened as a result of previous substandard forensic testing.

In a further blow to transparency and accountability, I note that such questions were repeatedly dismissed and shut down by state Labor government members of the committee. Throughout this devastating saga, the state Labor government has been a hindrance on ensuring Queenslanders can

see justice being served. With the passage of this legislation, as well as previous legislation and other additional measures, hopefully the serious matters of gross maladministration will be finalised once and for all. Victims in Queensland deserve nothing less and Queenslanders, one and all, deserve to have a forensic services system that works in their interests.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Before calling the next member, I remind members that when referring to previous governments, or the current government, they are to be called the 'Palaszczuk government' and the 'Miles government' but not the 'Palaszczuk-Miles government'.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON (Nanango—LNP) (12.26 pm): I also rise to contribute to the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. I do so with a really heavy heart. We know the language that has been shouted back at us and those who stand for the problems in Queensland's forensic science lab. It is dumbfounding to think that it was said that we were 'political scaremongering'—that was one of the worst. We are talking about people who have lost their lives, who have been raped and who have been abused. We are standing for the victims and yet it is said that we are 'political scaremongering'. Throughout this process our committee members had their questions ruled out of order because they were standing up on behalf of victims. As many members in this House have mentioned, whilst this is largely an administrative bill, it is what lies underneath that is so important. We are only here debating this bill today because this Labor government—both the Palaszczuk government and now the Miles government—completely and utterly failed to manage forensic services in Queensland.

The failure marks one of the most significant cases of government maladministration in living memory. It has fundamentally shaken the foundations of the criminal justice system, with the long-term ramifications still largely unknown. I have spoken in this House before on this issue, but I want to reiterate this important issue and again highlight the work of Hedley Thomas, Dr Kirsty Wright and, of course, Shandee's mum, Vicki Blackburn, in uncovering this diabolical piece of maladministration.

They exposed the information and the LNP started asking questions about the problems. We made speeches. We asked more questions. We went to the media and the government continued to deny and continued to talk down the issues. In February, the then health minister said, 'There has been no evidence of systemic failings in our forensic pathology unit.' How wrong could that minister have been? In March 2022 I asked a question in this House of the then minister for health and ambulance services. My question was—

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?

The answer by the then minister was quite telling. She said—

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 ...

The minister completely missed the point about the major failing that was happening within the lab under her nose. By late March 2022, finally the Palaszczuk government were dragged kicking and screaming to agree to the review. However, it was not until May that the terms of reference were released and it became abundantly clear that it was merely going to be a review for show. Zero consideration was given to a truly independent review and, as I have said, it was only after those continuing calls that a commission of inquiry was eventually announced in June. I should note that in all that time all we heard from the then attorney-general and minister for justice, minister for women and minister for the prevention of domestic and family violence was complete silence. We had silence on an issue that will be the focus of our justice system for years to come. We had silence on issues that impact rape victims. We had silence on an issue that has left the Blackburn family completely broken because of the lack of justice following their daughter's murder.

By September an interim report was released, and finally the government realised they actually had a serious issue on their hands. The interim report issued the first of many recommendations to come, which was that more than 1,000 court statements must be changed to say that they are not true. The gravity of this cannot be overstated. What we have witnessed, like so many members in this House have stated, is one of the greatest failures, if not the greatest failure, in the justice system ever seen not only in Australia but in the world, and this was a government that said we were scaremongering. This is a government whose speakers we have heard say in the House today that we were just trying to make political points in our speeches.

I put to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that this is one of the greatest failings in the criminal justice system that the world has ever seen. We have people waiting to bury their loved ones because of the backlog in the forensic science lab, because of the failings of this government, and they say we are politically scaremongering? No, this is a very big issue. This is an issue that will define our criminal justice system for decades to come. Why? Because that government, the Palaszczuk government, refused to listen and the Miles government still has its head in the sand.


Today we have heard the speeches that we are politically scaremongering. No, we are not. We are standing up for victims. We are standing up for the victims who are now out in public wondering whether, because of this maladministration, their accused is going to be roaming free to repeat heinous offences. We are talking about murder. We are talking about child abuse. We are talking about rape. This is a serious issue.

I know that the Palaszczuk government have spent their entire time—and now the Miles government is continuing this—dismissing the opposition. Those on that side of the House do not understand that democracy takes two sides and we as an opposition have a right to hold the government to account. That is exactly what we will continue to do as an opposition: we will hold the government to account for the failings and the maladministration that have happened under their watch. I say particularly to the members of the backbench that we are not scaremongering; we are not playing political games with this. We are actually standing up for the victims of these heinous crimes because of a maladministration that we tried for months to get this government to understand. Instead, because we said it, they said, 'No, there's nothing to see here. We don't believe in an opposition. We're just going to ride roughshod over the opposition.' The Palaszczuk government and now the Miles government do not understand that democracy takes two sides and it takes an opposition to hold a government to account.

Yes, we on this side are proud to have the bill before us, but do honourable members know what we are not proud of? We are not proud of the fact that we have to stand here and acknowledge all those heinous crimes that have gone unsolved because a government refused to listen to victims of crime. Like I said last sitting week in this parliament, the opposition will continue to stand up for victims of crime. We will listen to experts like Dr Kirsty Wright. What has happened to that incredible forensic doctor is a blight and a shame on all of those sitting opposite. The ministers should hang their heads in shame for what they put that amazing woman through. This is someone who is recognised worldwide for her research and who was thrust into the forensic lab debacle. She put her head up when they wanted to take it off.

Mr Powell: Pursue justice.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: She did that to pursue justice and I say: good on you, Dr Kirsty Wright, and good on you, Vicki Blackburn, for standing up for other victims. Vicki, I am so sorry that what happened to your daughter Shandee has been left because a government refused to listen to the fact that there was a problem. Those opposite continued to say that we were scaremongering. They forgot about the victims and they only thought about themselves. To that I say: shame.

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (12.36 pm), in reply: In reflecting on the contribution of the member for Nanango, I would urge her to perhaps read the commission of inquiry reports, because the management that oversaw what is a complete debacle of the lab happened across both governments. The failings of this lab go back to 2008. I think it is really important that the member for Nanango perhaps pauses and remembers that the maladministration that she now seems so concerned about actually happened over a long period of time, including when she was an assistant minister.

I want to thank all members for their contributions to the debate. As I said in my second reading speech, the bill will establish Forensic Science Queensland, the Director of Forensic Science Queensland and the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. The bill was developed in response to the 2022 commission of inquiry and as part of this government's strong commitment to addressing the issues raised in that inquiry.

The government has always been up-front with its appreciation for the people who helped uncover the breakdowns at the Queensland forensic laboratory. Again, I want to thank and acknowledge the hardworking efforts of Ms Vicki Blackburn, Dr Kirsty Wright and Hedley Thomas at the *Australian*. I would also like to thank those who took time to provide feedback and make submissions on the bill and officers from my department and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General who have been involved in developing the bill and supporting the committee process. I also want to acknowledge the ongoing work of Forensic Science Queensland staff, who continue to work hard to deliver and improve services.

The Miles government is committed to ensuring public confidence in the delivery of forensic services, a crucial part of the criminal and coronial systems and, of course, community safety. We have committed almost \$200 million to reforming forensic services and providing support to those affected by the commissions of inquiry. A total of 103 of the 123 recommendations have been implemented or partially implemented, and the debate of this bill in the House today gets us one step closer to making it 104. The purpose of these dedicated efforts is to ensure we have a top-class and trusted system here in Queensland.

The opposition have talked a lot about the past, and I will not deny that the past is relevant. However, to ensure the lessons learned are implemented, the Miles government is absolutely focused on taking action now and safeguarding the future. That is what this bill does. The bill ensures that the principles of quality, reliability, impartiality and independence are at the forefront of forensic services delivery both now and into the future. Crucially, the bill recognises that forensic service delivery cannot occur in a vacuum. A range of perspectives, including victims' voices, are required to be represented on the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. The bill also makes partnership development and collaboration one of the director's functions. This collaborative approach supported by the bill promotes high-quality forensic services continuing into the future. The way the bill protects the future of forensic services is nation-leading. The bill will implement a model of forensic service delivery that no other Australian jurisdiction has.

The opposition has asked various questions about the status of historical case reviews recommended by the commissions of inquiry, and I completely agree that Queenslanders deserve to know that justice is being done. Before I talk numbers, I want to assure Queenslanders that the Miles government is committed to getting historical case reviews right. A historical review process is being carefully implemented, and it will continue to be refined over time to ensure efficient and reliable review. The process involves collaboration between the Queensland Police Service, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Forensic Science Queensland and representatives of defendants. It is a legal-led review and considers whether DNA evidence is critical to the outcome of the case. If DNA was critical, the DNA evidence is scientifically reviewed to ensure previous analysis was sound. Out of the reviewed cases, not all cases will benefit from additional DNA analysis. In fact, scientific review may confirm that the original DNA testing was appropriate and satisfactory. The current focus is on cases that are being actively prosecuted by the Queensland Police Service and the DPP. Additional priority is given to cases involving a defendant who is in some form of custody. The next phase will be scaling this up to other cases. I assure the House the prioritisation of cases requiring review is being managed between relevant agencies in consultation with criminal justice stakeholders.

Queensland Health, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Queensland Police Service, the DPP and the interim Forensic Science Queensland are working to identify every case affected by the recommendations of the commissions of inquiry. As at 18 March, 443 cases are or have been subject to a legal-led case review. All of these cases are being actively prosecuted or were actively prosecuted at the time their case review commenced. The degree and nature of updated DNA analysis will vary from case to case. There may be cases where the analysis has changed for only one sample out of hundreds of samples. However, a number of these completed cases have resulted in updated DNA results. For example, there have been updates to the likelihood that a person's DNA is present in a mixed profile sample. In one matter I am advised that the new DNA interpretation guidelines and changes to processes at FSQ led to a reassessment that the DNA profile was from one person rather than three people. These new results strengthened the evidence against the suspect, who pled guilty to manslaughter following the results. The new DNA interpretation guidelines and process at FSQ are also bringing justice to victims of sexual assault, with new sexual assault cases progressing through the courts based on the DNA testing.

As for victims being contacted about historical case reviews, there are many ways this is occurring. Victims or their authorised representatives who request an update, for example, by contacting my office or the victims hotline are given that update. Wherever possible, we take a trauma informed approach with historical case reviews. It is undesirable to contact a victim to advise that their case is in scope until the process is complete because we do not know whether DNA retesting will impact on a case until it is properly reviewed. To ensure respect for victims, Queensland Police Service investigators consider contact with victims on a case-by-case basis. We also allocated \$10 million for victim support services to support them through this process which includes funding for Victim Assist Queensland to provide trauma informed support to any individual seeking assistance impacted by the commissions of inquiry. DVConnect also received additional funding for the establishment of the public facing Forensic Support Line, which commenced on 1 December 2023.

Those opposite have raised issues with so-called deviations from the commission of inquiry's recommendations for membership of the advisory council and the appointment of a chief operations officer. Before I speak to this, let me be clear: the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee, with members from all sides, recommended that the bill be passed and was satisfied that the advisory council provisions did not raise concerns about not legislating a chief operations officer. A chief operations officer equivalent has already been established operationally. The bill implements recommendation 121 in a way that is both consistent with existing legislative practice and which ensures it remains relevant into the future. Where the detail of recommendation 121 is not exactly mirrored in the bill, the intent is still achieved. This is not a stealth move by government, as the opposition would have us believe. The commissioner who issued recommendation 121 was consulted on the approach and did not raise concerns.

A wide range of stakeholders were also consulted on the draft bill and overall the feedback was supportive. Queensland Health directly engaged with the few stakeholders who commented on recommendation 121 to explain the rationale. The bill requires all categories of members identified in recommendation 121 to be appointed. There are also opportunities to be involved in delivering the advisory council's functions without being appointed to the council—for example, through subcommittees. The bill ensures that all relevant perspectives and expertise can and will have input into Forensic Science Queensland's policies and procedures while ensuring the core council membership is operationally workable in size.

The Miles government is committed to doing everything we can to keep the community safe, especially ensuring that Queensland women and children are safe and live a life free of violence. We know as a community we need to do more. That is why this government established the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce which delivered the *Hear her voice* report, it is why the government delivered on its election commitment to legislate coercive control, and it is why this government has developed a dedicated Women and Girls' Health Strategy. I want to acknowledge the dedicated victims and women support stakeholders who provided valuable feedback during consultation on the bill. We listened to that feedback and the bill was amended to provide that the advisory council must include at least one representative who holds qualifications or has experience supporting victims of crime. This person could be a representative of a victim support organisation, an advocate for victims or a person with lived experience. The Attorney-General also has capacity to appoint further representatives of victims and support groups. I want to acknowledge the valuable perspective that these representatives will have on the advisory council to ensure victims' voices are heard.

As I have said many times before, this government is prioritising forensic service reform and the transfer of Forensic Science Queensland to the justice portfolio is a priority. The bill underpins that transition. Cross-government efforts are already underway to ensure a smooth process for establishing and transitioning Forensic Science Queensland. If the bill is passed today, I expect Forensic Science Queensland will be administratively assigned to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General by the middle of this year. As part of the transition, we of course need to ensure that a highly qualified director and a diverse expert advisory council are appointed. To that end, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will be prioritising establishing these aspects after passage of the bill, including through an international recruitment campaign for the director and an open expression of interest process for the advisory council. My department and the Attorney-General's department are working closely on the logistics of moving the new model of forensic services to ensure continuity of historical case review processes once Forensic Science Queensland moves portfolios.

Those opposite have asked how Queenslanders can have trust in the system. The most recent commission of inquiry led by Dr Annabelle Bennett AC, SC found no evidence that would undermine public confidence in the current work of Forensic Science Queensland. This bill provides confidence for Queenslanders in the standard for forensic services that we can expect into the future. I again want to thank the members of the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee and the staff of the committee for their consideration and report on the bill. The delivery of forensic scientific services is a fundamental part of our criminal justice system and this bill is a key milestone in reforming forensic services and establishing a world-leading system in law for all Queenslanders.

The Miles government is committed to long-term reform to ensure that the failings uncovered by the commissions of inquiry never happen again. This government acknowledges that reforming forensic services is an enormous task that cannot happen overnight. It requires ongoing effort and improvement in aspects like recruitment, culture and scientific excellence, but I am proud to say that the bill provides the appropriate legislative framework to facilitate these efforts. It has been shaped through consultation

with various stakeholders spanning fields like forensics, law and victim support. The provisions in the bill, notably the composition of the advisory council, guarantee the ongoing representation of these voices as we embark on a new chapter. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.


Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 69, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (12.49 pm): I move—


That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (12.50 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.

PHARMACY BUSINESS OWNERSHIP BILL

Resumed from 30 November 2023 (see p. 3917).

Second Reading

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (12.52 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Cost of Living and Economics Committee in conducting its inquiry into the bill and I thank the committee for its report tabled on 8 March 2024. The committee made one recommendation: that the bill be passed, and I appreciate the committee's support for the bill. I also want to thank all of the passionate organisations and individuals who made submissions to the committee, participated in the public hearing and contributed to the development of the bill.

Pharmacists are internationally recognised healthcare providers who play a critical role in providing collaborative patient care in a range of community and hospital-based settings. There is no doubt community pharmacies are an essential pillar of our healthcare system and play a vital role in providing quality care to Queenslanders closer to home. Community pharmacies are more than just a place where medications are dispensed; they are the trusted hubs of health care, serving as accessible points of contact between the community and the healthcare system.

Today we have a vast array of medications available to treat countless medical conditions. Each medication comes with its own set of potential benefits and risks, and finding the best treatment requires specialist knowledge and expertise. Pharmacists are uniquely positioned to provide this expertise. They undergo years of rigorous education and training to understand the intricacies of pharmacology. Their level of clinical acumen is absolutely key to ensuring patients receive optimal care.

The Miles Labor government strongly believes in the importance of maintaining the 'community' in community pharmacy, which is why we are dedicated to maintaining pharmacy ownership restrictions and establishing a robust regulatory council to continue to support the sector. This bill establishes a contemporary regulatory framework to govern the ownership of pharmacy businesses in Queensland. This bill will replace the Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001, which has been in force for more than two decades and is no longer adequate to safeguard the interests of community pharmacies. The bill will maintain existing ownership restrictions requiring pharmacy businesses in Queensland to remain under the ownership of pharmacists or pharmacist controlled corporations. Additionally, it will ensure that entities like the Mater and certain friendly societies can continue to own pharmacy businesses as allowed under the current regulation. These limitations help to ensure pharmacies operate with a primary focus on the health and welfare of customers and the broader community—prioritising those interests over purely commercial ones.

Pharmacies are not ordinary retail outlets; they are entrusted with the dispensing of medications that can profoundly impact people's health. By restricting ownership to those prescribed in the bill we ensure pharmacies are owned and managed by those who prioritise patient safety above all else. The bill also retains the existing limits on how many pharmacy businesses a person or entity may own. A person or entity may own only a maximum of five pharmacy business. The Mater and permitted friendly societies may own a maximum of six. This ensures proprietors can maintain an active interest in each of their pharmacy businesses.

In submissions to the Cost of Living and Economics Committee and during the committee's public hearing the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council expressed concern that the bill does not permit Aboriginal health services to own and operate a pharmacy located within the service. This concern was shared by other stakeholders including the AMA Queensland and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and I thank them for their feedback on this issue. The committee's report recognised the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the important role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health organisations play in enhancing the provision of health services; however, the committee did not recommend amendments to the current ownership restrictions within the bill.

Our government is committed to closing the gap and improving health care for First Nations peoples, and we acknowledge the compelling evidence provided to the committee about the need for access to culturally appropriate pharmacy services; however, further work and consultation is required to ensure we understand the practicalities and possible consequences of legislating this proposal, and that includes consultation with the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council and our First Nations health services. Given the complex interactions also with Commonwealth legislation regarding the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and pharmacy location rules, we also need to consult with the Commonwealth.

We know that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services generally have established relationships with their local community pharmacy. Careful consideration is needed to understand the impacts on existing community pharmacies in the region. Given these complexities, it is clear that this proposal does require further detailed consideration. To ensure that barriers and impacts can be fully understood, I consider that one of the first priorities of the newly created council should be to provide advice to the health minister on this matter. I intend to recommend to Governor in Council that the council's membership include a First Nations member who is able to advise and support the council in considering these issues.


In the past, Queensland Health has overseen the regulation of pharmacy business ownership; however, this no longer aligns with the approaches in jurisdictions such as New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. In these jurisdictions an independent regulatory authority handles the task of regulating pharmacy business ownership, and these bodies are primarily funded through industry fees and comprise a diverse range of members. During consultation, many stakeholders strongly advocated for a regulatory approach similar to other states, and these stakeholders felt that a council with practical experience in the pharmacy industry would be better placed to regulate pharmacy business ownership in Queensland.

This bill will bring Queensland into line with those other jurisdictions by establishing the Queensland Pharmacy Business Ownership Council. The council will serve as a regulatory entity responsible for enforcing and administering the ownership restrictions on pharmacy businesses in Queensland. The council must have at least five members appointed based on recommendations from the minister. Persons eligible for council membership include an owner of a licensed pharmacy business or director of a corporate owner, a practising pharmacist employed by a licensed pharmacy business,

or an individual with expertise or qualifications in areas such as accounting, business, financial management, law or pharmacy business operations. Additionally, the minister may recommend the appointment of a consumer representative to the council or another member who the minister considers is appropriate or beneficial to the performance of the council's functions.

I now turn to the licensing framework which is intended to ensure the council can efficiently and effectively supervise pharmacy business ownership in Queensland. The bill will require owners to obtain a licence for each of their businesses with an annual renewal process. This will help to ensure the safety and quality of healthcare services provided to the public. It will also help to regulate the pharmacy industry by ensuring pharmacies meet specific premise standards, adhere to relevant legislative requirements and maintain high levels of professionalism.

The Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill aims to promote professional and safe pharmacy services by pharmacy businesses. Through maintaining ownership restrictions, establishing a regulatory council and requiring appropriate oversight over pharmacy businesses we can ensure Queenslanders can continue to receive quality health care closer to home. The bill is not just about maintaining the community pharmacy model; it is about protecting the health and safety of everyone who walks through the doors of a pharmacy. In every neighbourhood in every town, pharmacies offer health services that extend far beyond simply filling prescriptions. We recognise and we celebrate the contributions of pharmacies and pharmacists to the health and wellbeing of our communities. By requiring that pharmacies are primarily owned and operated by pharmacists we are ensuring that patient centred care, clinical expertise and professional integrity are upheld. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (12.58 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. At the outset I can advise that the LNP will not be opposing the bill. The Pharmacy Business Ownership Act has been in place since 2001 and has been amended significantly over that time. Despite numerous different amendments, the government now say that the act is outdated and limits Queensland Health's ability to ensure compliance with its requirements. As such, the bill before us now repeals the 2001 act and replaces it with what will hopefully be a more modern and effective framework for the regulation of the ownership of pharmacy businesses.


The policy objectives of the bill are to: clarify the requirements in the 2001 act relating to who may own or hold an interest in a pharmacy business and retain the limits on the number of pharmacy businesses that a person may own or hold an interest in; establish a regulatory council as a statutory body to administer the act and transfer regulatory functions from Queensland Health to the council; establish a licensing framework for the ownership of and interest in pharmacy businesses; and prohibit the council from issuing a licence if the pharmacy business is located in a supermarket.

Debate, on motion of Ms Bates, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Miles Labor Government, Performance

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Today the government could have come into this House and said that they had listened and charted an alternative path for Queenslanders. They have done neither. What did they say today about the health crisis, the housing crisis, the cost-of-living crisis and the youth crime crisis? Absolutely nothing! In fact, the Premier would not even say the words 'youth crime crisis'. He is the only person in this place who refuses to admit that Queensland is in the grip of a youth crime crisis. Instead, today we heard crass personal attacks. For 3½ years I have seen this government silence whistleblowers. Today they silenced their frontbench. Who would have thought that ministerial statement time would not get off the mark? I am not sure what sort of schoolboy antics that was but, boy oh boy, I have never seen anything like it in my time in this place. This is a government so devoid of an agenda that it just ran out of things to say.

While the Labor Party spent question time trying to run a scare campaign for their political survival, we were focussed on taking up the fight for a family whose father will not be there to see his grandkids grow up. We made a promise to Russell Bates's family that his loss will not be in vain. There will be a legacy from that tragedy. They reached out to the minister—

A government member interjected.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I take that interjection because it shows you everything you need to know. I am going to take the interjection, 'Another tragedy'. You bet it was and they did not deserve it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Comments will come through the chair and you will use correct titles.

Mr Whiting interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bancroft, you will cease your interjections.

Mr Whiting interjected.

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

Mr CRISAFULLI: That family reached out to the minister after the minister said on TV, 'Please, come. My door is open.' For three weeks they heard nothing. They came to the opposition and heard something on that day. Today the minister's defence is that she was not made aware of it. I am not sure how dysfunctional the minister's office is, but if such an email comes across my desk no-one will wait for three weeks. If ever you needed proof of a minister who is out of her depth and lacks compassion, a dysfunctional office and a government that has stopped caring, there it is for all to see.

The family has been failed in the care that Russell received and they did not get answers today. We are not going to stop until they do. Russell was a military man. He was an educator. He was a Lego legend. His legacy is going to matter to Queensland, it is going to matter to the family and it is going matter to this government because—

Ms Fentiman: It does matter. Of course it matters.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I take the interjection. If it matters, the minister should call a part 9 investigation and give the family the justice that they deserve. I thank the nurses who urged the family to call Ryan's Rule. Good on them. The minister said she wants proof that there were systemic failures. There is proof of that. The minister can continue to stonewall but the family deserves a full-blown part 9 investigation, not an internal investigation. This sounds a lot like Caboolture. It sounds a lot like Mackay. It sounds a lot like a government that is conducting itself in exactly the same way that it has for the past 3½ years.

Ms Fentiman: I am happy to call one once the investigation is complete.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Again, I take the interjection. If the minister is happy to call one, please, call one today because it is clear that there are systemic issues.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Waterford! There are far too many members arguing directly across the chamber and comments are not being directed through the chair. I will start to warn people. The member for Bancroft is already on a warning, in case he did not hear that.

Mr CRISAFULLI: To be clear, I will take every one of the interjections from the health minister because I am very confident that we will get to a point in the process where the minister will be forced to call a part 9 investigation. For the sake of the family, let us do it today. This appears to be a government that is constantly trying to find ways to sweep things under the carpet. They need to be up-front and admit that there are issues. Let us make sure that no other family goes through what the Bates family is going through.

While this government spent question time on a politically charged attack, Queenslanders learnt that their electricity charges are rising more than anywhere else in the country. The Australian Energy Regulator has announced that Queenslanders are likely to see an increase in their bills in the order of \$53. In most other states costs are going down. In only one other state is it going up and it is less than the increase in Queensland.

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Woodridge and member for Buderim, you are both warned under the standing orders.

Mr CRISAFULLI: There are two things unique to Queensland: a power plant that has been offline for more than 1,000 days and a very bad government that does not care about the cost of living. Those are the two things that are unique to this place and this state. In the past year, Queensland had a

19.9 per cent power rise, which is three times the national average, and now another \$53 will be added to bills. That is the biggest increase in the country when other jurisdictions are going backwards. Their power will be cheaper. When it comes to power generation, it is unique to have a government that for 1,000 days has had no answers on the Callide power plant.


While the government spent question time playing political games, the future of the infrastructure legacy of the Olympic and Paralympic Games took another step backwards. The history of this has to be told because for almost 1,000 days the government has tried to justify a plan written on the back of a coaster, on the world stage, for a \$1 billion redevelopment that became a \$2.7 billion knockdown that was, in fact, \$3.4 billion and Queenslanders were not even told. When the government was yelling and screaming that the opposition did not back the Olympic Games because we were not prepared to skittle a sports stadium, we stood our ground. We listened to Queenslanders. For 1,000 days this state has had missed opportunities when it comes to the delivery of infrastructure. Let me again make it very clear to the government: 1,000 days ago, we called for an independent delivery authority and those opposite ridiculed us. They even employed a former Labor minister as a consultant to try to justify their position. They said, 'Just trust us. This is the only available option. This is best bang for buck. Rachel said so.'

In the end, on a dime, less than a fortnight after, we saw one of the most ridiculous internal cook-up jobs you have ever seen. If ever you need proof of what happens when people in very high office have political leanings that they cannot break the shackles of, that report showed it. The government cooked up a plan that said that the only option was to knock down a stadium without a business case. We said that project did not have our support and I think that was fair and reasonable.

We need to get back to what the Olympic and Paralympic Games were sold to Queenslanders on: a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build generational infrastructure—including road and rail—and a 20-year tourism strategy so that every part of this state can benefit. The most accessible games should mean cities in this state have accessibility that is great for tourism. We want to see a communication strategy to ensure that during disasters every part of Queensland can benefit from the Olympic and Paralympic Games. That is what we were sold—projects such as heavy passenger rail all the way to Maroochydore. We do not need a half-baked solution but the full monty that was promised. Instead, this government has walked away from what the games were all about. It has squandered a thousand days. I assure Queenslanders: if the government changes in October, we will make sure that an independent infrastructure delivery authority delivers projects that are generational for this state.

It is clear that Queenslanders no longer trust this government. They do not trust it to fix the Queensland health crisis, despite the conveyor belt of ministers with the same excuses. They do not trust it to fix the housing crisis, despite announcements of massive funds that have never built a single new property in which Queenslanders can live. They do not trust it on the cost-of-living because they are living it through their power prices. They do not trust it on youth crime when repeat offenders are ripping the heart and soul out of communities. There is a message to us: keep going on these issues; keep focusing on the challenges; keep putting forward solutions. No fear campaign and no scare tactics will change the fact that this is a very bad government in its dying days.

Liberal National Party

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (2.11 pm): I am delighted to be able to address some of the comments from the Leader of the Opposition. Firstly, in terms of the investigations that are underway at Logan Hospital, there is a clinical review internal to the hospital. There is also a root cause analysis which does involve external independent clinicians. There is also a coroner who has extensive independent powers. As I have said today, if anything comes back from those reviews that suggests any issues are systemic, I have absolutely no problems with ordering a part 9 investigation. It is absolutely not correct to say that I will be forced into it because, as the Leader of the Opposition well knows, there are processes that need to be underway with clinicians. Doctors and nurses, who he wants to put back in charge, do these reviews. I am prepared to listen to the doctors and the nurses. Once we get that report, I will absolutely act if we need to—if there are systemic issues.

I note that the Leader of the Opposition says he will not stop in making sure this family and their father are not forgotten. If the leader is so concerned, why has he not gone out today, addressed the media and answered questions about why he believes there needs to be a part 9?

Mrs Gerber interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Pause the clock. Resume your seat, please, member for Waterford. Member for Currumbin, that interjection was extreme. You are warned under the standing orders.

Ms FENTIMAN: If the Leader of the Opposition is so concerned about systemic issues at Logan Hospital, why has he not fronted the media today to talk about the problems that he believes are happening at Logan Hospital? I wonder why he did not stand up yesterday to answer questions about his party's position on the Olympics. The reason is that the Leader of the Opposition is weak and is hiding from the media. He hid yesterday from the media and he is hiding today from the media.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, you are warned under the standing orders.

Ms FENTIMAN: I remember what happened to Logan Hospital when the Leader of the Opposition was a cabinet minister. I was a lawyer acting for the nurses sacked at Logan Hospital. I remember what happened to mental health when the Leader of the Opposition was a cabinet minister. I remember when the Barrett Adolescent Centre was closed. The Leader of the Opposition has still not apologised. I remember meeting with women. I was a board member of the Logan women's health centre that was gagged from speaking out and that lost funding. Those women still remember. They still remember when BreastScreen Queensland had its funding cut. The Leader of the Opposition has never apologised to the nurses at Logan Hospital who lost their jobs, to the Logan women's health centre that lost its funding or to BreastScreen Queensland that lost its funding. That is the Leader of the Opposition's record. He is too weak to tell us what his policy is on health.


We know what their policy is on health because the member for Mudgeeraba, the shadow health minister, told us. She said that she aspires to Campbell Newman's record on health. I know what that means: nurses and doctors losing their jobs, social workers and physios losing their jobs, and NGOs and community organisations such as the Centre Against Sexual Violence in Logan and Logan women's health losing their funding—and not just losing their funding but being gagged from talking about it. That is Campbell Newman's legacy on health and that is what the member for Mudgeeraba says she aspires to. The Leader of the Opposition is too weak to tell us what his policies are. He is too weak to front the media for two days in a row when there are clearly very serious questions about his party's position—

Dr Rowan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Moggill, you are warned.

Ms FENTIMAN:—not just on health policy but on a whole range of issues, particularly when it comes to Olympics infrastructure. Instead, he sends out his deputy, Jarrod Bleijie, whom no-one understands. What do they all remember about the member for Kawana? The worst attorney-general in Queensland's history. That is their front person. That is who has to answer the tough questions. Of course, he could not answer them because they do not have a position. They do not have a policy on health. They do not have a policy on the Olympics. It is about time this weak leader, who has never apologised to Queenslanders for the cuts and chaos they inflicted, stepped up to tell Queenslanders his plans.

Miles Labor Government, Performance

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.16 pm): This is a government rotting before our very eyes. I say to the Minister for Health: we will not forget the 15 young Queensland kids who died under her watch when she was the child safety minister. Every portfolio she has touched has turned to custard. Did she apologise? No. You want to talk about the media. The family did media today and we were advised—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Direct your comments through the chair.

Mr BLEIJIE: We were advised that the minister sent out Logan Hospital to do media today—not this minister. She sends out bureaucrats—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, I know that we are debating issues that are deeply and passionately held, but we still have a duty to act in a parliamentary manner and should be observing the standing orders. I have many members on warnings already. I will warn many more and I will start to send members from the chamber. I ask that this debate proceed in a much more orderly manner.

Mr BLEIJIE: The LNP asked the good residents of Ipswich West and Inala to send the Labor government a message on the weekend and, boy, they did. They sent a message on the cost of living, on crime, on housing and on the health crisis. They sent a message to a nine-year-old, dying government that the people of Queensland are not happy. Let's look at some comments the Treasurer has made about similar issues in the past. He said—

Let us do a progress check on the electoral performance of the LNP under the member for Broadwater. Just how big did the Leader of the Opposition win at his very first electoral test—the Stretton by-election? It was a complete failure. It was a total debacle.

He went on—

My message to the Leader of the Opposition is: you better look out! Look out for all of those champions on the backbench and the front bench who are all getting ready to take the job.

That is when the Leader of the Opposition achieved a few per cent swing in a by-election. Imagine what the Treasurer thinks about that now? What does the Treasurer think about Premier Steven Miles's performance on the weekend, when there were swings of 30 per cent and 18 per cent? There was a swing of 30 per cent in Labor's strongest seat in Queensland, in their heartland. What does the Treasurer think about those results from the weekend?

On Saturday night when he got on the news on the election loss in Ipswich West he was so arrogant he could not heed the message that had just been sent. He stuck to his talking points because he does not listen. They are the same old talking points. Premier Miles is just not up to the job. Everybody knows it. We saw no ministerial statements this morning. They cannot even talk about nine years in government. No minister could stand up this morning and talk about their record in office because we know it is not a good record.

Look at the Olympic and Paralympic games and the absolute debacle that has been overseen by whom? Premier Miles because he was the responsible minister for the Gabba blowouts. Every single project he touched blew out and now we see it. Today I asked the Premier whether Annastacia Palaszczuk was still running the government, because she was with John Coates at an exclusive restaurant in Sydney having dinner. Then there was the announcement yesterday from the government which was John Coates' announcement. The Premier asked me today: 'What did the Premier have for lunch?' I looked up the menu of this particular restaurant. I say to the Premier that maybe she had the Margaret Double Bay 'Tin Black Pearl Oscietra Gold Caviar with Crème Fraîche' for \$460!

Maybe that is what Annastacia Palaszczuk had for lunch. We always knew she liked the champagne, the red carpet and the glitz and glamour. There she is with John Coates having a \$460 meal.

Everybody is abandoning the Labor Party including Labor members of parliament. We have seen the member for Maryborough trying to move to a different political party.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members! Member for Gregory and member for Maryborough, cease your quarrelling across the chamber.

Mr BLEIJIE: Today I can disclose to the House that Labor Party MPs are debranding from the Labor Party. I table all of these—the member for Caloundra, the member for Cairns, the member for Barron River.

Tabled paper: Extracts, dated 12 March 2024 and 19 March 2024, from various newspapers, depicting the member for Caloundra, Mr Jason Hunt MP, the member for Cairns, Hon. Michael Healy, and the member for Barron River, Mr Craig Crawford MP [\[392\]](#).

They are all debranding. What is worse is that the union movement have set up the Coalition of Working Families and they are asking constituents to fill out a survey about cost of living. The problem for their constituents is that it is not going to their member of parliament; it is going to the union. I say to Queenslanders in Caloundra, Barron River and Cairns in particular: do not fill out this survey because it is the union movement data harvesting for the October election!


The Labor members are ashamed to be members of the Labor Party, and so they should because they have failed Queenslanders on the cost-of-living crisis. They are so ashamed to be members of the Labor Party that they have debranded. Even Minister Grace is shocked. She does not even know as a senior minister what her Labor members are doing. They are abandoning the Labor Party.

(Time expired)

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House will come to order. Before I call the next speaker, I am going to take some advice. I call the member for Woodridge.

Liberal National Party

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (2.22 pm): The weekend electoral results clearly demonstrate that the Leader of the Opposition could become premier of Queensland—and aren't those members opposite celebrating! Their arrogance, their backslapping—they are all celebrating, measuring up the curtains for the ministerial office. They are all ready to go.

What the results on the weekend reveal is this: the LNP leader needs to stop being weak and start answering the hard questions. At his first test—the very first test after the by-election—the Leader of the Opposition squibbed it. The Leader of the Opposition has been asked consistently what his position on Olympic venues is, and he has hidden from the media for 36 hours. He did not have the fortitude to stand up and tell Queensland what his position was.

Still the LNP leader hides and he is hiding behind an 'independent review'. The question for the Leader of the Opposition is simple: does the Leader of the Opposition support our plan for a great value games or does he support spending \$3.4 billion on the vanity Victoria Park project? The Leader of the Opposition refuses to say. What does the Leader of the Opposition do when he cannot make a decision? He sends out the deputy leader, the member for Kawana, to defend the non-decision—his decision to outsource any independent thinking to an 'independent review'. That is what we need. Remember when the Leader of the Opposition promised to 'win big'? Remember when he said that? He cannot hide behind slick slogans anymore.

The Leader of the Opposition must rule out the Victoria Park vanity stadium or he needs to explain how he is going to fund it. What will happen if the independent review panel recommends that it be built? Where will he get the \$3.4 billion—and the rest—to build it? This is just another financial time bomb that is being set by a weak Leader of the Opposition and his weak deputy. All of these time bombs arise from the weakness of the Leader of the Opposition and his inability and failure to make tough decisions.

The Sunshine Coast rail extension needs an extra \$6.6 billion to keep the member for Maroochydore happy. To keep the property sector happy the LNP leader needs to find \$2 billion in handouts for his solar landlord scheme. How many billions will Queenslanders pay for his plan to adopt the New South Wales GST funding scheme? The Leader of the Opposition does not have a clue. He has absolutely no idea.

The unfunded commitments and the thought bubbles are all adding up, and we are keeping a tally. We are keeping a tally of LNP lies and we are keeping a tally of LNP unfunded promises. They are all adding up to one thing.

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

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. I think I know where your point of order is going.

Mr BLEIJIE: After 15 years of convention about unparliamentary language, the Treasurer should know better. I ask him to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Firstly, when you are taking a point of order I do not need the additional commentary. I ask the Deputy Premier to withdraw the unparliamentary language.

Mr DICK: I withdraw. They are all adding up to a serious risk to Queenslanders. We saw this happen before. In 2012 the member for Broadwater was elected to government with what? Unfunded promises. There were all the dishonest platitudes—public servants had nothing to fear. The unfunded promises led to one thing: a massive cuts assault on the people of Queensland. That is what happened: 14,000 people lost their jobs because of unfunded promises—4,400 health workers including 1,800 nurses and midwives. That is what is on offer from this weak leader of the LNP and this weak deputy leader—more unfunded promises, more failures to take decisions and more cuts to fill their black hole.


They cannot run away from it. They are going to fund a rail line. Nobody knows where the \$6.6 billion is coming from. They are going to put \$2 billion into their solar landlord scheme to line the pockets of landlords to keep the property sector happy. That is exactly what they have done. They are

going to cut progressive coal royalties. The people of Queensland will pay. They will pay dearly. They will pay severely. That is exactly what will happen. The Leader of the Opposition is a slick politician, but the reality is that he has the same beliefs of every LNP leader before him who has stood in this place. His budget black hole will lead to cuts to frontline services and cuts to cost-of-living relief when Queenslanders can least afford it. Queenslanders cannot risk the LNP.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House will come to order.

Bates, Mr R

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.28 pm): He walked in there a relatively healthy man up until that minor fall and left in a body bag. That is how the family of Russell Bates described what happened to him at Logan Hospital. Clearly Mr Bates did not receive the care that anyone would expect for a loved one in a Queensland hospital in 2024. It is not the fault of the hardworking staff of Logan Hospital. What would we do without them? They are the only ones keeping the broken system together.

The minister today would not even front the media at Logan. Instead she sent out the staff. Clearly something has gone wrong—very wrong. Russell had to wait in a corridor for hours due to ambulance ramping. Even when he was attended to, his family had to plead for more assistance when he continued to deteriorate. Russell was lucky that he had his family close by fighting for him. How many others have not been so lucky?

Russell's treatments were not working. It got to the point where nurses advised the family to call Ryan's Rule to get more help. Again I quote the family—

The nurses were so concerned about Dad. They were running around the hospital looking for people to help him.

Eventually a perforated bowel was discovered; sepsis had set in. Russell's life support system was turned off 12 days after seeking help at Logan Hospital. His family said—

The kidney doctor on day 11 said to us, 'We wish we'd known about this three days ago. He could have had a chance.'

Can you imagine that? Imagine being told, essentially, 'Your dad is going to die, but it could have been avoided.' Now the family must wait for up to two years to get a report from the coroner—two years of uncertainty—so where is the closure for this family? Where is the justice for Russell? I have spoken to this family. The Leader of the Opposition and I met with the family. They are hurt and they are angry. They did not know that their 2023 Christmas with their active, Lego-loving dad and doting grandfather would be their last. The family has said—

Enough is enough, health minister. Steven Miles, fix your system.

They are right: the failures in care received by Russell are just a symptom of a system that is broken.


Queensland Health has deteriorated over many years under various health ministers: it deteriorated when the now Treasurer was minister for health; it deteriorated when the now Attorney-General was minister for health; and it deteriorated when the now Premier was minister for health. We are now up to our fourth health minister under this government. To quote the Leader of the Opposition, 2024 is sounding a lot like 2023. The ministerial titles have changed, but the same failed ministers are sitting around the same cabinet table making the same decisions and refusing to deal with the Queensland health crisis. The family said—

... us speaking out is not going to bring Dad back but how can we get this message out to the health minister, to the government to ensure this doesn't happen to someone else's family? It's got to stop.

That is a cry from a family who feels like the government is not listening to them. I say to the health minister on behalf of the family: will you give Russell's family justice? Will the minister initiate a part 9 investigation to get to the bottom of what went wrong in this case? The family should not have to wait two years. Investigations done behind closed doors with findings that will be kept secret also will not provide comfort for this family. That is why, on behalf of the family, the LNP have asked for a part 9 inquiry and a commitment from this minister that the results will be made public. The minister had an opportunity today to commit to this course. It is a path this minister has so far refused to take, and we have to ask why. Is this minister committed to fixing the health crisis or is this minister more interested in saving her own political skin?

'Let the sunshine in,' called Professor Coaldrake. I do not see sunshine; I see a government that is more interested in operating in the dark. I see a government that is more interested in hiding the truth about what is happening in our hospitals than in saving Queenslanders in their hour of need. The Bates family need answers. They need answers from a minister who cares, not one who sends staff out to bear the brunt of what happened to this family. This should never happen to any family in Queensland. It has to stop.

Liberal National Party

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (2.33 pm): I think there were a few misleading lines reiterated there. The minister has made her position perfectly clear in this House a number of times.

A government member interjected.

Ms GRACE: Yes, there is no need to mislead; she has made her position very clear. It is no good coming in here saying there have been refusals and the rest. There is a process; she has made it clear. It is a tragedy. Saying that she is refusing to do certain things—

An honourable member interjected.

Ms GRACE: I will take that interjection—is misleading. That will occur within the time. Of course these are tragedies. My family in Hobart recently went through a similar experience at the Hobart Hospital. We were recently down there talking to them about a sad loss in our family. These things happen. They are tragic. My family has still not recovered from some of it. I am not going to go into the detail. This is not the time or the place. Of course we have sympathy for the families when tragedies occur.

If those opposite truly believe that if they get into government a similar incident will never happen because suddenly they occupy the government benches then they are misled as well. These tragedies happen in hospitals—just like it happened when those opposite closed the Barrett centre and young people lost their lives. We did not come into government and sack 14,000 public servants. Nurses and midwives could not believe they were being sacked from hospitals. Imagine that happening to the hospital system. I say to those opposite: yes, these are very sad circumstances. No-one understands it more. We will go through the process and commit to what the minister has—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): The members for Mudgeeraba, Gympie and Maryborough will all cease their interjections.

Mr Saunders interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Maryborough, you are warned. You have continued your cross-chamber banter as I have been trying to get your attention.

Ms GRACE: We understand the issues facing Queensland and Australia. Having recently come back from Hobart I can say that they are facing exactly the same issues under a Liberal government. There were issues with housing, with youth crime, with the cost of living and with health. They have exactly the same issues under a Liberal government. The truth of the matter is that these issues are being faced all over Australia at the moment post COVID. We understand that and people out there do. That is not to say that we do not address these issues. Housing, hospitals, schools and transport are all in our plans to deliver, as well as the infrastructure we need to deliver a world-class 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games and a lasting community legacy across the state. We are going to make the most of the opportunity that being firmly at the centre of the world stage gives us, and we are going to do it within our own existing funding envelope.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition get up and say a few things about this issue today. I have never heard people doublespeak and not actually say anything. They know we are working on an independent delivery authority to deliver the games. That will be in place by mid-July, so I am not sure exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is referring to when he says 'if after October all of a sudden this delivery authority materialises'. It will materialise; we have made that commitment perfectly clear. I want to take this opportunity to thank Graham Quirk, Ken Kanofski and Michelle Morris for their thought processes.

An opposition member interjected.

Ms GRACE: We did not ignore them; we implemented 27 of the 30 recommendations and—


Mr Nicholls interjected.

Ms GRACE: Read page 31 of the report. They presented what they said about Victoria Park. The report states—

... while initial indications are positive, the findings presented here are preliminary in nature and need more work to be validated before they can be relied upon properly.

The Premier has made his position very clear in relation to the \$3.4 billion. There is no such clear position from those opposite. I say to those opposite: instead of reading menus from restaurants—and ex-premiers are free to do whatever they want—maybe you should study the report and come up with a position, because that is what the people of Queensland are going to demand.

North Queensland, Water Infrastructure

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.38 pm): You cannot develop North Queensland without developing water storage. The attitude of this government and the Minister for Water towards the development of water in the north really shows how much they care about North Queensland. At every turn the minister and his department have thrown a spoke in the wheel of any development we have tried to do in the north-west and Etheridge shire.

We stagnate not only as a region but as a state and a nation if the starting point for everything is to keep everything pristine. I am convinced that is the attitude of the department. You have to prove that nothing will be unsettled downstream before you even get a project. Normally, going by our history, the government comes up with some leadership and says that it wants to facilitate development in the area: 'Let's build the infrastructure. Let's build Lake Julius, Lake Moondarra, the Burdekin Dam. We will build it and let's see what happens with private industry.' This has all happened the other way around. We have some poor sods out there who are trying their best, risking all of their capital and making it their life's work. They are calling out for the government to give them a bit of the water that is flowing out into the river every year—3.8 million megalitres—and it throws a spoke in every wheel so they cannot do it.

It is entirely acting the other way. When we put a cooperative together like HIPCo, they got \$180 million off the federal government. They won a tender, which eventually just ended up being who has the most money in a tender, not who has the best project. It is not the one which has the most regional development; it is just who has the most money to offer for water. The government have demonstrated that they are happy for everyone to just sit on these sleeper licences. Once they get through the process, every condition in the book is thrown at them, and some of them are absolutely farcical. You cannot look at this without drawing the conclusion that these people do not want anything to develop in this area.

I will just give one of the clangers that came out in the tender process. If you won the tender process in the Flinders and paid top dollar for the water, you had to go to every user in the Flinders downstream from you and say, 'Would you mind signing an indemnity letter?' If you affected them downstream anything up to one per cent, you had to get an indemnity letter off them. This is everyone you just competed against in the tender, so you have got Buckley's of doing that. No-one is going to agree to that. No-one who just competed with you about the same water is going to sign a letter to say, 'No problem. I'm happy for you to have the water.' That was just one of the many conditions put in there that was designed to fail. That is not my assessment; that was an assessment done for the department in December last year. The minister's own press release said—

... the Gulf Water Plan Performance Assessment Report found ... it did not support growth in irrigated agriculture and in the emerging minerals industry.

They probably should have told all these people, like Andrew Pauli, who is busting himself out at Richmond in the hot sun trying to keep old machinery alive and maintaining it himself. He is trying to make a go of things, trying to get a little bit of water out of this river. He put 20 grand of his own money up there and he just lost it in the tender process. Shouldn't the minister have told him that first if he said that nothing in there was to 'support growth in irrigated agriculture'? If the government does not want us to survive up there in the north-west, please tell us now.


We need access to some of these resources if we are going to progress in the future. That was done in the south-west and all through Central Queensland; they got to do that as they developed. That is how Emerald, St George, Mareeba and Burdekin have developed. That is how they got their toehold in and they built towns around that, and then other industries can come in on top of that. This does not

happen by sitting passively here in Brisbane hoping someone else does it. The government has to be proactive; that is how it works. The government is not being proactive, but people up there are being proactive and the government is throwing everything possible in front of them to say that they do not want it to go ahead. I am absolutely convinced that is the case.

Let me get to some of the facts. The surface water available in the Flinders is two million megalitres, with 3.8 million megalitres of average annual flow. Even on the two million, that is four times the water in Sydney Harbour going down there every year. It used to be six million megalitres in the 1980s but CSIRO recalibrated that. The data is all patchy because a lot of it relies on stream flow records. If that stream flow record from the 2019 floods is accurate—where we saw an ocean of water going up through the gulf—I am a monkey's uncle. It is not being measured properly and there are myriad examples where there are flaws in the data. The government is so precisely relying on that and carefully holding on to that. There are about 107,000 megalitres being used at the moment out of this whole thing, which means about 200,000 megalitres is not being used.

(Time expired)

Leader of the Opposition, Performance

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works) (2.43 pm): In my first speech in this place, I recited the following quote—

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

As a 24-year-old at the time on a 0.7 per cent margin, I knew the importance of taking a position on difficult issues, even when it is hard. The Leader of the Opposition has been in politics for a really long time. He has learned how to be slick and slippery, how to duck and weave on any question where he has to actually articulate a position of his or the LNP's. No clearer was that than yesterday—

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order in relation to parliamentary language. The words that were used were clearly unparliamentary. In fact, they were ruled out of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Thank you for your point of order. I will take some advice.

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was not looking for advice from you, Leader of the Opposition. I apologise, but I did not hear the contribution as I was reading something. The Clerk has advised me of the language used. The Speaker made rulings earlier in the day in relation to a number of words that have been used. I encourage members to write them out of their speeches. I ask the minister to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Ms SCANLON: I withdraw. No clearer was that than yesterday and today when the Leader of the Opposition failed to make the tough decision and actually front the media and tell people what their position is on the Olympics. Instead, he hid behind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Crisafulli: 43,074 Queenslanders on the social housing waiting list and this is what the minister is focused on.

Ms SCANLON: I take the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. We have no indication of what the opposition's plans or values are so all we can do is judge what you did last time. On International Women's Day, the Leader of the Opposition said—

Imagine how much we as a state, all of us, will be stronger if we can have more women at the table making the decisions that matter.

We do not have to imagine it because we actually have women in this government who sit at the cabinet table and are a part of our caucus and make decisions, but I understand why those opposite might need to imagine it. Even a *Brisbane Times* article pointed out this week—

The LNP's team in the single-house Queensland parliament has the lowest proportion of women of any parliament in the country. The Leader of the Opposition pretends like he is some ally of women—

Mr O'Connor interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bonney, you are warned.

Ms SCANLON: He pretends like he is some ally of women, but his actions demonstrate otherwise—like voting to keep abortion a crime in Queensland, like cutting funding to domestic and family violence in his own community, like funding BreastScreen Queensland. In fact, when an MP in his own party actually broke the record of being the youngest woman elected to parliament, rather than

backing her, he literally moved from one side of the state to the other to take her seat for his own political ambition. He says he is an ally of women—unless they get in his way. What has he done for the Gold Coast since he was elected and took that seat off the youngest woman in parliament? He made a big song and dance about promoting someone to be the shadow minister for integrity. I do not know where the Leader of the Opposition was when there was story after story about his long-held friend, the member for Fadden, Stuart Robert. He did not seem to be too interested in integrity then.

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr Bleijie interjected.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Mudgeeraba, you are under a warning. You can leave the chamber for an hour. You have continued to interject.

Whereupon the honourable member for Mudgeeraba withdrew from the chamber at 2.48 pm.

Ms SCANLON: I take the deputy leader's interjection. Just last year, where was the Leader of the Opposition when his own colleagues in Canberra blocked investment in 30,000 social and affordable homes? The member for Bonney might think it is funny, but I can assure him that those vulnerable Queenslanders do not think it is funny when the opposition block investment in housing. We know that they have a track record of opposing housing. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition promoted the very same man who cut social housing last time by 428 homes. They cut the social housing construction program, they did not commence a single social home on the Gold Coast when the member for Everton was the minister and they sacked 1,600 QBuild workers. They took the extraordinary step of actually defunding Tenants Queensland and then saying no to Commonwealth government funding. At almost every opportunity, the member for Everton comes into this House and has a go at renters.

I know that the deputy leader also gets up and wants to talk about the private market. Well, here are some facts for him. On average, there have been fewer homes commenced, approved and constructed under the LNP per quarter than there have been under our government. It is only a Labor government that will deliver through our Homes for Queenslanders plan—a plan that those opposite have suggested is too much. We know that means they are going to cut. There is a very real possibility that the Leader of the Opposition will be elected to be the Premier of this state, so he needs to stop being weak and articulate what their plans are. In the absence of that, all we know they will do is cut.

Miles Labor Government, Integrity

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (2.49 pm): Last Saturday I spent several hours supporting Darren Zanow, the fantastic member-elect for Ipswich West—hardworking, local, experienced—a breath of fresh air for the good people of Ipswich West, who have been taken for granted for far too long by the broken and chaotic Labor Party. Darren understands the issues facing families in Ipswich West: the youth crime crisis, the cost-of-living crisis, the health crisis and the housing crisis. He also understands issues of trust—trust in government—and those are issues that Darren and the LNP campaigned on. Indeed, they were the issues on our how-to-vote cards. Imagine my surprise while at the Karalee State School election booth when I saw some suspicious characters lining up with the Legalise Cannabis Queensland Party. Those characters were consorting with ALP booth workers and then very obviously pulling on a green Legalise Cannabis Party T-shirt and lining up to hand out pot party how-to-vote cards. Let's have a look at those how-to-vote cards. The authentic pot party how-to-vote card was authorised, of course, by someone from Nimbin—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Member for Clayfield, you will either read some of that—

Mr NICHOLLS: I table that document.

Tabled paper: Brochure from the Legalise Cannabis Party relating to the Ipswich West by-election [\[393\]](#).

No preferences are recommended, of course. They were obviously a bit high to work it out that day. Let's have a look at the fake how-to-vote card being handed out by the suspicious pot party branded workers. The fake how-to-vote card recommended preferences to the Labor Party. Who, I wondered, had smoked the bong and visited the land of the lotus-eaters? Who was on the Maui Wowie? Who was on the wacky tobacky? I checked the authorisation on the bottom of that card. It was authorised by a Mr S Bowman, level 13, 333 Adelaide Street, Brisbane. Who occupies that auspicious office? The Brisbane branch of the Australian Workers' Union. Who is Mr Bowman? He is the Southern District Organiser of the Australian Workers' Union who on 8 March 2023, alongside other AWU operatives like Joey Kaiser, state secretary Stacey Schinnerl and assistant secretary Kurt Neumann met the then deputy premier and now Premier. According to the Premier's diary, he then went on to meet Joey's dad, Mike Kaiser, his director-general. It is the very same AWU that the Deputy Premier,

the Attorney-General, the transport minister, the member for Sandgate, the member for Stafford and many other Labor MPs are all members of, who owe their political allegiance and their political life to the AWU and who are now all obviously signed-up supporters of the stoners at the AWU who support the Legalise Cannabis Party. Here is the question: which one of them is Cheech and which one is Chong? We all know that the ALP is going up in smoke and, after last Saturday, they are still smoking.

Tabled paper: Leaflet relating to the Legalise Cannabis Party [394].

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Sandgate, you are warned.

Mr NICHOLLS: There is a far more serious issue at stake here, and that, of course, is the Labor government's and this Premier's lack of integrity. In not condemning this practice, the Premier and Labor condone it. How many times do they say ad nauseam, 'If you walk past it, you support it'? Well, why are they walking past it? What is the AWU aligned Attorney-General doing about this tricky and deceitful action by her union comrades? Will she take action against the AWU for handing out misleading second preference cards? Will she take action to investigate?

Mr Saunders interjected.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Resume your seat, please, member for Clayfield. Member for Maryborough, you are under a warning. You can leave the chamber for an hour, please.

Whereupon the honourable member for Maryborough withdrew from the chamber at 2.53 pm.

Mr NICHOLLS: This is the Attorney-General who said that these changes are about making 'elections fairer, more transparent and just'. In only October she said, 'I am very proud to be part of the Palaszczuk Labor government'—not now so much, of course, we read—'which from day one has been reforming our electoral laws to bring transparency and integrity.'

We know that this Attorney-General has checked out, moved on by her own Premier and her own colleagues. She is disinterested in being in this place and is going through the motions, barely able to get the enthusiasm to turn up, and now not even pretending to care about the integrity of our voting system. This morning the Attorney could have made a ministerial statement. In 45 minutes, there was not one ministerial statement. She could have condemned the actions of the AWU, but what did we hear? Crickets. The Attorney should be inquiring into the blatantly deceptive processes of this union movement and its dishonest people. Tired, out of touch, out of energy—it's time to show Labor the door in 2024.

Electricity Prices

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs) (2.54 pm): Isn't it appropriate to follow the member for Clayfield who, I have to say, I have to say, has just delivered an uncharacteristically juvenile performance? He comes in here and wants to talk about matters of trust. Who could forget that man as the architect of the pain ranking for his cuts to the Queensland Public Service? Has there ever been a more appalling display? This is the bloke who maximised pain for every single Queensland household. As far as I can see, the only—

Mr NICHOLLS: Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at the minister's statements and ask that he withdraw.

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

Mr de BRENNI: I withdraw. As far as I can see, he is the only minister to ever take to the Queensland cabinet a proposal to scrap a cost-of-living rebate. That is his record and I will—

Mr NICHOLLS: Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order—the same point of order with respect to the minister. I take personal offence and ask that he withdraw.

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

Mr de BRENNI: I withdraw. The Miles Labor government, though, has a strong record of supporting Queenslanders. This morning the Australian Energy Regulator released their draft Default Market Offer determination. The report shows that we have delivered the cheapest power of any state in the National Electricity Market. That is the truth. We know that those opposite struggle with the truth.

Worse then, we saw the performance of the member for Nanango, who came in here this morning and demonstrated what could only be described as an embarrassing combination of incompetence and ignorance. Were they here to mislead because they are inept or is it intentional? One has to wonder.

When you properly analyse that report that was released and the data within it—clearly the member for Nanango has not; she was unable to do that—you see that it is cheaper to boil a kettle in Bulimba than in Ballarat; it is cheaper to charge your EV in Cooper than in Coffs Harbour; it is cheaper to run an air-conditioner in Aspley than in Adelaide; and it is cheaper to charge a phone in Ipswich West than in the Illawarra.

Just last week, in a trick out of the Newman playbook, backed in here just moments ago, the Leader of the Opposition chose to intentionally mislead Queenslanders at the *Courier-Mail's* cost-of-living debate. He intentionally ignored key data to deliberately distort figures relating to Queensland household bills. The report released by the AER today acknowledges that the actual price of Queensland household bills are the lowest in the National Electricity Market, yet the LNP continue to tout fantasy figures for their political convenience. If the opposition cannot bring themselves to acknowledge the benefits of a cost-of-living rebate, does anyone believe they will ever deliver one?

Last month the member for Toowoomba South said in this House, 'Past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour.' Isn't that right? The LNP is the only party to ever cancel cost-of-living rebates. When they were last in government the member for Clayfield scrapped a planned \$100 electricity rebate for Queenslanders right before a 21 per cent increase in prices. As the *Brisbane Times* said—

Plans for the rebates have been scrapped, leaving households to bear the full brunt of power price increases.

That is what the member for Clayfield did. That is what they did around that cabinet table—leave Queensland households to bear the full brunt of power price increases. The LNP let power prices go up by 43 per cent. When Queenslanders look at the Liberal National Party, they see something in between ineptitude and intentional deception. Last time they were in office they promised no job cuts, lower electricity prices and no asset sales. Queenslanders know what they delivered: mass sackings. They know what they delivered: skyrocketing electricity prices. They know what they delivered: an asset fire sale.

The opposition's track record speaks for itself. The LNP sells off assets. The LNP sells off controls, and they sell out Queenslanders at every single opportunity. They said 'arrogance', 'bad communication' and 'stupid' decisions killed their government. Don't take my word for it—that is a direct quote from a media interview with the Leader of the Opposition in 2015. There is nothing more that I need to say about this weak and arrogant opposition than their own words. Their shameful record speaks for itself. They scrapped the Cost of Living Rebate, they closed power stations because they said electricity was too cheap and the Leader of the Opposition simply cannot do the maths or, worse still, just cannot tell the truth.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): The time for matters of public interest has expired.

PHARMACY BUSINESS OWNERSHIP BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 658, on motion of Ms Fentiman—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.00 pm): I rise to address the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. Mr Deputy Speaker, I think you will be hearing a lot this afternoon about how important we all in this House consider our pharmacies, pharmacists and their staff to be. Indeed, community pharmacy is the bedrock of frontline health services. That is certainly the case in my communities, and I would anticipate it is the same, regardless of whether you live here in Brisbane or in the far west and far north. They, alongside our general practitioners, our community nurses, our paramedics and our emergency department staff, are often the first port of call and the first profession that we reach out to for medical advice and assistance in our time of need.

In the case of the pharmacist, probably alongside your local general practitioner if you are lucky to have one who has been there for a number of years, they are the ones that you maintain the most lasting connection with. Therefore, as I said, they are very much the bedrock of medical and health services in our communities and they often become a focal point for communities. It is certainly the case in my part of the world.

The Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2021 has now been in place for well over 20 years. It was overdue for a significant overhaul, despite amendments during the 20 years of its operation. This ownership bill repeals the 2001 act and replaces it with a modern and effective framework for regulation of the ownership of pharmacy businesses. I will return to some of the particular aspects that are being implemented through this bill, but it is important to note that this has been quite some time in the making. This bill will finally implement the government response to several recommendations of a 2018 report of the then Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's report No. 12, *Inquiry into the establishment of a pharmacy council and transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland*.

As I said, that kicked off in May 2018. The committee accepted and published 210 written submissions. They obtained a report from the Queensland Audit Office about the administration of transfers of pharmacy ownership. They obtained a report from the Queensland Productivity Commission on the cost-benefit analysis of establishing a pharmacy council in Queensland. They held public hearings right across the state, including in places like Toowoomba, Cairns and Townsville. They met with equivalents in other states, particularly the Victorian Pharmacy Authority. They tabled their report on 16 October 2018 and made 11 recommendations. It was not until April the next year that the government response to the committee report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly. All of the recommendations were accepted in full or in principle, but it was acknowledged that a number of them—recommendations 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11—would require legislative amendment. In essence, that is what we are achieving here today.

This bill went off to the Cost of Living and Economics Committee for consideration and review and it recommended that the bill be passed. There are a number of significant aspects to this bill that I think are worth noting. The policy objectives of the bill include to—

- clarify the requirements in the 2001 Act relating to who may own or hold an interest in a pharmacy business, and retain the limits on the number of pharmacy businesses that a person may own or hold an interest in;

It will, as that committee report recommended, finally—

- establish a regulatory council as a statutory body to administer the Act and transfer regulatory functions from Queensland Health to the council;
- establish a licensing framework for the ownership of and interests in pharmacy businesses;
- prohibit the council from issuing a licence if the pharmacy business is located in a supermarket;
- prohibit third parties from exercising inappropriate control over how pharmacy business owners provide pharmacy services related to medicines and provide that clauses in a contract or agreement that allow a third party to exercise inappropriate control are void;

There are a number of other aspects that this legislation enshrines around the operation of that council.

There was significant support for this legislation, not only through that original committee process but also through the subsequent committee process. There were a number of concerns raised, and I think it is important that we acknowledge those and keep an eye on how this legislation, when implemented, addresses those. A number of stakeholders—AMA Queensland, RACGP, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council and the federal Productivity Commission—did raise concerns around the anti-competitiveness that may come as a consequence of the regulatory framework in this bill. It is important to ensure we look at competitiveness when it comes to any legislation because, at the end of the day, a lack of competitiveness leads to higher costs for our Queensland constituents. As I said, though, you need to weigh that up with the importance of our pharmacies to our communities. I believe, as does the LNP, that the balance is accurate in this legislation, but I think it is worth keeping an eye on whether, as a result of this legislation, those anti-competitive concerns come to fruition.


A number of other pharmacy owners also expressed concern around the undue compliance burdens on their businesses. This is particularly an issue for small and family business owners. As I have said repeatedly in this House, the electorate of Glass House would not exist if it were not for family and small businesses. They are the lifeblood of each and every one of the 26-plus communities in the electorate of Glass House. They provide the services, they provide the essential needs, they provide the employment to each of our communities and without them we would be lost. I always take a keen interest in any piece of legislation that increases regulatory burden on small and family businesses.

I want to reassure those who raised that concern that, should the LNP be fortunate to be able to form government after the 26 October election, we have already committed to restoring the Queensland productivity commission that Labor abolished. A key part of their work will be reducing the regulatory

burden on Queenslanders, especially small and family businesses. I hope we are given that opportunity. I hope that we are able to bring back the Queensland productivity commission. Like previous LNP governments, I know that a focus on red-tape reduction will have huge benefits for small and family businesses in the electorate of Glass House and, indeed, across the entire state.

As I said at the outset, I want to be on the record as supporting this legislation because I support the work of the pharmacists, the pharmacy owners and their staff across each and every community I have the privilege of representing—long may their service continue. I genuinely thank them on behalf of the communities I represent.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Before I call the next member to speak, I remind the House that the following members are on a warning: the members for Bancroft, Woodridge, Buderim, Currumbin, Nanango, Moggill, Bonney, Clayfield and Sandgate.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (3.09 pm): I rise as the chair of the Cost of Living and Economics Committee to endorse the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill. I think all of us in this House have at some time in our lives relied upon our local pharmacist for trusted advice about our health care. I speak from experience. My local pharmacist, Damian Prineas, and I regularly talk. I know of his close and hardworking commitment to the Logan community, especially those who suffer complex and chronic health conditions and those who are elderly. They often rely on him for his advice and services. They also rely on him for the follow-up that comes from a pharmacist who does not just run a business that focuses on the profit and loss but sees their pharmacy credentials and their professionalism as a key part of what they are about and sees their vocation as contributing to health care, especially the careful administration and use of powerful drugs.

I also want to recognise the other pharmacists of Logan, especially in Logan Village and other places, with whom I have had strong dealings on their various business issues. They do an amazing job looking after people. We know that, with so much amazing science and life-improving and indeed life-saving medicines available, the local, human and trusted advice of pharmacists is more vital than ever. I see the care and concern that is shown to patients and I know that makes an enormous difference.

In 2001, former parliamentarians brought into this place a bill about pharmacy ownership and control. We saw then that there were large, uncaring corporate entities in other countries that were diminishing the roles of health care with the aim of using pharmacists to solely maximise corporate profit. That was something that this parliament rightly recognised in 2001 was not good for the people of Queensland and not good for the health care of the people of Queensland. Now in this bill we will clarify that and establish oversight with a statutory regulatory council to administer that act and the regulatory functions that were previously within Queensland Health under the 2001 act.

I want to recognise the advocacy over quite a considerable time of Chris Owen and the rest of the team at the Pharmacy Guild who are with us here today. They have been steady supporters of this bill and worked cooperatively through this process. They know that establishing this licensing framework for the ownership and interests of pharmacy businesses is vital for both the health care of Queenslanders and the functioning of their guild membership to have successful community businesses deeply in contact with the communities they serve.

The bill prohibits the council from issuing a licence if the pharmacy business wants to be located in—and, as was said in discussions, is therefore somewhat controlled by—a supermarket. That is because we recognise that pharmacies are all about health care. When people sometimes need to ask delicate questions of their pharmacist about embarrassing or personal things, that should not be done as the call for discounts and red-light specials is going over the air. That is why that is an important part of this bill.

The bill prohibits third parties from exercising inappropriate control over how pharmacy business owners provide pharmacy services related to medicines. We note that under the 2001 act there were businesses that attempted to have an inappropriate level of control through the provision of medicines and other services. We want to recognise that there should not be workarounds attempting to subvert the nature of the act. We want to see that pharmacy professionals are making caring choices about their patients; we do not want to see profit-driven outside influences playing a part. We also want to ensure that clauses in a contract or agreement that allow a third party to exercise inappropriate control cannot be enforced and will be void.

Importantly, the council will maintain a register of pharmacists to assist the community locate pharmacies and services of pharmacies but also to make someone understand that if someone is claiming to be a pharmacist and they are not on the register then they are indeed not a pharmacist.

The bill modernises the existing provisions relating to the functions and powers of inspectors, legal proceedings, delegations and protections from civil liability. It restricts the disclosure of information obtained in connection with the administration of legislation to limited circumstances and confirms that regulations may be made about fees, waiver of fees, record keeping and pharmacy premises standards.

In the long run this really is a cost-of-living issue, because this health bill focuses on stopping big corporate interests amassing disproportionate market power. If not for this bill, after going through that process of amassing that market power they would then seek to push up prices and force health consumers to take the product that gives the corporate interest the highest profit rather than the medicine that is right for the consumer. I have lived in the United States and I have seen situations where organisations such as CVS would put one pharmacy on one corner and another on the opposite corner—or the kitty corner, as it is called there—in order to maintain market dominance. In that way they could push their particular products and force other smaller pharmacists out of the market. We do not see that as healthy. We see what is in this bill as the right approach.

We know that this bill has opponents. There are those who line up against community pharmacies, and they are on the side of the big corporates. They say, 'Let's just let the market rip. Let the big corporations and their profits decide the health care of the most vulnerable.' On this side of the House we want professionals who are dedicated to a vocation to look after the elderly and chronically unwell first. We recognise that this bill fulfils the intent of the 2001 act and it provides further definitions. The submission of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia states—

- While the *Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001* ... has maintained the foundations for pharmacy business ownership in Queensland, the Act or the inability to ensure compliance with the Act has allowed the creep of corporate entities into the sector. Corporates have been able to exploit the vague and dated legislative provisions, at the expense of community pharmacy, and patients in the communities of those pharmacies.
- To allow large corporations and supermarkets like Coles and Woolworths to own or influence pharmacy businesses, would facilitate analysis, and exploit patient health records. In addition, it would reduce competition—


I think that is over time, not immediately—

and increases upward pressure on the cost of living of Queenslanders, as we have seen in the grocery sector. It would be remiss to expect that the pharmacy profession would be exempt from the price setting practices and market power exerted by the major corporate entities currently within the industry.

I think this is a fact. The other thing I think members should recognise is that the pharmacists themselves are driven by a vocation to give to health care, and keeping community ownership helps drive that. I note there is discussion over the definition of a pharmacy business and future problems that could be encountered. In our report we noted that the statutory regulatory council can give advice to the minister if any of those things start to creep in and we can then address those issues by regulation. That standing statutory regulatory council will provide that oversight.

I also note that the Aboriginal health services had concern. We want to work hard to close the gap. Indeed, the Pharmacy Guild themselves recognise that we want Aboriginal people to feel confident that they are dealing with someone who is on their side, who is professional with them and who has their best interests at heart and recognise that they will fill their scripts and work with their pharmacist. That is something that the guild is very committed to and, through the minister, the council is going to be committed to. We did not want to bring in something that had unintended consequences. That is why we did not make that recommendation at this time, although there is a watching brief on it.

We want to see the patient at the centre. We want to see professionals who have a vocation in health care working and building these things so they become a community institution of value to the whole community and give great health care.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.18 pm): I rise to address the debate on the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. As outlined in the bill's explanatory notes, for more than 20 years the Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001 has been in place during which time it has undergone various and significant amendments. It has come to the point now where it is deemed to be outdated and in fact limits Queensland Health's ability to ensure full compliance with its requirements. Accordingly, the Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001 will be repealed and replaced with this legislation we are currently debating which seeks to provide for a more modern and effective framework for the regulation of the ownership of pharmacy businesses.

As outlined in the explanatory notes, the policy objectives of this legislation include but are not limited to: firstly, clarify the requirements in relation to who may own or hold an interest in a pharmacy business and retain the limits on the number of pharmacy businesses that a person may own or hold an interest in; secondly, establish a regulatory council as a statutory body to administer the act and transfer regulatory functions from Queensland Health to the council; thirdly, establish a licensing framework for the ownership of and interests in pharmacy businesses; fourthly, prohibit the council from issuing a licence if the pharmacy business is located in a supermarket; fifthly, require the council to report the results of compliance audits as well as require the regulatory council to maintain a register of pharmacies to assist the community to locate pharmacies and services provided by pharmacies; and, finally, modernise existing provisions relating to the functions and powers of inspectors, legal proceedings, delegations and protections from civil liability.

This legislation has indeed been a long time coming. However, this legislation will implement the state government's response to a number of recommendations of the parliamentary Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's report No. 12, *Inquiry into the establishment of a pharmacy council and transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland*. It must be noted that this committee began its inquiry as far back as May 2018, with its report subsequently tabled in 2019. Notwithstanding the significant delay it has taken the state Labor government to finally bring this legislation forward for debate, I want to emphasise some of the points that I previously made with respect to the committee report and its recommendations. When I addressed the committee report in 2019, I stated—

The committee examined some fairly contentious areas. One of those relates to scope of practice. Many in this House would be aware that collaborative models of care can be very important in achieving good clinical outcomes for patients. Some of the areas that were examined in relation to vaccinations and antibiotic prescribing can be very contentious but, within collaborative models of care, they can provide significant benefits to patients as long as there are not any unintended consequences.

On that particular point, I have always held the belief—we talk about the separation of powers in this place—that there is an important separation of powers when it comes to prescribing which is often undertaken by doctors, dispensing which is done by pharmacists, and then the administration, in some cases by nurses if it is in hospitals or residential aged-care facilities. Maintaining those separations can be very important, but there can also be a role for collaborative models of care and scope of practice adjustments, particularly when we have workforce issues in rural and regional parts of Queensland.

I also acknowledge the recommendation of the committee in relation to the establishment of a Pharmacy Advisory Council and the significant benefits and added value that could stem from the creation of such a council. In 2019 I also spoke about pharmacy ownership. Considering that the contribution I made during the committee report debate was in February 2019, with the benefit of hindsight I realised that there were matters raised which ultimately became a significant focus during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. As I stated then—

... I note the committee's recommendations in relation to pharmacy ownership. I think those recommendations are very sound and reasonable. The aim of this report was to enhance patient care in Queensland, to have collaborative models of care and to ensure the potential expansion of vaccination coverage so that some transmittable diseases can be reduced or prevented by vaccinations. That is very important. As a state jurisdiction, the last thing we would want is to continue to have outbreaks of the flu or other illnesses.

Pharmacists provide a wealth of health education as well as health advice and health intervention. We need to ensure that the pharmacy models are robust and sound and that there are not any adverse outcomes when it comes to workforce recruitment and retention, particularly in rural and regional Queensland. Our general practitioners, our medical specialists, our nurses and our midwives are all very important. By working together in collaborative models of care, that can be good for patients and the health system, both public and private.


It has been more than five years since I made that statement to the Queensland parliament and the work of pharmacists across Queensland is more valued than ever. I again wish to acknowledge the significant work that many community-based pharmacists do in our communities across Queensland, especially in rural and regional areas as well as residential aged-care facilities.

Specifically in relation to this legislation, I note that it has broadly received support from pharmacy business owners and associated groups including the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. That being said, it is important to acknowledge the concerns that have been raised by key stakeholders and associations, including the Australian Medical Association Queensland, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners of Queensland, the Aboriginal and Islander Health Council and the Australian government's Productivity Commission. Such concerns pertain to the evidence base for the licensing framework, regulatory council and ownership restrictions as well as provisions viewed as being anti-competitive and concerns raised in relation to the accessibility and affordability of pharmacy services.

These are considered views and concerns and it is incumbent on the Labor state government to ensure the diligent implementation of this legislation, including a thorough review of its operation within a reasonable time frame from its enactment.

There is no doubt that when it comes to improved health outcomes pharmacies play a vital role in ensuring the timely and affordable provision of medicines and associated service to those who need it. It is therefore vital that appropriate legislation and regulatory frameworks are in place to ensure that the operation and management of pharmacies are fit for purpose and reflect the modern needs of Queensland communities.

Finally, I take this opportunity to acknowledge all of my local pharmacies in the electorate of Moggill. They provide an invaluable community service for local residents. Importantly, this Thursday, 21 March 2024, is Thank Your Pharmacist Day. This is an important annual celebration which is held in March of each year, bringing together patients, community leaders, stakeholders and other health professionals from across the health sector to acknowledge the vital work of all of our pharmacists. I know that people will appreciate holding these celebrations this Thursday in not only my electorate but across all electorates in Queensland.


 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.25 pm): I rise to offer my support for the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023 and thank my fellow committee members for their consideration. I also thank the members of the former health committee of the 56th Parliament who conducted an inquiry into the establishment of a pharmacy council and transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland. This bill sees the implementation of the legislative amendments required for that committee's recommendations 8, 9, 10 and 11. I note the extensive consultation that went into this bill, not only with the previous parliament's inquiry but with the Queensland Audit Office and the Queensland Productivity Commission. I note the original inquiry's recommendation 6 to establish a Queensland Pharmacy Advisory Council, but subsequent stakeholder engagement sought the establishment of a regulatory council rather than an advisory body.

This bill seeks to establish the Pharmacy Business Ownership Council as well as update the pharmacy ownership restrictions set out in the new Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill. Reviews have found that the Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001 is outdated and has many instances of ambiguity. Previously administered by Queensland Health, the current regulations were difficult for Queensland Health to enforce. The bill clarifies who may own or hold an interest in a pharmacy business and retains the number of pharmacy businesses that a person may own or hold an interest in. Under the bill, only a pharmacist or a corporation whose directors and shareholders are all pharmacists and certain friendly societies may own or have an interest in a pharmacy business. The bill also retains the limit on ownership, with pharmacists and corporations not being able to own or have an interest in any more than five pharmacies. I believe most consumers are supportive of the rationale for these restrictions. Pharmacies are a key delivery point of important health services and the need for professionalism and patients' interests before profit are paramount. The idea of corporatisation of medicine and the potential for monopolies would ultimately see Queensland consumers pay more for their medicines.

The other aspect of regulation that the committee examined was the location of pharmacies. Specifically, this bill imposes a new restriction on the location of a pharmacy business so it cannot be located in or accessible from a supermarket. The bill contains definitions of 'supermarket' as well as 'pharmacy business'. The restriction was supported by pharmacy business owners. They felt that supermarkets were not an appropriate location for the provision of sensitive healthcare services, and I think most people who have attended their pharmacy to seek assistance for their own or perhaps their children's medical ailments might agree with me here. Given the extended scope of practice that pharmacists in Queensland can now offer, the idea of discussing health matters in a location such as a supermarket setting would have people avoiding seeking the assistance of, or trying to obtain medication without the guidance of, a pharmacist.

It might be one thing to ask for 500 grams of sliced English ham over the counter; it is a completely different thing to ask what a particular rash is and 'what do I need to treat it—speaking on behalf of a friend?' It was interesting to note that the AMAQ did not see a problem with supermarkets being a provider of healthcare services, but the shelf stocker in the pharmacy aisle or the medications aisle at the supermarket assisting you with the dosage of a particular medicine versus the person at the local pharmacy who can point you in the right direction or perhaps away from a medication that might not be suitable for you are offering two completely different services. As I said, the fact that it is the

pharmacy owners themselves who wish to maintain the integrity of their health services means that I am certainly more inclined to agree with them. Also I note that the amendment will bring Queensland into line with other jurisdictions for this restriction. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (3.30 pm): Let us take a moment to try to move past consideration of rashes and hams in the same sentence. I rise to make my contribution to debate on the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. The community pharmacy sector is absolutely vital to Queensland's health system. In the 20-plus years since the current system of pharmacy regulation was instigated, Queensland has ended up with fewer pharmacies per head of population than before and we have no guarantee that this bill is going to reverse that trend. The existing system has also seen the rise of massive supermarket style discount chemist chains like Chemist Warehouse. Are the solutions that this bill puts forward the answer to that? Time will tell.

We have an overburdened and underfunded healthcare system in Queensland. Access to primary health care is by no means guaranteed to all Queenslanders. Even here in the south-east corner, getting good care from a general practitioner is fraught with challenges. For a start, Australia is facing an unprecedented GP shortage. We will be short nearly 11,000 GPs by the time the Olympics roll around. Secondly, even if you can get an appointment with a GP, out-of-pocket expenses have soared in the past year. In most parts of Australia, finding a bulk-billing clinic is getting harder and harder every year. The reality is that in many parts of Queensland, and especially in rural, regional and remote Queensland—like the areas you represent, Mr Deputy Speaker—a pharmacist may be the only healthcare provider available when you need primary health care. Certainly, they are often the first port of call for healthcare concerns. As our GP shortage intensifies, and unless our healthcare system receives the funding it so desperately needs, pharmacies are only going to become even more important players in our health ecosystem.

The Queensland Greens want a well-funded universal healthcare system. The current system of pharmacies in Queensland is heavily corporatised, with these large Chemist Warehouse style chains dominating the landscape and threatening small businesses. We need to be clear again: the current restrictions on pharmacy ownership that have already been in place for the past two decades have done nothing to stop this sudden disruption and the advent of Chemist Warehouse. Furthermore, they have done nothing to ensure we have greater access to pharmacies in Queensland. Instead we have worse access, with fewer pharmacies per head of population than we had at the turn of the millennium. One submitter to the inquiry on this bill, Amin Javanmard, a pharmacy owner from Biggera Waters on the Gold Coast, said—

While nationalising the supply of pharmaceuticals and services provided by pharmacists through direct government ownership of pharmacies would probably be the best outcome, the present system has been a good demonstration of the role of the private sector in achieving public health aims and outcomes.

Until we get to the point of nationalising supply of pharmaceuticals, the Greens want to see a system of community pharmacy that maximises benefits for everyday people.

This bill replaces the 2001 Pharmacy Business Ownership Act with an act that largely preserves the pharmacy ownership restrictions that have been in place for 20-plus years. It retains the limit on the number of pharmacy businesses that a person or a corporation might own and clarifies the requirements on who might own or control one. It creates a regulatory council that will exercise regulatory functions that have previously been held by Queensland Health. Interestingly, it purports to address the key shortcoming of the existing ownership restrictions by including a prohibition on third parties exercising inappropriate control over how pharmacy business owners provide pharmacy services related to medicines. I will say a little more on that shortly.

Plenty of submitters on the inquiry to this bill pointed out issues with the current restrictions on pharmacy ownership. The Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council pointed out in its submission that the retention of ownership restrictions will likely restrict options for models of care desperately needed to support the provision of culturally appropriate comprehensive health care to Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These include community controlled pharmacy ownership arrangements. Further, QAIHC stated that consumer safety as well as improved access should be prioritised and that the bill should not be supported.

The Queensland Productivity Commission also submitted to this inquiry. It has examined the relevant issues in detail in previous years. It submitted that the Queensland Pharmacy Business Ownership Council should not be created and that Queensland Health should retain the regulatory powers that are proposed to be transferred to the council. It does not support the retention of the existing ownership provisions and submitted that there is no credible evidence that these rules maintain access

to pharmacies in outer suburban, rural and remote communities. Further it states, like QAIHC, that the removal of the restrictions would strengthen the Aboriginal community controlled sector. I note that the minister indicated in her second reading speech that the Pharmacy Business Ownership Council will be tasked with addressing this issue. It is a really important issue raised by the bill. It is important that it is resolved as soon as possible and I welcome the minister's comments on this, along with her indications around First Nations membership of the council.


The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners noted that location and ownership restrictions should be relaxed to allow other health professionals to have ownership of pharmacies. It cited experts including a Commonwealth Competition Policy Review in 2015 which stated that these restrictions do not observe the objectives of the National Medicines Policy as they limit both consumers' ability to choose where they obtain pharmacy services and suppliers' ability to meet consumers' demands.

As for our position on this bill, we will not be opposing it, but again I want to note that we are effectively reinstating the same system of regulation that has led to fewer pharmacies per head of population than when the restrictions were introduced and that has facilitated the establishment of local monopolies and large corporate entities and conglomerates. In recent years Chemist Warehouse alone has caused a massive disruption to the pharmacy sector. In fact, it is about to be publicly listed on the Australian Stock Exchange once its merger with Sigma Healthcare goes through. Our laws are designed to keep pharmacies in the hands of small business owners, and the Chemist Warehouse model has completely blown this up.

Chemist Warehouse's owners have basically found an innovative way to get around the law in the five states of Australia that limit the number of pharmacies owned by an individual pharmacist. From there their market share has exploded. As at December last year, 158 of the 578 Chemist Warehouse franchise pharmacies nationally were controlled by five key members of the Chemist Warehouse management team. Once this merger goes through, it seems we will have a full 10 per cent of our pharmacies under the control of a listed corporation whose sole goal is investor profitability. I will put it to everyone rhetorically: is this the public health outcome we want? The Queensland Greens would say no. Profit for investors should not come before maximising public health outcomes and access to cheap medicines for everyday Queenslanders. If a model like this can comfortably exist within Queensland's highly restrictive framework for pharmacy ownership, I would argue that our framework is not fit for purpose.

Clause 22 of the bill importantly proposes to prohibit a very narrow scope of conduct described as inappropriate control, presumably in an attempt to limit the expansion of this kind of chain. The Pharmacy Guild has made its submissions that the prohibition on external control should refer to control and influence, not just control. Essentially, their concern is that inappropriate control provisions in the bill will not do the job. I share those concerns, but I suppose at this point we are left with little option but to wait and see how it pans out.

Twenty years on from the implementation of this current system, we have less access to community pharmacies, less access to primary health care and an increasingly corporatised and monopolistic pharmacy sector. To the extent that the bill preserves the current framework for pharmacy ownership and introduces these minimal reforms about how we deal with inappropriate control, I am not convinced that we are necessarily lining ourselves up for the best future to tackle the issues facing the pharmacy sector in Queensland today. Given how creative large businesses such as Chemist Warehouse have been in storming the pharmacy sector, making ownership restrictions effectively irrelevant and taking on massive shares in the market, it remains to be seen just how effective these new controls will be.

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (3.40 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. I am proud to be part of a government that is implementing appropriate and sensible ownership restrictions in the pharmacy space. The Miles government is committed to supporting Queensland community pharmacies. Local community pharmacies are a crucial part of our healthcare system. They play a vital role in safeguarding health and wellbeing across the community. I know that as a dad and I know that as a public servant.

This bill gives effect to recommendation 9 of the 2018 parliamentary committee report that recommended that pharmacy businesses in Queensland remain under the ownership of pharmacists or pharmacist controlled corporations. Of course, this means maintaining the 'community' at the core of 'community pharmacies'. This limitation ensures that Queensland pharmacies can primarily focus on the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders in my community and the communities across Queensland that they serve.

In terms of my community pharmacies, I give a particular shout-out to Roy and Barb Packer at SuperPharmacyPlus in Stafford. They not only provide a range of really important health and wellbeing services that one would expect at a community pharmacist, but also are an NDIS registered provider and specialise in the supply of equipment for disability support and elderly support right across Brisbane. They do a fantastic job of supporting the most vulnerable in our community and they do so as proud community pharmacists. With pharmacies also at the Rode Road shops in Chermside West and at Kedron, Stafford Heights, Stafford and Chermside, our community is well serviced by community pharmacists whose hearts are in the right place and who do a great job for our parents, our families and our kids.

Community pharmacists really stepped up during the COVID pandemic. They proved to be crucial not only in providing vaccinations but also in messaging, leading the community in discussions and in service delivery, particularly when it was hard to get in to see a GP. They step up each year when it comes to flu season. It is one thing to send a message but their service delivery is also crucial. Queensland would not be the safe and sound community that it is without the crucial role that they play.

Speaking of flu and COVID shots, I try to support local pharmacies when I get my flu shot. I try to post about it and encourage other people to do the same, particularly as we come towards the middle part of the year. I have said before that, while it is not my motivation for going into public life, I have realised that one of the added bonuses of this job is the ability it gives me to embarrass my children. Every year I post a shot of me getting a jab in the arm or, as one of our children describes it, getting my noodle arms out. I particularly enjoy it when they come home from school saying, 'Mum, have you seen what he's done again?' It is great and it is all for a good cause.


I have had quite a lot to do with community pharmacists in different roles. Being the community minded people they are, often they take on serious roles in local school P&Cs and other community organisations so I get a lot of feedback from those people as well. As I have said, that should not be surprising considering the community focus and dedication to others that they demonstrate in their professional lives as well as their personal lives. I thank them all.

This bill makes sure that patient safety is protected. Our incredible pharmacists are tasked with dispensing medications that can significantly affect the health of Queenslanders, for better or for worse. We want to ensure that we give that power to people we can trust. We know that ownership restrictions ensure that only an appropriately qualified person who has professional and ethical standards is associated with the pharmacy profession as those people have oversight and control of the pharmacy business and the frontline health services that they provide.

Some submitters to the 2018 committee process expressed the view that an owner who is not a pharmacist would be more likely to look just at the dollars and cents and place profit before patient welfare, meaning decreased patient safety and a lowering of health standards. That is why the bill retains existing limits on how many pharmacy businesses a person may own. A pharmacist or pharmacist controlled corporation may own a maximum of five pharmacy businesses and the Mater and permitted friendly societies may own a maximum of six pharmacy businesses. This bill will ensure that all communities, no matter whether in the beautiful electorate of Stafford or elsewhere across Queensland, are offered health services that extend far beyond simply filling in a prescription.

I associate myself with the contributions of the members for Logan and Macalister who both made the point that sensitive and direct conversations may need to be had with pharmacists, whether for yourself, your parents or your children, for better or for worse, and that the middle of a Coles or Woolworths supermarket is not an appropriate setting to have such a conversation. I associate myself with the logic that they set out in terms of what this legislation will deliver.

I thank the committee, especially the chair and member for Logan. Obviously, a lot of detailed consideration has gone into the report and that is reflected in the legislation, which will provide really good outcomes. Like many members, I have had professional discussions with the guild, both on the ground and centrally, because they do want to reach out and engage with members of parliament about important issues that face their members and the members of our communities whom they serve. I thank them for their genuine and cooperative interactions. I thank the submitters and the witnesses for their involvement throughout the process, as well as the department. I look forward to seeing the implementation of this important reform and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.47 pm): I rise to speak to the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. In its report No. 1 to the 57th Parliament, tabled in the Assembly on 8 March, the Cost of Living and Economics Committee recommended to the Assembly that the bill be passed. The Pharmacy

Business Ownership Act 2001 has been in place for over 20 years and has had significant amendments during that time. The government has advised that the 2001 act is outdated and limits Queensland Health's ability to ensure compliance with its requirements.

The Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023 seeks to repeal the 2001 act and replace it with a modern and effective framework for the regulation of the ownership of pharmacy businesses. The explanatory notes state—

The policy objectives of the Bill are to:

- clarify the requirements in the 2001 Act relating to who may own or hold an interest in a pharmacy business, and retain the limits on the number of pharmacy businesses that a person may own or hold an interest in;
- establish a regulatory council as a statutory body to administer the Act and transfer regulatory functions from Queensland Health to the council;
- establish a licensing framework for the ownership of and interests in pharmacy businesses;
- prohibit the council from issuing a licence if the pharmacy business is located in a supermarket;
- prohibit third parties from exercising inappropriate control over how pharmacy business owners provide pharmacy services related to medicines and provide that clauses in a contract or agreement that allow a third party to exercise inappropriate control are void;
- require the council to report the results of compliance audits;
- require the council to maintain a register of pharmacies, to assist the community to locate pharmacies and services provided by pharmacies;
- modernise existing provisions relating to the functions and powers of inspectors, legal proceedings, delegations and protections from civil liability;
- restrict disclosure of information obtained in connection with the administration of the legislation to limited circumstances; and
- confirm that regulations may be made about fees, waiver of fees, record keeping and pharmacy premise standards.

A pharmacy has evolved over the years from originally being a dispenser of medicine and its associated support for the community for coughs and colds. It involved the study of medicinal plants through to the compounding of ingredients. A modern community pharmacy is a healthcare facility that provides pharmaceutical and support services to the community. From independently owned pharmacies to corporately owned chain pharmacies, a variety of pharmacies are in operation and all are an integral component of Queensland's healthcare system.

The importance of our community pharmacies was recognised by our government when we became the first jurisdiction in Australia to authorise pharmacist administration of the COVID-19 vaccines, providing much needed access to the life-saving vaccine in our regional communities.

For many people, their local pharmacy is their first port of call when they or someone they love is unwell or injured. Community pharmacists are medicine experts, providing professional advice and counselling on medications, including their use and effects. Their services are both highly accessible and highly regarded. In the vast majority of cases, their services are offered to consumers without the need to make an appointment.

Our government is committed to ensuring our community pharmacies can continue to provide world-class health care to Queenslanders. Many community pharmacies are the health hub of their community—a place where the staff know their customers by name and take time to talk and check in. This is especially the case for some of our vulnerable or elderly community, who often view their pharmacy not just as a shop but as somewhere they can go and have a confidential conversation with someone they can trust.

Pharmacy business owners and groups made up the majority of the 125 submissions received by the committee to this inquiry. These submitters were broadly supportive of the bill, albeit having identified a number of requested changes to certain definitions and provisions. Pharmacy business ownership in Queensland is regulated under the 2001 act which, as I said earlier, has been in place for over 20 years and has been subject to significant amendment. The explanatory notes advise that the 2001 act is now 'outdated and limits Queensland Health's ability to ensure compliance with its requirement'.

The new regulatory framework to be established by the bill is informed by recommendations of the former Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee in its report No. 12 of the 56th Parliament, *Inquiry into the establishment of a pharmacy council and transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland*, which was tabled in October 2018. The health committee report in 2018 included 11 recommendations relating to: the regulation of pharmacy ownership in Queensland; the establishment of a pharmacy advisory council; scope of practice for

pharmacists and pharmacy assistants; and the communication of pharmacy services. The Queensland government's response to the health committee's report was tabled in April 2019 and accepted all 11 recommendations in full or at least in principle.


The explanatory notes for the proposed bill advise that the decision to establish a regulatory council rather than an advisory council was 'based on stakeholder feedback received during consultation on the bill'. Queensland Health has acknowledged, however, that other stakeholders have strongly opposed pharmacy ownership restrictions and the associated regulatory model set out in the bill. This divergence of views has been reflected in the submissions and evidence presented to the committee. The Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2023 that the bill will establish is expected to commence by proclamation approximately 12 to 18 months after assent. Queensland Health advised—

This will allow time for implementation activities including development of the IT system required for the licensing framework, set up of the council, development of subordinate legislation (fees regulation and premises standards), and industry education.

The health committee noted that there were a diverse range of views from stakeholders on whether ownership requirements as set under the 2001 act remain necessary to protect consumers and deliver accessible and affordable medicine. The committee ultimately recommended that the requirements be retained. The proposed bill serves to implement the health committee's recommendation by replicating both the current restriction on ownership to pharmacists and the limitation on the number of pharmacy businesses in which a person may have an interest, subject to a number of clarifications as to the application of the provisions.

To support the operation of the restriction on who may own a pharmacy business, the bill defines a pharmacy business as a business that provides pharmacy services in Queensland that include core pharmacy services. Under the proposed bill, a core pharmacy service means: the compounding of medicines for sale to members of the public; or the dispensing by, or under the supervision of, a practising pharmacist of medicines to members of the public. The department noted that the definition of core pharmacy service differs across jurisdictions and that the proposed definition for Queensland was designed to be narrow so as to not inadvertently capture other types of businesses as a pharmacy business for the purpose of the ownership restrictions.

The explanatory notes justify the limitations on who may own or hold an interest in a pharmacy on the basis that 'medicines are not ordinary items of commerce and have the potential to cause significant harm to individuals if misused'. More broadly, the notes highlight the potential negative impact on the community if these items are distributed improperly—for example, if they are diverted to criminal organisations. According to the explanatory notes, limiting the number of pharmacy businesses a person may own or hold an interest in is designed to prevent the formation of monopolies which may result in a lack of oversight of pharmacy businesses and lead to a lesser quality of care. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.56 pm), continuing: I rise to continue my contribution. The bill will prohibit third parties from exercising inappropriate control over how pharmacy business owners provide pharmacy services related to medicines and provide that clauses in a contract or agreement that allow a third party to exercise inappropriate control are void; require the council to report the results of compliance orders; require the council to maintain a register of pharmacies to assist the communities to locate pharmacies and services provided by pharmacies; modernise existing provisions relating to the functions and powers of inspectors, legal proceedings, delegations and protections from civil liability; and restrict disclosure of information obtained in connection with the administration of the legislation to limited circumstances and confirm that regulations may be made about fees, waiver of fees, record keeping and pharmacy premise standards.

The bill implements the government's response to several recommendations of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's inquiry into the establishment of a pharmacy council and transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland. That inquiry took place six years ago. For the benefit of the House, it is worth going over the background of that inquiry.

In May 2018 the committee was tasked with inquiring into the establishment of a pharmacy council and the transfer of pharmacy ownership in Queensland. For the inquiry, the committee accepted and published 210 written submissions; obtained a report from the Queensland Audit Office about the administration of transfers of pharmacy ownership by Queensland Health for compliance with the 2001 act; obtained a report from the Queensland Productivity Commission on the cost-benefit analysis of

establishing a pharmacy council in Queensland; held five public hearings including in Toowoomba, Cairns and Townsville to examine the issues raised by submitters; met with representatives from the Victorian Pharmacy Authority in Melbourne; and sought expert advice from Queensland Health.

The committee's inquiry considered the following key issues: the pharmacy ownership requirements in the 2001 act; the merits of establishing a separate statutory authority such as a pharmacy council to administer transfers in pharmacy ownership; and the administration of transfers of pharmacy ownership by Queensland Health.

The committee report, tabled on 16 October 2018, made 11 recommendations relating to the regulation of pharmacy ownership in Queensland, the establishment of a pharmacy advisory council, scope of practice for pharmacists and pharmacy assistants, and communication of pharmacy services. On 16 April 2019, the government response to the committee report was tabled. The government response accepted all 11 recommendations in full or in principle and identified that legislative amendments were required to respond to recommendations 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11. The government response also committed to introducing a licensing scheme to support the regulation of pharmacy ownership in Queensland and the implementation of multiple recommendations from the committee report. The bill will implement the government's response to recommendations 8, 9, 10 and 11 of the committee report.

Notably, the bill deviates from the government response in relation to recommendation 6—the establishment of a Queensland pharmacy advisory council to advise the Department of Health in its administration of the Pharmacy Business Ownership Act and the fulfilment of its regulatory responsibilities. Instead, the bill establishes a regulatory council as an independent statutory body and transfers responsibility for the administration of pharmacy ownership regulation from Queensland Health to the new body.

The Cost of Living and Economics Committee reported back to the House on 8 March 2024, recommending only that the bill be passed. I would like to thank the committee members for their consideration of the bill and all 125 submitters to the bill. Submitters ranged widely from individual community members to key health stakeholder groups to the federal Productivity Commission. I will touch on some of their contributions and concerns in a moment.

Firstly, however, I would like to take a moment to thank pharmacists for what they do. I note that there are some pharmacists and members of the Pharmacy Guild in the gallery. Pharmacies provide an important yet often underappreciated or glossed over service to our community. When Queenslanders are sick, it is often the pharmacist who finds themselves providing advice on what medicines they require to help them feel better. We also know that pharmacies are coming under increased pressure due to the Queensland health crisis that is getting worse and worse and worse and has gone from disaster to disaster under this chaotic and crisis ridden government.

This tired, third-term Miles Labor government has failed to plan, failed to resource and failed to run our health system for a decade now. The current minister is just the latest in a conga line of frauds, phonies and failures. Their failure impacts on the pharmacy industry too, as I have outlined.

Mrs MULLEN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Pause the clock. What is your point of order?

Mrs MULLEN: I understand the member has used unparliamentary language.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will get some advice. Member, I ask you to withdraw.

Ms BATES: I withdraw. The current minister is just the latest in a conga line. Their failure impacts on the pharmacy industry too, as I have outlined. The worst ambulance ramping in the country, record elective surgery waitlists, Queenslanders losing their lives as the health system fails them—the outlook is bleak. We must acknowledge that pharmacies are impacted by this chaos and crisis and therefore ensure that their regulatory framework is appropriate. Getting this bill right will go a long way towards ensuring Queenslanders get the treatment they need when they need it.

Another peculiar aspect of this legislation is the time line. As I mentioned earlier, the original parliamentary committee report to which this bill responds is almost six years old. Despite tabling their official response five years ago, it has taken until now for these legislative changes to actually come through and be debated in this place. When governments are consumed by chaos and crisis they take their eye off the ball, and Queenslanders have to wait years for reforms they are promised. Only this tired, worn-out, bad, third-term Labor government—a government engulfed in its own chaos and crisis—could take nearly 2,000 days to implement the recommendations of an inquiry it promised. Even then

they are not doing so anyway. As I mentioned earlier, the bill deviates from what the government said they would do in their initial response back in 2019. So under this government you wait 2,000 days for reforms that in the end are different to what you were promised.

The committee's inquiry into the bill received over 100 submissions, as we know. While the submissions received were broadly supportive of the bill, many notable stakeholders did raise some concerns to which I would give some time in this House. A number of stakeholders were concerned that the new regulatory framework may have anti-competitive consequences and limit opportunities to provide greater affordability and accessibility of pharmacy services. In particular, the AMAQ, the RACGP, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council and the federal Productivity Commission raised this concern.


The LNP believes that when we consider the implementation of new regulatory frameworks, especially for essential industries, the wellbeing of the end customer—that is, the people of Queensland—must be front of mind from both a health perspective and a financial one. In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, affordability and accessibility of essential services, including medicine, is vitally important. The LNP will watch closely how this bill impacts competition in the industry. I would like to note, however, that Queensland used to have a body that did some great work on analysing the regulatory impact of new legislation, but Labor abolished this body in 2021. Only the LNP will restore the Queensland Productivity Commission so we can answer these questions here at home in an open and transparent way.

A number of pharmacy owners are concerned that the bill as proposed will impose additional undue compliance burdens on their businesses, particularly on small and family business owners. Like all small and family businesses, pharmacists are tired of being tied up with red tape. So much of the time of small business owners is now taken up complying with often onerous regulation through the filling out of various forms and the like. Such systems are a handbrake on businesses' productivity. Productivity for small business owners in particular is not something that those opposite even think about. Why? Because they have not run a small business. They do not know what it is like. Only the LNP is the party for small and family businesses.

Again I say to the House: if we wanted to do some research into the impacts of this bill on the regulatory burden of small and family businesses, we used to have a body that could do that. A productivity commission could do that, but Labor abolished it. The LNP will bring it back. Highlighting these concerns is not to negate the importance of a strong regulatory framework for an industry such as pharmacies, but good government always look for opportunities to reasonably reduce the regulatory burden on small and family businesses.

In conclusion, the LNP will not be opposing this bill, but we have highlighted some stakeholder concerns that we will be monitoring moving forward. On behalf of the LNP, I would like to thank pharmacists for what they do and the essential services that they provide. I acknowledge the impact that the Queensland health crisis has on their businesses and their staff. The Queensland health crisis lies squarely at the feet of the state Labor government beset by chaos and crisis. The member for Waterford is a failed health minister and has been exposed as a complete failure.

Only the LNP has the right priorities for Queensland's future. Only the LNP will ensure easier access to health services. The only way to heal the Queensland health crisis is to show Labor the door in 2024.

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (4.07 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. Local pharmacies make a difference to the lives and health care of Queenslanders every single day. I am so grateful for them. Local pharmacies are the heart of communities right across Queensland. They make sure that our kids, our families and our neighbours can access essential health advice and support closer to home. That has been my No. 1 priority—essential health advice and health care closer to home for every Queenslander.

One pharmacist I would like to give a special mention to in this place today is Rockhampton pharmacist Carina Finn. Carina is the pharmacist in charge at Priceline Parkhurst in my electorate. She is just so incredibly caring and thoughtful. It was very fitting that she was awarded Priceline Pharmacist of the Year in 2020 for the entire country. She is a very special person. She has helped me and my family so many times. She wears this beautiful bright pink lipstick that matches the Priceline branding perfectly, and Odette remembers her every single time. When we walk in there she asks, 'Is Carina here today?'

It was back in 2017 two weeks before the state election. It was Remembrance Day. Odette was only three weeks old. I had just been at the Remembrance Day service at the RSL. I was exhausted and I had also developed an infection. I was prescribed some medicine but I was told that I had to stop breastfeeding as it was not safe to take it whilst breastfeeding. I was devastated because, as a new mum, I was absolutely determined to breastfeed my baby. When I went in to see Carina I was absolutely distraught, but she was so incredibly helpful—‘That’s fine. We can help you with something else.’ She got me sorted and I continued on that breastfeeding journey, but I hate to think what would have happened if I did not have Carina that day.

I also give a shout-out to Tom Lloyd from LiveLife Pharmacy in Yeppoon who has always been very helpful. LiveLife Pharmacy is two doors down from my electorate office, so I see the pharmacists and the staff there very often. It was only a few weeks ago that I was asking Tom some advice about type 1 diabetes and the prescription of insulin to patients. It was very handy that he accidentally pocket dialled me that morning and was on hand to answer my clinical questions to assist in a policy idea that I had come across with a constituent. ‘Call me any time if you need advice,’ he said. I also want to mention Bruce Elliot, Dan Carpenter, Penny Shepherd, Stephen Collins and Rod Dakhllallah at LiveLife Pharmacy and all of the pharmacists right across Keppel and, indeed, Queensland. I acknowledge the pharmacists who are here in the gallery today as well.

I was so incredibly pleased to have Tom Lloyd make representations to me back in 2022 about the vaccinations in pharmacy program under the National Immunisation Program. I am so pleased that Queensland signed on to the program. It commenced in January 2024. This is a Commonwealth funded program that allows eligible people to access free National Immunisation Program vaccines from Queensland Health registered pharmacy vaccination service providers with no out-of-pocket costs. I am pleased that I was able to advocate on behalf of Tom, pharmacies across Queensland and the community. The program commenced in January of this year. It means that more people will have access to immunisations at no cost to them. More people will be protected from the flu, HPV, shingles, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal and pneumonia because pharmacists will be able to vaccinate them. This program will save lives, and I am so pleased that Tom contacted me to advocate for this program. I give a big shout-out to you, Tom Lloyd. I love your work! I was so pleased to work together with you to make it happen. Bruce Elliot from LiveLife Pharmacy wanted me to let you all know that under this program this year to date the LiveLife Pharmacy in Yeppoon has administered 259 Shingrix vaccines to protect against shingles as well as 175 COVID boosters. They have now commenced giving the pneumonia vaccine, too. That is a great result for little Yeppoon!


Whether it is diabetes screening, a blood pressure check, vaccination or delivery of medication to patients at their home, community pharmacies provide incredible life-saving services every day. Pharmacists are highly trained healthcare professionals and they play a crucial role in educating patients about medications, ensuring proper usage and advising on potential side effects or interactions. Their accessibility and trustworthiness make them invaluable allies in our regional, rural and remote communities. As a regional member of this place, I can attest to that.

My mum has always been a big believer in pharmacists. ‘Go to the chemist and ask the pharmacist,’ she has always told me. ‘They are so knowledgeable,’ she says. My mum was one of six children. She grew up on the land at Theodore and Tara. My mum’s mum, my grandmother, valued the opinion of our family chemist. They saw more of him than the doctor, and they would consult with him on a whole range of issues. My mum said, ‘He was an important person in the community.’ Pharmacists are still very much important members of our community.

That is why I am pleased the bill will support the community pharmacy model by retaining and strengthening the requirements for pharmacy businesses to be primarily owned by pharmacists or pharmacist-led corporations. This will help ensure that owners of pharmacy businesses continue to prioritise the welfare and health of patients above all other considerations. The bill also ensures the community pharmacy model can be sustained into the future by establishing the Queensland Pharmacy Business Ownership Council. The council’s main role will be administering the pharmacy business ownership requirements in the legislation. Furthermore, to ensure the adequate oversight of pharmacy businesses a new licensing framework will be implemented. This framework requires pharmacy business owners to obtain a licence for each of their businesses.

This bill is designed to safeguard the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders by ensuring it continues ownership of pharmacy businesses by pharmacists. The Miles Labor government is committed to supporting Queensland community pharmacies. Community pharmacies are an essential pillar of our healthcare system and play a vital role in safeguarding our health and wellbeing. A

pharmacist or pharmacist controlled corporation may own a maximum of five pharmacy businesses under the bill, and the Mater and permitted friendly societies may own a maximum of six pharmacy businesses. This bill will ensure that all communities, no matter where in Queensland, offer health services that extend far beyond simply filling prescriptions. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (4.13 pm): I rise to speak on the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. I want to welcome the pharmacists to the gallery. As a dentist, I note they are wearing the types of smocks we used to wear. I have a great photo from UQ. I was so thrilled to get into dentistry and get that white smock. A bit like an Australian Rugby player wearing their jersey, you would wear it thinking, 'I'm now going to be a dentist!' Pharmacists have taken them over. I note that Professor Trent Twomey wears his around parliament in Canberra and dentists have had to change to light blue. That is what dentists had to do, and I used to do that when I was practising. Welcome to the pharmacists!

Other members have expressed their great affection for their local pharmacists, and I want to say that, too. Being from the great three faculties at UQ—pharmacy, dentistry and medicine—of course we will not talk about OPs, ATARs, TE scores and who got where because of what, because there are different reasons people have done different courses. I know that Dr Rowan is adamant about that. He thinks we just did dentistry because we did not get into medicine, but that is not true. I am happy to have that debate any day of the week.

The bill seeks to modernise and regulate the ownership of pharmacy businesses in Queensland. The Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001 has served its purpose for over two decades. Pharmacies have certainly changed in that time, so it is time for the act to change. As we have heard from the member for Moggill, the introduction of this bill is timely given that this Thursday is Thank Your Pharmacist Day, so of course the Facebook posts are prepared. It recognises the hard work and dedication of pharmacists and the important role they play in primary health care. I encourage all Queenslanders when visiting their local pharmacy or hospital to thank them for their commitment to our community.

Whilst the opposition does not oppose the bill, it should be noted that stakeholders, including AMA Queensland, have raised serious concerns about the bill. I refer to a transcript of an interview with AMA Queensland vice-president Dr Nick Yim dated 6 March titled 'Proposed pharmacy ownership laws will create new problems'. It is a transcript of an interview with Steve Austin, and I table that.

Tabled paper: Article, dated 6 March 2024, titled 'Proposed pharmacy ownership laws will create new problems' [395].

In the interview with Steve Austin, Dr Yim said—

... this pharmacy business bill ... it's come as quite a surprise to AMA Queensland. We feel that these ... laws are simply unnecessary, and to paraphrase the Federal Productivity Commissioner, there is no evidence of a problem to fix and there is no evidence that if there were a problem, that this bill would actually fix it.

Dr Yim goes on to say—

... the key thing is, currently the pharmacy business ownership laws are highly uncompetitive. It is one of those few industries where only a pharmacist can own a pharmacy, and that's not the case with any other healthcare business. For, example, a pharmacist can own a general practice, but a GP can't own a pharmacy.

As shadow minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, I note the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council's submission, which states that the bill is 'inherently anti-competitive' and 'will likely restrict options for models of care desperately needed to support the provision of culturally appropriate comprehensive health care to Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'. I note that the member for Maiwar expressed the same concerns.

QAIHC and AMA Queensland have consistently called for an end to the anti-competitive regulation of pharmacy ownership, highlighting that current legislative arrangements restrict patient access to cheaper medicines and better pharmacy services and will continue to disadvantage consumers. Of notable concern, the current arrangements restrict opportunities for community controlled pharmacy ownership arrangements and innovative models of care supported by genuine partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health organisations, ACCHOs, which would be consistent with the government's obligations under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. That submission was done by the chair of the Aboriginal organisation I spoke about, and I read that with interest. I refer to, and table, another article from AMA Queensland CEO Dr Brett Dale, who said—

To be frank, it is outrageous that the bill shows disregard for the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and potentially will undermine the provisions for culturally safe services for First Nations communities.

Tabled paper: Article, dated 23 February 2024, titled 'Draft pharmacy ownership laws bad for consumers' [396].

The bill aims to clarify ownership requirements for pharmacy businesses and maintain limits on the number of businesses one can own or hold an interest in; establish a regulatory council as a statutory body to administer the act and transfer regulatory functions from Queensland Health to this council; and prohibit licences for pharmacy businesses located within supermarkets.

Some pharmacy owners fear there will be increased compliance costs, which poses a significant worry for pharmacy owners, especially those running small or family businesses. They fear that the proposed bill will only add to their already burdensome regulatory obligations. This bill seems at odds with the former small business minister's new small business strategy announced back on 30 January 2023. Minister Farmer said—

Backing small business is vital for the state's economic growth so the Queensland Government wants to ensure the right conditions, programs and support are in place for small businesses to reach their goals.


It should be noted that the costs faced by Queensland businesses as they deal with red tape and regulation have doubled in the past two years. The Business Chamber Queensland report released last year titled *Efficient regulation report 2023* suggests that the total estimated compliance costs to businesses because of local, state and federal regulations from actual expenditure and time spent dealing with them was \$11 billion. Business Chamber Queensland chief executive Heidi Cooper said that businesses want governments to prioritise cutting red tape and reducing regulatory burdens. She said—

To make Queensland productive, efficient and competitive there needs to be overall regulatory reform to make it easier for businesses to work with government.

I table an ABC News article by Jack McKay where Ms Cooper is referenced.

Tabled paper: Article from ABC News online, dated 9 November 2023, titled 'Red tape, compliance and regulation costs double for Queensland businesses, report finds' [\[397\]](#).

Whilst a robust regulatory framework is crucial, it is imperative to find ways to alleviate unnecessary burdens on small businesses. Pharmacists, including those sitting in the gallery, will attest to the fact that, when you are having to fill out the business activity statement quarterly, run a business, employ staff, deal with staff absences, run rosters and run the retail side as well as the regulatory side, it is very burdensome and can be frustrating. That is why the LNP opposition is committed to fostering an environment where businesses can thrive and not drown in paperwork.

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.21 pm): I begin by reflecting on the words of the member for Logan in his contribution. This is in many ways a bill that will assist as a cost-of-living measure, because for many Queenslanders who are seeking good healthcare outcomes often the first port of call is their community pharmacy. I think everybody in this chamber—certainly those sitting in the gallery—knows that local pharmacies are at the heart of communities right across Queensland. They make sure that our kids, our families, our neighbours and our parents can access essential health advice and support close to home and importantly with low barriers to access. It costs nothing to wander into a pharmacy if you are worried about something—maybe a sore ear or a sore throat—and get some advice without necessarily taking that next step and making a GP appointment.

It is important that these pharmacies are owned by pharmacists or pharmacy-based corporations because they are healthcare professionals who have completed a minimum of five years training in a tertiary institution. Where pharmacists undertake special services like UTI medication provision, as they now do in Queensland, they also undertake ongoing, mandatory professional development and specialist training in order to deliver those additional services.

Our pharmacists play such a vital role in partnering with our primary healthcare providers—like our GPs, urgent care clinics, satellite hospitals and major tertiary hospital institutions—to make sure all Queenslanders can access timely care. Whether it is a diabetes screening, a blood pressure check or the delivery of medication, community pharmacies provide incredible life-saving services—and also life-giving services—every day to improve the quality of life and quality of health for Queenslanders. What would we have done during COVID if our community pharmacies were not there to help get jabs in arms and roll that out? We could not have done that without them. I know everybody in this House agrees with that. That is where I got all of my jabs and they did a fantastic job. The access to that information online was also exemplary. Now we are through that period, one of the ongoing services—

Ms Richards interjected.

Ms PUGH: Certainly they do, member for Redlands, but I was also thinking about the member for Keppel and the free care they provide to new babies. They do weigh-ins for new babies to ensure they are on track with their weight gain. I was at my local community pharmacy when my daughter was three weeks old—so very similar to the member for Keppel's story—and I realised that Elyse had not gained her birth weight back, which was a horrible realisation. I then had to make an appointment with my GP, but it was my community pharmacist who made that point to me and told me my next steps. This was my third child but I had never been in that position before where my baby needed additional help. It was at that intervention point with the pharmacist, after I had taken her in and weighed her, where I was told that I needed to take her to the GP. She ultimately ended up back in hospital, but it was the intervention at Peter Kolb Amcal at Middle Park—and give a shout-out to the brilliant pharmacists on staff there—which started me on that trajectory.

I cannot overstate the importance of having these low barrier to entry intervention points in our community pharmacies to ensure we are getting the best health outcomes because that could have ended up being much more serious if I had not walked into the pharmacy that day. I want to point out that they got no money for that service of weighing my baby. In fact, I walked out of that pharmacy and I did not buy a thing—they made no money from that—which is not necessarily a savvy business move in and of itself.

Mr Dametto interjected.

Ms PUGH: I walked out of there in a panic, member for Hinchinbrook, because I was concerned that my baby had not gained back her weight, but I am a regular customer at the Peter Kolb pharmacy and always support them. They are good people.


Beyond these preventive health intervention points, our community pharmacies also provide ongoing preventive health care to the community, which means that something like UTIs can be dealt with by your community pharmacy if you fit the right criteria. The pharmacist will tell you if you fit the right criteria because they are trained extensively in how to provide that service to the right people in the community. That means that a lot of people who are suffering from a UTI—and most of those people will be women—do not have to make an appointment with their GP to get the antibiotics they need to treat something that is incredibly painful and needs to be treated straightaway. As anyone who has ever had a UTI will tell you, you know exactly what it is and you know you need to get antibiotics quickly. You know that you do not need to wait a couple of days for a GP appointment; you just need to get on your treatment plan so you can move on with your life without needing to go to the bathroom every 20 minutes.

The move to allow UTI treatment is just another way we can allow our pharmacy experts to practise at the top of their scope. The reason I raise this is because the Queensland government and Queenslanders can have confidence through this bill that the pharmacist who does this work with Queenslanders has only their best interests at heart, because the owner of that business is going to be either a pharmacist or a pharmacist-led corporation, not a business owner who does not have that five years of pharmaceutical training that I previously spoke about. Queenslanders place a level of trust in their pharmacists, and it is really important that that trust is carried all the way through to the ownership of that organisation as well as the person who is at the front of the business.

Queenslanders rightly expect that the only thing a pharmacy employee or pharmacist will recommend is what is right for that patient, what is right for that Queenslander, and what their studies have said will work. In fact, at that same Peter Kolb pharmacy, I have been pulled up for buying too much of something. I tried to buy 100 iron tablets in one go a couple of years ago and they pulled me up and asked, 'Why do you need this many iron tablets?' They had a conversation with me around that, which I think is a good thing. It is healthy for a pharmacist to start a conversation with people, and I know that is the kind of work that pharmacists right across Queensland are doing every day. Pharmacists are highly trained healthcare professionals and they play a crucial role in educating patients about their medications, ensuring proper usage through conversations like that one, and advising on their potential side effects or interactions.

Their accessibility and their trustworthiness make them invaluable allies in our regional, remote and rural communities. That is why I am incredibly pleased—and it sounds like all members of this House are very pleased—that the bill will support this community pharmacy model. It will retain and strengthen the requirements for pharmacy businesses to be primarily owned by pharmacists or pharmacist-led corporations. This will help to ensure owners of pharmacy businesses will continue, as they always have, to prioritise the welfare and the health of patients above all else.

The bill also ensures the community pharmacy model can be sustained into the future by establishing the Queensland Pharmacy Business Ownership Council. The bill is designed to safeguard the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders by ensuring the continued ownership of pharmacy businesses by pharmacists. As I said, this bill is great for cost-of-living issues because it allows Queenslanders to access trusted, quality advice with no underlying business pressures from those community-based pharmacists whom we all depend and rely upon for low-barrier-to-access healthcare needs. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (4.30 pm): I, too, rise to contribute to the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill. I must say: if there was a bill to talk about not only the health crisis but also the chaos and crisis that is going on under the Palaszczuk government, now the Miles government—all the same government—it is—

Mr Power interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take that interjection. It is important to understand that this bill responds to a parliamentary committee report that is almost six years old. I mean, come on! Talk about chaos and crisis! They cannot even get something procedural through—six years.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): The member for Logan will cease his interjections.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. With that, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Mr Chris Owens, who does a power of work on behalf of the Pharmacy Guild and not just within the city; he is a big proud owner of a regional pharmacy as well. Thank you, Chris. I know that Matthew Battams is up there as well—I give a shout-out to you. I cannot properly see the other two people. If I had your names I would yell out and say a big hello to you as well. We on this side of the chamber love our community pharmacists. Community pharmacists are the people who keep rural and regional Queensland ticking. I know that in places like the South Burnett, Somerset, the Gympie region—

Mr McDonald: The Lockyer.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON:—and the Lockyer region, we need our community pharmacists. We need our community pharmacists because our hardworking doctors and nurses are overwhelmed with the crippling health crisis that is going on particularly in rural and regional Queensland. That is why I give a big shout-out to Barry and Paul at the Nanango and Kingaroy Discount Drug Store; Jack, Dannielle, Chris, Cobey and Tom at Blooms The Chemist Kingaroy; and Michael at the Toogoolawah Pharmacy. I note that when the Albanese government was fiddling around with the books federally I had a great meeting with Michael about his concerns there. There is also William at the Direct Chemist Outlet Kilcoy; Mark at Wondai and Proston pharmacies; Stew and Nishadi at Amcal+ Pharmacy Murgon; Andrew at Good Price Pharmacy Warehouse in Kingaroy; and the Discount Drug Store in Esk. I have missed Hamish there somewhere. He is one of my local pharmacists; I go to him quite often. There is the Goomeri Community Pharmacy; the Kilkivan Pharmacy; David at the Blackbutt Pharmacy; and the Yarraman Pharmacy. These are just within the Nanango electorate, and I know that I have missed quite a few.

There are two extremely impressive female pharmacists—not just Dannielle at Kingaroy—whom I want to give a shout-out to, because they took the time to write submissions for the committee to consider as part of the report which the government left on the shelf for nearly 2,000 days. One is the mighty Lucy Walker from Goondiwindi. I note that the member for Southern Downs is on this speaking list, and I am sure he will talk about Georgina. I have been lucky enough to visit that pharmacy where she uses that incredible robot; it is unreal. Lucy Walker is an incredible local. Georgina Twomey runs an amazing pharmacy. Both of these incredible pharmacists made submissions for the committee's consideration. They are probably wondering what has been going on for the last 2,000 days. It is quite extraordinary. As the shadow minister for health noted in talking about the housing crisis, it took 2,000 days to bring legislation to the House. This is why the people have lost faith in this tired, old Labor government. It is worn out and it is engulfed in its own chaos and crisis. The wheels of government certainly turn slowly over there—2,000 days.

Ms Bates interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take that interjection.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members for Redlands, Bancroft and Maryborough, take your conversations outside, please.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: If the member for Bancroft wants to say it again, I am happy to take his interjection because I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, he is on a warning. If he would like to say something, I am happy to take his interjection and then I can perhaps deliver my speech in silence.


We know that there is only one side of the House that truly really supports our small business owners. There is no greater example of small business owners than our community pharmacists. Take Jack, who runs Blooms The Chemist Kingaroy. Jack and his wife, Laura, and now three beautiful children moved from Brisbane and decided to make Kingaroy their home. What a beautiful place. Not only have they decided to make it their home but they are building their pharmacy business, they are employing people and they should be looked after. People like Jack and Dannielle at Blooms actually help us out, because when you cannot get into the hospital they say, 'Go to your community pharmacist.' Thank goodness they exist in rural and regional Queensland. I am always so very thankful for my community pharmacists for what they do and the service they provide us.

I will acknowledge the pharmacy business owners who made up the majority submitters to this bill. We know that the Pharmacy Guild of Queensland does an incredible amount of work. They work so hard. I want to give a shout-out to each and every one of those community pharmacists within the Nanango electorate. I also wish to acknowledge those within broader rural and regional Queensland. Happy Thank Your Pharmacist Day! Thursday, 21 March is Thank Your Pharmacist Day, and these quiet achievers really deserve our thanks for what they do and for the provision of services to our community.

While we are talking about Thank Your Pharmacist Day on Thursday, I may as well drop in that it is my daughter Lucy's birthday tomorrow. Happy birthday, Lucy. I can connect this back to the pharmacy bill because Lucy is a nurse. She is a very proud registered nurse who is now doing her midwifery, and I know that Lucy would be the first to say, 'If you have just stubbed your toe, go to the pharmacist and get a bandaid.' I am quite sure that is what she would say. The longer she is a nurse, the harsher she is becoming, I notice. She keeps telling me, 'Toughen up, princess.' Anyhow, happy birthday, Lucy.

We all know the compliance burdens involved with onerous regulation. The time taken in the never-ending filling out of forms does put a handbrake on productivity. It makes doing business very difficult for some of these smaller regional pharmacies. Some of those in my community have quite a large staff; others are just one-man or one-woman type operations. That is not to negate the importance of a strong regulatory framework for an industry such as pharmacies, but good government should always look for opportunities to reduce that regulatory burden. It is extremely important.

As a former assistant minister for the reduction of red tape, I will always back anyone who looks for the opportunities to reduce that red tape because ultimately what we need to see, particularly for the development of rural and regional Queensland, is more businesses. We need to see more people who undertake their pharmacy degrees and training and who wish to come out and work, live, enjoy and raise a family in these beautiful country towns. I have listed all of those pharmacies in my local area. I am sure there would be jobs for those pharmacy students who are looking to do training. I know that there are many incredible students who attend high schools in my electorate who end up studying pharmacy. Whenever I meet these students I always say to them, 'Can you make sure you go back to rural and regional Queensland and become a lifelong regional pharmacist because the benefit you can give back to your community is immeasurable and the community will always hold you in high regard.' We could not live in those rural and regional areas if it were not for the services of our pharmacists. I would like to say thank you to our regional pharmacists. I hope you enjoy the day on Thursday.

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (4.40 pm): I rise to give my contribution to the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. From the outset, I want to place on record that we have a great appreciation for our pharmacists and our family owned pharmacies in the Hinchinbrook electorate—the Hinchinbrook shire, the Townsville region and the Cardwell and Tully area. Making sure that those family owned and locally owned pharmacies continue, without the competition of large conglomerate pharmacy organisations coming in to take over in the space which is enjoyed by those family owned businesses, is very good. Over the years the KAP has worked tirelessly with the Pharmacy Guild—and other businesses, may I add—to keep large pharmacy companies in rural and regional Queensland and put protections in place to support and protect small and family owned businesses to ensure they are there for years to come.

I grew up in a small town named Ingham. We used to have a number of greengrocers in town. We used to have a number of small family businesses that operated very successfully. Beautiful freshly-grown produce that was allowed to ripen on the vine or on the tree was available at our local

greengrocer stores. What do we have now? All we have left is Coles and Woolworths. That is what happens when you do not have protections in place to stop large conglomerates and multinationals coming in and taking over in this space.

I applaud the state government for this legislation that is before the House. It would never have happened without the strong support of, push from and consultation with the Pharmacy Guild. I place on record my appreciation for the work of the Pharmacy Guild. The idea of a pharmacy was always to go and do your degree and training and return to the place where you want to set up to make sure that you are living there, you are serving the community and you are getting to know the people who you are dispensing to. The large pharmacy model that seems to be adopted in the large city areas has seen what is the local pharmacy erode to a point where it is almost as bad as walking into Coles and Woolworths and expecting one-on-one service.

I reflect on my experience growing up in a small country town. When you go into a pharmacy in places like Ingham, you walk in there and you know the people. You know Brendan Seri who is now working behind the counter as a pharmacist. You are talking to Chris Holland if you are down there at Terry White's—that used to be Sadleirs Pharmacy, owned by Jim Busuttin. Those sorts of places feel like home. You go across the road and you can talk to Atlanta Crag from my office. You go into those places, and you trust the pharmacist almost as much as you trust your local GP. You go to see your GP and then you go to see your pharmacist. Now things have changed there is an opportunity to actually see your pharmacist for more. People are busy. The chance to access the medication that is necessary for them, without the burden of booking a GP appointment, has been appreciated by people, especially in rural and regional Queensland where we have quite a doctor shortage at the moment. There might have been a bit of a turf war at the start over that, but I can tell members that those regional GPs are pretty happy that they are able to alleviate some of the pressure.

We want to make sure we are protecting the family owned pharmacist. I believe this legislation goes a long way towards doing that. It is commendable that both sides of the House, and the KAP, will be supporting this. The KAP has supported the Pharmacy Guild for a long time and we may even have some of their members in the gallery today. The objectives of the bill include—

- clearly states who may own or hold an interest in a pharmacy business, and retain the limits on the number of pharmacy businesses that a person may own or hold an interest in;

The idea behind that is to make sure that we do not have people buying pharmacies left, right and centre to build their wealth. When they start doing that, you lose that personal touch from your pharmacy businesses. They continue—

- establish a regulatory council as a statutory body to administer the Act and transfer regulatory functions from Queensland Health to this council;

The bill also seeks to—

- establish a licensing framework for the ownership of and interests in pharmacy businesses;

Making sure that pharmacists own pharmacies is important, too—and not just people who are looking to make a dollar out of people to fill their back pockets or, in some cases, their shareholders' back pockets—as is making sure that the mind of a pharmacist is on providing a health service for those people who live in the area.


We have seen this happen with Coles and Woolworths when they were allowed to move in and get rid of the small greengrocers. It sounds good at first and communities have bought into this. I have seen communities that have been pretty excited about seeing some of the larger pharmacy chains show interest in an area. I need to remind people that even though a small pharmacy might charge a little bit more—just like the greengrocer may have charged a little bit more for fresh fruit and vegetables—once the big guys come in, the supermarket duopoly moves into this space, all of a sudden the small guys are gone, the quality of the produce falls away, and guess what? They control the price. They can sell you a bottle of milk cheap this week, but I tell you what, the price of bread is going up. That is what happens in your large pharmacy chains, too. They might get excited about what is on special this week, but something else has gone up to level that out. That is what you can do when you own the market.

I think this is a great piece of legislation to try to protect those small businesses and to give them a foothold in the local community so that when their children have an opportunity to go to university and study pharmacy they are able to come back. Maybe when someone at the local school goes in for work experience, they have an opportunity and vision of not only coming back as a pharmacist, but one day—how beautiful is this—owning a small business in a regional town. That is a beautiful vision for

most people, and that is the backbone of Australia and what Australia was built on. There is the idea of having the opportunity to not only work in a place but also maybe one day working your way up to owning the place. Small private enterprise is something that is worth protecting.

There are other roles and other jobs that are attached to pharmacies. One of my sister's first jobs was working in the make-up section at Sadleirs Pharmacy in Ingham. If you have ever been to a small regional town there are plenty of jobs for young ladies in those areas, but for some reason young ladies want to work at the pharmacy or the local hairdressing salon. I think that is a beautiful thing. In regional towns young people are attracted to those jobs and it gives them opportunity. I know my sister had an opportunity to fall in love with working at the pharmacy. She developed a love for beauty and beauty products and she now runs two successful businesses as a result of the experience she gained from working for Jim Busuttin at Sadleirs Pharmacy.


A lot of our regional communities have aging populations and a big thing for those people, especially when it comes to medication, is trust. If those older people do not trust people, they do not have much. They need to be able to trust that their pharmacist is doing the right thing for them because they are getting that personal service, because they are getting it from someone who owns the business and cares about them. They need to know the pharmacist is not a blow-in who will work a couple of months as a pharmacist and move on, like the doctor locum system which we have problems with in regional Queensland right now. We have the opportunity right now for people to own and run their pharmacies and this legislation will help protect that into the future. This bill has the support of the KAP. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (4.49 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution in support of the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. I am really fortunate in the Redlands to have one of the most amazing members of the Pharmacy Guild, and I cannot see if she is in the gallery. Fiona Watson is absolutely topnotch; she is the best pharmacist someone could find, along with her mum, Evelyn, and her sister, Shona. Evelyn bought that business back in 1997. It is family owned and family operated. They are simply incredible. There is not a person in Redland Bay who does not know who Evelyn, Shona and Fiona are. They provide an absolutely tremendous service to our community. Never did I see that more than during COVID, as the member for Mount Ommaney mentioned, when we were all in a really heightened and stressed state. They were measured and calm, and they got the job done to make sure we protected Queenslanders. I thank them for all of the work they have done.

Fiona and I catch up regularly. She is always keeping me abreast of where pharmacists are at and what they are looking for, such as the work in getting the UTI prescriptions up and available for women. If you have ever had a urinary tract infection, you know that when you need that antibiotic you really need that antibiotic. We have done some great work with the Pharmacy Guild and I feel really privileged to have Fiona in my local patch. She keeps me up to date. There is also Ritchie, who is the pharmacist at our Thornlands community pharmacy. All of our pharmacists in the local area keep in contact.

I am extraordinarily proud of this piece of legislation, which will continue to support our local community pharmacists. They do a great job. I note, as many other members have contributed today, that Thursday is Thank Your Pharmacist Day. I will be making sure I do that. I think we should be thanking them more than on one day a year. I also note that last week they had their Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference. I know how dedicated they are to making sure they stay on top and at the forefront of everything to do with medicines and their profession.

To everybody in our community pharmacies I say thank you for all you do. The current act is over 20 years old and it is timely that we refresh it, update it and provide those mechanisms that will continue to protect our locally owned pharmacies in that community sense, because the service they provide to our communities is extraordinary. On that note, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (4.52 pm): I rise to address the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023, a bill that, as we have heard, seeks to clarify the requirements and establish additional regulatory controls around the ownership of Queensland's pharmacy businesses. Community pharmacy businesses are the first port of call for our communities' immediate health needs. They are our port of call when we have a toddler with a temperature or a raging cold or when we run out of a ventolin puffer, which is so important in reducing the impact of asthma.

With four young kids, I regularly make an evening dash to the local community pharmacy to buy a bottle of panadol or nurofen to get on top of a teething toddler's temperature—something that I am sure most parents can appreciate. For my community, which has a higher preponderance of older

residents than many in the state, our local community pharmacies are particularly important. They are essential to dispense medicines and advice to control the chronic conditions that many suffer from in their senior years.

Perhaps I did not appreciate the importance of a community pharmacy until I was elected in 2017. Since then it has been very clear that our community needs access to advice and care close to home which only our community pharmacies can provide. In my electorate one local pharmacy, the Buderim Pharmacy, has for many years provided home delivery of medicines at no cost to patients. It is an example of the difference between a community pharmacy and the larger chains and supermarkets. In doing so, businesses like the Buderim Pharmacy are delivering a critical service to our community, and that support means that residents are able to stay comfortably at home longer and they can do so without the additional supports they might otherwise need. I should note the Buderim Pharmacy is not alone in this regard. Our local Terry Whites, our Amcals—and I am not going to rattle off all the local pharmacies—all share that same commitment to our local community.

We know that at their heart most community pharmacies are small and family businesses. In my role as the shadow minister for small and family business I have been privileged to meet and visit many community pharmacies—from Goondiwindi to Gladstone, from Cairns to Currumbin. They have told me of the challenges facing their businesses: the regulatory burden, the competition from other sectors and the progressive erosion of their margins. The member for Nanango spoke of Lucy Walker in Goondiwindi. She has an amazing business. I visited there a year or two ago with the member for Southern Downs. She and her business are the heart of that community. It is the heart of the main street. She has an amazing robot which is an investment in her community that allows her to deliver the services and employ more locals. It is people like Lucy, with her commitment to the local community, whom we need to protect and ensure they continue to flourish.

Mrs Frecklington: She's got good craft, too.

Mr MICKELBERG: She does have good craft; I will take that interjection from the member for Nanango.

At our heart, the LNP is the party of small and family business. We represent the small businesses that sponsor the local footy team, that donate the snags for the Men's Shed Bunnings barbecue and that donate to the local school P&C. It is those businesses that are the threads that make up the tapestry of our communities and it is small and family businesses—not big businesses like the major supermarket chains—that this parliament needs to foster and protect.

Notwithstanding the importance of their task, for the most part pharmacy businesses in Queensland are small businesses. It is important that governments at all levels get the regulatory settings right for small and family business. Regulation too frequently is used by big business as an anti-competitive barrier to entry, and it is through that lens that I consider this bill. Are the regulatory requirements that this bill seeks to impose justified, and do they impose the minimum regulatory burden on small and family businesses while still protecting consumers? Far too often this Labor state government imposes additional requirements on small and family business when all that achieves is placing additional burden on small business owners who are already doing it tough.

In a previous life I provided advice to small and family businesses. At that time I was quite surprised by the relatively thin margins and profitability that pharmacy owners have to deal with. Given that I was in the health sector, I had assumed that many pharmacies would be working on far fatter margins and have far more profitability. It became clear that, despite the educational requirements required to become a pharmacist, they do that job because it is a vocation and they care about our community.


This legislation does have the potential to be anti-competitive and as a consequence it may reduce accessibility for the pharmacy services our community needs. Ultimately, we need to consider that there is a net benefit for all Queenslanders. It is important that we protect and empower our local community pharmacies so they can continue the types of services I spoke about that the Buderim Pharmacy delivers for the benefit of all Queenslanders. We will be watching the implementation of this bill to ensure it delivers better health services for every Queenslanders and not less access than is currently available.

I note that a number of submitters to the bill inquiry raised concerns around the compliance burden that this legislation may place on pharmacy businesses. It is an issue that we on this side are particularly mindful of and it is why we have committed to re-establishing the Productivity Commission after it was shamefully cut by this Labor state government. I also note the concerns expressed by the

AMAQ and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Queensland. They, too, represent key stakeholders in our health system and it is important that we consider the second order effects of decisions such as those we are debating here today. To that end, I associate myself with the contribution of the member for Moggill, who is far more qualified than I am in relation to such issues and who covered them in good detail.

I want to address the timing of this bill. As the member for Nanango noted, the original parliamentary committee report to which this bill responds is almost six years old—nearly 2,000 days old. It talks to the chaos and crisis besetting this government and its priorities that this government would rather rename Fraser Island than address these important issues. It talks to the lack of priorities and priorities that do not address the concerns of Queenslanders. I call on those opposite, as did the people of Ipswich West and Inala on the weekend, to start listening to Queenslanders and start reflecting their concerns.

The LNP will not be opposing this bill, but we continue to call on the state government to place small and family businesses at the forefront of every decision this government makes because small and family businesses are the backbone of our community.

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (4.59 pm): I rise to support the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023 which will replace the 2001 act with a modern and more effective framework for the regulation of the ownership of pharmacy businesses. I want to start by acknowledging all of the hardworking pharmacists in the Stretton electorate. Pharmacists and pharmacy assistants play a pivotal role in primary health care. They have the community's trust and confidence. They are dedicated to serving the people of Queensland and providing world-class health care. As health professionals, their job goes further than simply dispensing medicine. They provide many members of my community with health advice every day and it is important to acknowledge that this government supports pharmacists using their full scope of practice so they can offer a wide range of frontline health services to Queenslanders. Further, we are a proud supporter of community-based pharmacies and the community pharmacy model that sees the community benefit from an increasing number and quality of services and care delivered. In contrast, if the pharmacy sector was deregulated, as many right-wing think tanks have argued, pharmacies would be focused instead on high volumes and low margins to maximise profitability and drive shareholder returns at the expense of more service and patient focused traditional community pharmacies. The pressure to minimise costs would put pressure on less profitable parts of pharmacy businesses, in particular those services which require higher levels of patient care.

When it comes to the health of Queenslanders, it is a core belief of those on this side of the House that every Queenslander deserves access to top quality universal health care close to home, and that is why we do not support the privatisation of hospitals or contracting out of services or making health workers redundant and replacing them with casuals, because that leads to worse health outcomes. We also do not support deregulating pharmacies—a free market model. The free market might make a few high-volume services or products cheaper, but ultimately it would result in worse health outcomes for ordinary Queenslanders. We only need to look at the behaviour of the big supermarkets like Coles and Woolies and how they have been using their market power to drive down prices for farmers but not passing any savings on to their customers. They just give bigger returns to shareholders.

That is why it is important that we have a modern and effective framework for regulating the ownership of pharmacy businesses. In particular, this bill will retain current ownership restrictions which ensure pharmacies are owned by pharmacists whilst also ensuring that organisations like the Mater and certain friendly societies can continue to own pharmacy businesses. These restrictions ensure that pharmacies are operated in a manner that places the health and wellbeing of customers and the community ahead of commercial considerations. We do not want an Americanised healthcare system controlled by big corporates where health care is only for people who can afford it.


This bill will repeal and replace current legislation which has been in place for over 20 years but is no longer fit for purpose, so the new bill will ensure our community pharmacies remain protected. The policy objectives of the bill are to clarify the requirements of the 2001 act relating to who may own or hold an interest in a pharmacy business and retain the limit on the number of pharmacy businesses that a person may own or hold an interest in; establish a regulatory council as a statutory body to administer the act and transfer regulatory functions from Queensland Health to the council; establish a licensing framework for the ownership of an interest in pharmacy businesses; prohibit the regulatory council from issuing a licence if the pharmacy business is located in a supermarket; prohibit third parties from exercising inappropriate control over how pharmacy business owners provide pharmacy services related to medicines and provide that clauses in the contract or agreement that allow a third party to

exercise inappropriate control are void; require the regulatory council to report the results of compliance audits; require the regulatory council to maintain a register of pharmacies to assist the community to locate pharmacies and services; modernise existing provisions relating to the functions and powers of inspectors, legal proceedings, delegations and protections from civil liability; restrict disclosure of information obtained in connection with the administration of legislation; and confirm that regulations may be made about fees, waiving fees, record keeping and premises standards.

As I mentioned, one of the key important parts of this bill is that it establishes a regulatory council as an independent statutory body. This transfers the responsibility for regulating pharmacy ownership from Queensland Health to the council. This change has been made in response to feedback from pharmacists that they considered an independent statutory body would be better placed to monitor and enforce pharmacy ownership requirements. It also brings Queensland into line with most other states. Overall, the bill promotes the professional, safe and competent provision of pharmacy services by pharmacy businesses and also maintains public confidence in the pharmacy profession.

I am also proud to say that Stretton is home to many pharmacists. I am sure that there would be many other MPs in this House who have community pharmacies in their electorates but whose pharmacists live in Stretton. That is because my local community really values education. Many people come from all around the world for a better life in Australia and I see how much their families value education. They can get a fantastic state school education in Stretton with great teachers, teacher aides and new buildings that are all air conditioned. When I visit these schools I hear countless times from proud parents that their children have finished year 12 with a great ATAR score and they are very proud that next year they will be going to university to study pharmacy. One of the things that I have found over time is that being a pharmacist seems to run in the family. It is quite often that a pharmacist's children will take up the profession. It is really not just a profession; it is a position that is held in great esteem in my community and across the whole of Queensland and Australia. As other members have said, it is a real vocation, especially in my community, and that is something that we must maintain.

In conclusion, this government remains committed to the community pharmacy model. It has stood the test of time and has also allowed us to deliver a number of commonsense patient wins for Queenslanders like delivering COVID vaccines or free flu vaccines or women's health care, which is such an important focus for this government, such as easier access to UTI treatments or the pill. The community pharmacy model allows us to support better primary health care for Queenslanders closer to home, and this bill allows pharmacists to do just that. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (5.06 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill. I was fortunate to be substituted on to the economics committee which was examining this bill to replace a member who was absent and that was a really interesting experience for me. I appreciated that opportunity and I thank the chair, Linus Power, for having me for the day. It was the day of the public hearing.

A government member: Great man.

Mr LISTER: I did hear a minor interjection from the other side, but I do not think I will be taking it.

Mr Purdie interjected.

Mr LISTER: I am a great man, and I am glad you think so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Through the chair please, members.

Mr LISTER: My apologies, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is very important in speaking on behalf of my constituents and about my electorate of Southern Downs that we emphasise the importance of pharmacies being independently owned and operated. We do not want to see the big end of town—large multinationals, large corporations—amassing many pharmacies because that is bad for small communities like the ones that I represent and it also provides, in my opinion, a perverse incentive for a diversion away from what professional pharmacists hold dear, and that is to put the interests of the patient or the customer first and to not allow profit to drive decisions about what health solutions they might prescribe in their own right or in terms of what type of medication they are filling with a script. I am not an opponent of big business as such, but I certainly am where big business exercises a power that distorts the market and makes it difficult for small businesses. As the member for Buderim said earlier, small businesses—family businesses, family enterprises—are the backbone of our economy. They employ the vast majority of people in our economy and I am very proud to say that I put small and family businesses first whenever I am considering business matters as an MP.

This bill, as we have heard, provides two major elements. The first is to spell out clearly who may or may not own or have an interest in owning a pharmacy or pharmacy business and it also establishes for the first time the Queensland Pharmacy Business Ownership Council which is the statutory authority that will be assuming from Queensland Health the role of supervising the adherence to rules around pharmacy ownership and so forth.

The functions of the council will be deciding applications relating to pharmacy business licences; changing, suspending and cancelling pharmacy business licences under the act; the monitoring and enforcement of compliance; advising the minister on premise standards and other matters relating to the act; administering Queensland Pharmacy Business Ownership Council funds; and keeping a register of licensed pharmacy businesses. That that would be undertaken by an independent statutory authority is very fitting.

I would like to, as many members have done before me, pay tribute to the pharmacy businesses in my electorate. There are far too many to mention. They are all small businesses with the exception of one, of course, which is the Warwick Friendly Society. The Warwick Friendly Society is a mutual organisation. There are special provisions in the bill to stipulate how many pharmacies they may own and to clarify that a structure such as a friendly society is able to operate a pharmacy business. Lucy Walker's name has come up quite a few times here.

Ms Leahy: A fantastic pharmacist.

Mr LISTER: I take that interjection from the member for Warrego. Lucy is famous for having her face on the front of her big pharmacy in Marshall Street, Goondiwindi, but it may be less known that she is on the board of the Pharmacy Guild of Queensland and she is also a member of the Interim Pharmacy Roundtable. That was something I learned about for the first time when I sat temporarily on the committee. As I think the member for Buderim said, it is people like Lucy who run pharmacies, own pharmacies and invest and create the jobs that so many people enjoy in a place like Goondiwindi. At that pharmacy there is 'spencer the dispenser', a giant robot that somehow knows the stock locations for all the medicines and will zoom around, grab a box and put it in a container ready for the pharmacist or the pharmacy assistant to take and dispense. That makes it very efficient.

Ms Leahy: And the drone.


Mr LISTER: I will get to the drone. Thank you, member for Warrego. There is another giant robot there—I cannot remember what he is called—that packs pharmaceuticals into blister packs. This is really important in particular for nursing homes, where there are a lot of medicines going in and out. To have them blister-packed to assist with dispensing makes sure the correct doses are given to the correct people at the correct time. Very importantly, Lucy Walker's pharmacy provides that service for other small pharmacies in the district. That kind of investment and response to the needs of the community has been made possible by the requirement that pharmacies be operated effectively as small businesses. Lucy Walker has done a great job there.

I mentioned the Warwick Friendly Society. Tonight I am having dinner with one of the members of the board of the Warwick Friendly Society, Corrine Butler. She often talks to me about the chair, Chiara Farrell, and the other board members and the work they do providing pharmacy services, a sleep apnoea centre and also the medical centre in Warwick, which means they have a very large footprint. Their history goes right back to 1908, and they are still respected today for providing help to people when they are in need. That has been fantastic.

One of the submitters on the bill who came before us was from the Shopping Centre Council of Australia. I remember quite clearly that they were arguing that they need to have a statutory basis to prevent businesses in shopping centres from doing certain types of trade. I think in this particular case they were talking about having certain clients come who may not be welcomed by other tenants in the shopping centre. We are talking about people accessing methadone and things such as that. The committee, as I did, took a fairly dim view of that. I formed the view that on the one hand the Shopping Centre Council of Australia are a strong advocate for the liberalisation of trading hours, laissez faire and so forth, which hurts the small businesses in my electorate and something that I certainly do not like, but on the other hand they want to make sure that anything they deem unsavoury is palmed off to that small business in the main street which is probably suffering because of the exertions of the Shopping Centre Council. I really enjoyed putting that to the representative. He did not have a lot to say on that matter. I think my point was quite well made.

Overall, this is a good bill that enshrines what we in this House know to be important—that is, the independence and the primacy of professionalism and care focused on the client that pharmacies currently give. I am certainly not in favour of seeing an accumulation of many pharmacies by a corporate

entity. Structures that would allow that to happen would make it increasingly difficult for excellent pharmacies like the Warwick Friendly Society and Lucy Walker's Chemmart in Goondiwindi to provide that care which centres on the needs of the individual, on the patient or the client, and is able to eschew extraneous commercial considerations such as which version of this will create more profit. I think we all agree that is a good thing and I definitely support that. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (5.15 pm): Can I start by acknowledging, as did the member for Redlands, Fiona Watson, who is in the gallery along with other representatives from the Pharmacy Guild. She is a tireless advocate for pharmacies in the Redlands and the entire industry across Queensland. She is also an advocate for small business, attending many small business events that the member for Redlands and I put on in the Redlands. We agree on a lot of things. I think we butted heads one time, but we got on with reforming the industry and I am glad we are doing it here today for the good people of the Redlands.

I rise in support of the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill. Pharmacies play a vital role in all Queensland communities. Every Queenslanders should have safe access to medication. Currently pharmacies can only be owned by a qualified pharmacist or pharmacist controlled organisations. This ensures the values of patient safety instilled into pharmacists are at the forefront of the pharmacy's business model. This ensures the code of ethics that underpins their practice. Pharmacists are often the best people to be operating their businesses. Through their guilds they are bound to the values of patient safety, maintaining community standards and having care and concern for their customers. The Miles government understands this and that is why we are not making any changes. However, we understand the continual need to improve how we regulate the industry to ensure the best outcomes for our communities. We are doing this by moving to an independent regulator, which will bring us in line with other states. We are not changing the rules, per se, but changing how they are enforced and by whom.

This bill proposes to regulate control, ownership and operation of pharmacy businesses by abolishing the outdated Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001. The 2001 act has been in place for over 20 years and it has been significantly amended during that time. The Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's report describes the 2001 act as outdated and says it limits Queensland Health's ability to ensure compliance with its requirements. As already outlined by the minister, the driving question behind this new legislation is: how do we appropriately and adequately regulate these restrictions?

The committee inquiry has done the hard yards. It accepted and published 210 written submissions; obtained a report from the Queensland Audit Office about the administration of transfers of pharmacy ownership by Queensland Health for compliance with the 2001 act; obtained a report from the Queensland Productivity Commission on the cost-benefit analysis of establishing a pharmacy council in Queensland; held five committee hearings in Toowoomba, Cairns and Townsville to examine the issues raised by submitters; met with representatives from the Victorian Pharmacy Authority in Melbourne; and sought expert advice from Queensland Health. The committee used this extensive research and consultation to inform the bill that is before the House today.

In New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, pharmacy business ownership is regulated by an independent pharmacy regulation authority. However, in Queensland we have had a non-standard approach with Queensland Health acting as the regulator. This bill proposes that we come into line with those other states and establish a new independent regulator. We will be creating the Queensland Pharmacy Business Ownership Council. The council will be a regulatory body with responsibility for administering and enforcing the pharmacy business ownership restrictions. Some of the powers the new regulatory committee will have include suspending or cancelling a licence where it is necessary for the safety of the community or pharmacy model, for example, if the owner is no longer a fit and proper person to be a licensee because they have been convicted of an indictable offence.

We know that diversity delivers the best results. That is why this bill requires the council to have a diverse and expert membership. It must consist of at least five members appointed upon the recommendation of the minister. This criteria dictates that a person may be eligible for appointment if they are the owner of a licensed pharmacy business or the director of a corporate owner, a practising pharmacist who is an employee of a licensed pharmacy business or a person with qualifications and experience in an accounting, financial management, law or pharmacy business. The minister may recommend the appointment of a consumer representative, which I think is very important. This ensures that the integrity, full transparency and strong conflict-of-interest provisions in the bill will deliver a fair decision.


I join with the health minister in extending my thanks to all pharmacy owners, especially the ones in my electorate of Capalaba. Each year, Fiona organises my flu vaccine with a local pharmacist. I think more people should take up that option. Each and every year we see more and more flu cases.

Ms Fentiman: Particularly now that it is free.

Mr BROWN: I take the interjection: particularly now that it is free. I urge everyone to make an appointment with their local pharmacist, and pick up some jelly beans while they are at it. It is always good to support the local pharmacy. As a lifelong asthmatic, I am in there quite a bit to pick up my medication.

Getting back to the bill, this new model will enable pharmacies to operate in the best interests of the community and for the community. It will do this by moving to an independent regulatory model with strong regulations to keep community interests and safety at the forefront. It strengthens the regulations on pharmacies to ensure transparency around operations by limiting the number of pharmacies a person can own, introducing a regulatory council that enforces the new law and a framework that oversees the transfer of ownership.

A pharmacy is not a business with the sole purpose of making money; it doubles as a community service that provides patients with professional advice and life-saving medication. Community pharmacists are medicine experts and provide counselling on medication, including their uses and effects. That is why we need to take particular care when it comes to regulating and enforcing the business aspects of this community resource. The Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill repeals the 2001 act and replaces it with a modern framework that acknowledges the findings of the committee's consultation process. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (5.23 pm): It is a privilege to rise to speak on the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023, which has been some time coming. In fact, as we have all heard, the bill originated in 2018, a report was written, the government responded in 2019 and supported the recommendations and then there was another review. I suggest that perhaps the delay in bringing the bill forward is a further example of the government not having the right priorities. I appreciate the contributions of the shadow minister for health, Ros Bates, and the member for Moggill, a former president of the AMAQ and a former president of the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland. Rural doctors and rural health services are subjects very dear to my heart.

I pay tribute to all of the pharmacies in our regional communities for the primary health care that they provide. I grew up and spent much of my professional life in the Gatton community. You cannot talk about Gatton and pharmacies without mentioning the name Val Vaughan. Val is still a contributor to our community. She has won many awards in our local community. Over decades, Val Vaughan and her trusted team have provided absolutely wonderful care and advice—life coaching, some might say—to people in need. They are absolutely essential primary healthcare providers. Val moved on to set up partnerships with Alex Hood and David Cullen. In fact, right in the main street of Gatton, David and Eloise Cullen are still providing health services. I love to drop in and say g'day.

It is not just the pharmacist who is key to the business. I recognise, from the Pharmacy Guild, Chris and his team who are in the gallery today. With respect to Chris and his team, it is not only the pharmacists who are key. The men and ladies who make up the front-of-house staff do a wonderful job. I cannot help but mention Leanne Lentz. Everybody in Laidley would know Leanne Lentz. She has been in the pharmacy for many decades. She is a wonderful and trusted person. She is always helpful and provides guidance to those with the youngest of babies as well as those who are a little older.

Pharmacies provide an example of great leadership in our community. As has been said today, pharmacies are wonderful small businesses. Quite often they are family businesses that pass from generation to generation and such is the case with David and Eloise Cullen's pharmacy. Pharmacists provide really dependable advice to families in need. I could not put a number on how many disadvantaged people have been helped by pharmacies and others in our community.


It is great to see our youngsters going off to study. Regularly people say to me that we need to keep our brightest and best in our community whether that is Gatton, Laidley, Lowood, Fernvale or any of the other smaller towns. I tell them that the best thing we can do is to make sure that our brightest and best go off to learn and study and understand a bigger part of the world. One of those aspects is pharmacy. We would like to see our students go out, do their studies and pass their university qualifications. Then they can come back and carry on a family business or set up another business and raise their family in our community because that will keep our community vibrant.

We have pharmacies right across the Lockyer community from Fernvale, Lowood, Plainland, Laidley and Gatton up to Withcott. Some of those people are absolutely wonderful stalwarts who volunteer in many other organisations such as service clubs and the chambers of commerce. I think of Laidley where Tina Wong and Chris Tam ran a pharmacy for many years. A few years ago that pharmacy changed ownership when Matthew McLean bought it. Matthew and his family are wonderful contributors to the Laidley community. Pharmacies and other small businesses like them form the backbone for our communities. They are a really dependable set of ears and provide leadership so that our communities continue on the right path.

Some people raised concerns about the anti-competitive nature of the bill. If the council charged with responsibility in this area is managing it appropriately, we want to see that review to make sure those controls and the anti-competitive nature of the provisions are not being abused. We recognise the contribution that pharmacies make to their own destination. We want to ensure these small businesses in our communities have an assurance that they will not be taken over by multinationals. I think we have the balance right, but we look forward to ensuring the government and the council do the right thing by us.

As we get a little bit more experienced in life, health becomes an even greater part of it—whether it be seeing a doctor or specialist or going to the hospital. Ensuring we have better primary health care through our pharmacies is vital for us to protect. I note that most stakeholders were very supportive of the bill, to which there were originally over 200 submitters. This further exemplifies to me that this government has its priorities wrong—it has been in chaos and crisis for some time—by, for example, making changes to the name of Lady Cilento hospital as opposed to passing this bill which has been sought after by many. I think Queenslanders have stopped listening to this government because it does not have its priorities right. We on this side of the House have been listening to Queenslanders—last weekend Queenslanders sent a message to the government—and we will continue to listen to their concerns.

I stress the importance of youngsters in our communities considering pharmacy as a really wonderful career option. They should go and learn, study and get their degrees, then come back to our communities and contribute to the further development of primary health care in our communities. Our regional communities are richer for that. I thank all of the pharmacists. I note that Thursday is Thank Your Pharmacist Day. I encourage members to have a chat to each of the pharmacists in their local communities and thank them for the wonderful job they do. When I get the opportunity, I certainly will be dropping in and seeing mine.

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.32 pm): I rise in support of the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. Like my colleagues on this side of the House, I like the ‘community’ in community pharmacy. It is important that we always maintain that level of personal service that comes when we go into our community pharmacy in our respective local areas. Before I give a shout-out to some of mine, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of some of the Pharmacy Guild representatives. I can see those beautiful-looking ties—


An honourable member: The white smocks.

Mr CRISAFULLI: The white smocks. It is great to see you all here. Thank you very much. My sister started her working career in a community pharmacy in Ingham. I saw what that did for her as a young woman entering the workforce—the opportunities it gave her and the ability to connect with that community. To this day, she still has incredible friendships and incredible skills that she learned in that career.

I am mindful of the great contribution that community pharmacies make. I want to use my contribution to thank the many in my local electorate of Broadwater: the Monterey Keys pharmacy, Chempro at Hope Island, Hope Island Amcal, Paradise Point Chempro, Terry White Runaway Bay, Priceline Runaway Bay, Sanctuary Cove Chempro and Coombabah Chempro, to name just a few. We know how much they mean to the community. We know how much value they give. More than that, though, they are small and family business owners. The reason the opposition will be supporting this bill and the reason the opposition was keen to have it debated as soon as humanly possible—I am mindful that it has taken some time to get here—is that they are good changes that ensure ‘community’ remains in community pharmacy.

Increasingly, pharmacists are doing amazing work in a really strained health system. We have to acknowledge that. We have to acknowledge the work that our pharmacists did during COVID, when there were mixed messages. When decisions needed to be made at the front line, in many cases it was

community pharmacists who stepped up. We owe them all a great deal of gratitude for that. They employ local people. They provide trusted local advice. We are most grateful for the contribution they make. For that reason, the LNP will be supporting the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023.

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (5.35 pm), in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill 2023. In particular, I thank the members who have acknowledged the incredible contribution made by community pharmacies across Queensland. It is clear that community pharmacies are an essential component of Queensland's healthcare environment. It is crucial that we support them now and into the future. One owner told the committee—

We are a family rural pharmacy where we live and work within the community. We have “skin in the game” and we do whatever it takes to look after our community. We are the most accessible health destination in town. Our patients know when they or a family member have a health problem, they feel comfortable to come into our pharmacy and get immediate access to a pharmacist ...

These interactions occur between Queenslanders and their pharmacist thousands of times each day and go a long way to protect the health and happiness of all Queenslanders. The system works and our patients are grateful for it.

I could not say it better myself. This bill ensures that our current and future pharmacy business owners can continue to provide high-quality, affordable health care wherever they live.

The bill significantly modernises the framework for regulating pharmacy business ownership and addresses deficiencies within the current act. I note the member for Maiwar's comments that the current ownership restrictions have not been enough to protect the community pharmacy model. The current act simply does not contain the necessary powers for Queensland Health to effectively regulate pharmacy business ownership. Through the new licensing framework, this bill will ensure the council as the regulator can actively review ownership arrangements each year. It provides the council with the necessary powers to enforce the ownership requirements, including the power to request information or documents necessary to determine who owns or has an interest in a pharmacy business. It also makes it an offence for a third party to exercise improper control over a pharmacy business. This is an Australian first aimed at ensuring our pharmacy owners can act autonomously.

Importantly, this bill prevents the newly formed council from approving a licence for a pharmacy business that is located in or directly accessible from a supermarket. This provision brings Queensland into line with the rest of country and it recognises, as members have noted today, that supermarkets are simply not an environment conducive to supporting the very often personal health needs of our community members.

We know that community pharmacies are the heart of many regional and rural communities. In these communities there are often few other health professionals and the role of the local pharmacist extends far beyond dispensing medications. Pharmacists in these communities understand local issues and build trust with patients, often over many years. The local pharmacy is truly part of community life. During the 2018 parliamentary inquiry into pharmacy ownership, many stakeholders expressed concerns that relaxation of the ownership restrictions would result in large corporate entities concentrating their services in regional centres. They noted that this could result in the closure of smaller pharmacy businesses in surrounding rural and remote areas, leading to reduced access to pharmacy services in those communities.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia told the 2018 committee that the ownership restrictions ensure a decentralised and diverse ownership structure which is essential to providing access to Queenslanders wherever they are throughout the state. I thank the former parliamentary committee for their great work during that inquiry. The Miles government is committed to ensuring that the community pharmacy model is sustainable now and into the future. The bill will help to ensure local pharmacies can continue to thrive and support the health and wellbeing of our rural and remote communities.

Many members have noted that some time has passed since the 2018 parliamentary committee's report. I want to assure members that we have taken the time to work with stakeholders to ensure that we have this right. I say that good things come to those who wait. It is a complex and detailed bill that establishes an entirely new regulatory scheme for the pharmacy industry. Unlike those opposite, our government will never rush decisions that affect the health care of Queenslanders. We needed to get this right.

Queensland Health undertook extensive consultation, receiving almost 800 pieces of feedback, all of which were carefully considered to inform the final bill. This time was well spent, as we have before us a robust, modern and comprehensive bill which will ensure our community pharmacies can continue to focus on what they do best—and that is looking after our communities.

I note that during the committee process some stakeholders did not support the premise of the bill that pharmacy businesses should be primarily owned by pharmacists. While I acknowledge the views of those stakeholders, the Miles government is committed to supporting the community pharmacy model. Ownership restrictions are common to all Australian jurisdictions and aim to ensure that pharmacy businesses are operated in a manner that places the health and wellbeing of customers and the community ahead of commercial considerations. Whilst I acknowledge there are varying reports and evidence relating to pharmacy business ownership restrictions, I want to make it clear that our government is committed to protecting and promoting the community pharmacy model.

I again thank the Cost of Living and Economics Committee for their detailed examination of the bill. My thanks also go to the staff of the committee. I also thank the hardworking members of the legislative policy unit within Queensland Health, especially Kirsten Law and Karson Mahler. I want to thank you for all of your work on this bill over many months and years. I also want to acknowledge the many stakeholders who have contributed to the development of this legislation including the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. I acknowledge the many pharmacists in the gallery today. This bill demonstrates the Miles government's commitment to the community pharmacy model which we know is essential for our healthcare system.

As the committee heard from one stakeholder, 'Pharmacy ownership by pharmacists is the very cornerstone on which the fabric of community pharmacy in Australia is built.' Well I agree. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.


Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 240, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 1, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (5.42 pm): I move—


That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (5.43 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.

CASINO CONTROL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 25 October 2023 (see p. 3222).

Second Reading

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (5.43 pm): I congratulate the pharmacists for their great work. It was a pleasure to work with them. I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I thank the then Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for its consideration of the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the stakeholders who took the time to make written submissions and appeared at public hearings to assist the committee in its consideration of the bill. The committee tabled its report on 2 February 2024 which recommended that the bill be passed.

On 6 October 2022, the government accepted in principle all 12 recommendations of the *External review of the Queensland operations of the Star Entertainment Group Limited*, conducted by the Hon. Robert Gotterson AO, KC, known as the Gotterson review. The recommendations were made by Mr Gotterson to enhance casino integrity, minimise the potential for harm from gambling and restore public confidence in the operations of all Queensland casinos following his findings of egregious conduct by some Queensland casino operators.

One of the recommendations, recommendation 12, was delivered last year through the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2022 to provide for the discretionary ability for the Governor in Council to appoint a special manager in circumstances where it is necessary to discipline and potentially remediate a casino licensee back to suitability. The power was subsequently used to appoint Mr Nicholas Weeks as the special manager to Treasury Brisbane and the Star Gold Coast in disciplinary action against both casinos.

The present bill contains the second tranche of reforms that will implement the remaining 11 recommendations of the Gotterson review as well as other reforms to enhance the casino regulatory framework. To be clear, the focus of this bill is on casinos where a substantial case for reform has been established.

The Gotterson review made a number of recommendations which, when implemented, are intended to make casinos less vulnerable to money laundering, will help to track and control patterns of gambling spend, and identify and prevent self-excluders from gambling. Specifically, recommendation 1 called for casinos to ensure that gambling is only undertaken with identity-linked player cards. Additionally, it was suggested by recommendations 3 and 4 that casinos implement a full, mandatory and binding precommitment system on gaming machines and a binding break-in-play system that extends across all forms of casino gambling.

Mandatory carded play and mandatory precommitment can only be implemented to the extent that it is technologically feasible to do so. The bill therefore requires casino operators to enforce these measures for any games or activities which may be prescribed in a regulation so that a staged approach to the implementation can be taken in line with technological advancements.

To ensure workability, the bill provides that a regulation may also make provision for specific matters related to carded play and a precommitment system including how player cards may be issued or cancelled and the types of precommitment limits that must be available to players. The necessary regulations to support the introduction of mandatory carded play and mandatory precommitment will be developed in consultation with stakeholders following passage of the bill.

Given the strong link between gambling advertising and gambling behaviour, the bill also expressly prohibits casino operators from requiring a person to give consent to receiving advertising or promotional material as a condition of obtaining a player card.

The bill requires casino operators to prevent a person from undertaking, in a 24-hour period, cash transactions for gambling of more than the amount prescribed in a regulation. As with carded play, this is a means to reduce incidences of money laundering. While recommendation 2 of the Gotterson review suggested that cashless gambling should be implemented for transactions greater than \$1,000, the amount will be subject to future stakeholder consultation.

Recommendations 5 and 6 of the Gotterson review suggested that player card information be collected to monitor gambling behaviour and assist in identifying gambling related harm and potential money laundering activity. The review suggested that such information should be made available for research into gambling harm. To this end, the bill requires casino operators to collect carded play information as prescribed by regulation. The type of information to be prescribed will be the subject of consultation with stakeholders.

Under the bill, casino operators are obligated to regularly report particular deidentified player card information to the regulator as prescribed by regulation. The bill also provides the chief executive the power to request any other player information for the administration and enforcement of the Casino Control Act 1982 or research into gambling harm. The chief executive may seek anonymised or non-anonymised player information for administration or enforcement purposes. However, only

deidentified information may be sought for research purposes. The bill also makes clear that only deidentified information may be shared with an external entity for research purposes. The then Legal Affairs and Safety Committee believed the bill strikes the right balance between the need to protect personal information and the need to share such information to uphold the public good in certain circumstances.

The bill also seeks to modernise particular gambling terminology used under the Casino Control Act in line with recommendation 7 of the Gotterson review by replacing the term 'problem gambler' with wording that is not inherently stigmatising and by replacing references to 'responsible gambling' with 'safer gambling'. The amendments reflect the concept that responsibility for gambling harm is multifaceted and that gambling providers have a role to play in minimising harm. The amendments also reflect the reality that some gambling products can be designed to induce repeated play. The bill makes similar amendments to other gambling acts where required for consistency.

Although there is currently a Queensland responsible gambling code of practice that applies to casino gambling, compliance with the code of practice is voluntary. The Gotterson review found the voluntary nature of the code of practice may be insufficient to effectively regulate safer gambling, a finding shared by the recent Queensland Audit Office report *Minimising gambling harm*.

The then Legal Affairs and Safety Committee also acknowledged that 'self-regulation is not always appropriate when the industry is large, concentrated, or has the potential for a major public impact'. As intended by recommendation 8 of the Gotterson review, the bill provides for a regulation to prescribe a mandatory code of conduct which may impose obligations about safer gambling. Given the Gotterson review found that poor risk management and deficiencies in corporate culture had contributed to issues at Star, the bill further enhances the implementation of recommendation 8 by providing that a code of conduct may also provide for casino governance and accountability matters.

The regulation of casinos is complex and requires a variety of monitoring, investigation and enforcement activities as well as research, policy development and legislative reform capabilities. The cost of this is significant, and the current casino quarterly licence fee is insufficient to cover the cost. The bill therefore aims to have the cost of regulation and oversight, as well as the cost of conducting gambling harm minimisation programs, better reflected in the contributions of casino licence holders who benefit financially from conducting casino operations in Queensland. This is achieved via an annual supervision levy on casino licensees as recommended by recommendation 9 of the Gotterson review.

The bill provides for me, as the responsible gambling minister, to fix the total levy amount to be paid by all Queensland casino licensees each financial year. Each casino licensee will be required to pay a percentage contribution towards the total levy amount as prescribed under a regulation. The levy will replace the casino licence fee; however, casino licensees will still be required to pay for the costs of suitability investigations, gaming equipment evaluations and employee licence applications separately, as cost recoupment arrangements already exist for these matters.


The bill implements recommendation 10 of the Gotterson review by providing for a full review of each casino licence to be undertaken at least once every five years unless otherwise postponed by regulation. Such reviews will provide an opportunity to periodically assess the suitability of each casino entity and their compliance with casino legislation. Outside of the time frames for a full review, a separate review may still be carried out about any matter relating to a casino licence. The bill provides for a reviewer of a full review or other review to have the powers of a commission of inquiry. The costs of both types of reviews will be cost recoverable.

The bill implements recommendation 11 of the Gotterson review to enhance Queensland's exclusion framework. Currently, individuals can be excluded from casinos where they decide to self-exclude, where the casino operator excludes a person because of particular conduct such as dishonesty or because of gambling harm, or where the Queensland Police Commissioner initiates an exclusion. The bill adds a further exclusion category which obligates a casino operator to exclude persons who they are aware are the subject of an exclusion from an interstate casino made or initiated by an interstate police commissioner.

The Star was found by the Gotterson review to have enticed persons who were banned from interstate casinos at the direction of interstate police commissioners to gamble at Treasury Brisbane and Star Gold Coast. To prevent future conduct of this kind, the bill imposes a heavy maximum penalty on a casino operator who gives, or offers to give, a person an inducement to enter or remain in a casino if the casino operator knows, or ought reasonably to have known, that the person is the subject of an interstate exclusion.

Apart from the Gotterson review recommendations, the bill implements other reforms to enhance the casino regulatory framework. Chief among these other reforms include: new legislative duties on senior officers of casino operators and their holding companies in relation to the appropriate operation of a casino; higher maximum penalties for certain offences under the casino legislation; and new obligations on casino operators to notify other Queensland casino operators about persons they have excluded via a general casino initiated exclusion or via a common law withdrawal of licence to enter or remain at the casino operator's casino.

This bill introduces some ambitious reforms, but they are needed to: prevent criminal influence and infiltration in Queensland casinos; ensure that the failures of Star are not repeated again; and protect consumers and further minimise the potential for gambling harm. Consistent with the then Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's recommendation, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (5.54 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, \$56.5 billion in gambling turnover; \$6.1 billion in gambling losses, up 63 per cent since 2018-19; and \$1.9 billion in gambling taxes. That is the story of gaming and gambling in Queensland. Mr Deputy Speaker, \$113.6 million in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation for Star for the 2023 half year ending 31 December; a \$9.1 million net profit for Star for the same half year; \$100 million in penalties paid to the state of Queensland; and \$100 million in penalties paid to the state of New South Wales.

Gaming, gambling and casinos are very big businesses in this state. They rely on a lot of Queenslanders coming in through the door and losing money—\$6.1 billion of it. The tax take in Queensland in 2022-23 is almost \$2 billion. You might well ask how much of that is being spent on gambling harm minimisation, because \$2 billion is a lot of money, especially when it is up by a very substantial amount.

I will turn to the Auditor-General's report on that. The Auditor-General's report reflects that gambling taxes and levies have increased by \$578 million between 2018-19 and 2022-23, a 43.4 per cent increase. Despite that massive increase, how much is being spent on gambling harm minimisation by the Labor government concerned about what gaming harm might occur? A miserly \$11.9 million—0.62 per cent. That is how much Labor is spending on harm minimisation. Those are not figures that are made up by me: they are the figures in the Auditor-General's report. They are there to be read. What else did the Auditor-General say? The report states—

Over the past 5 years, the funding for harm minimisation has not kept pace with the increase in problem gambling nor the significant increase in gambling revenue.

...

Queenslanders have lost over \$25 billion to gambling in five years.

These are enormous sums of money, and those sums of money being lost by Queenslanders can often have devastating consequences. I am not a prude. I do not personally like gambling or gaming, but if those people who enjoy it and can manage it and get pleasure out of it want to do it, I say go for it. But there are those who obviously pay a very heavy price. There are those for whom problem gaming is an issue.

You would think that the government could care more about it. I looked at the 2023-24 budget papers from last year to see if it was part of the focus of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. At the beginning of those budget papers they highlight a number of issues, but in the departmental budget highlights that did not feature at all in what they were trying to achieve for 2023-24. As I have commented, the recent Auditor-General's report highlights just how much the government is failing in this important area. It states—

The department is unable to determine whether it has been effective in minimising gambling harm, as it has not established robust and comprehensive measures to evaluate the impact of work undertaken to date.

What does that mean? It means the government, through the department and the Attorney-General, does not know if what it is doing is effective. The already minuscule amount of money that it is spending—in comparison to the taxes it raised—is unable to be quantified in terms of an effect and whether it works. We have all the programs, glossy brochures, announcements, gambling harm minimisation weeks and turning up at the events but no-one knows if it works. They cannot tell. The Auditor-General has belled the cat. The department is unable to determine whether it has been effective in doing that. What else did it say? It said—

At the time of the audit—

and this is only over the last 12 months—

implementation of programs and initiatives was significantly behind schedule and had been subject to limited oversight.

It was significantly behind schedule and subject to limited oversight. This was another condemnation by the independent Auditor-General in respect of this matter.

What does it say in relation to a comparison with other jurisdictions? We always need to consider what is going on in New South Wales and Victoria, the other eastern seaboard states where gaming occurs. From 2018-19 to 2021, the department allocated approximately \$300,000 annually for gambling related prevention, research and evaluation programs. There was a one-off injection in 2022-23 prior to this Attorney-General under the previous attorney-general. However, this is still significantly less than jurisdictions like Victoria, which invested over \$15 million on gambling prevention programs in 2020-21 alone. Even compared to Victoria—or, as I like to call it, the democratic socialist workers republic of Victoria—we are spending less here on gaming harm minimisation than they are in Victoria. These are the stark facts as revealed by the Auditor-General's report.

Proper and effective regulation of casinos and gaming is essential to ensure Queenslanders can have confidence that crime is not being committed, that money is not being washed through casinos and that gaming harm is minimised. Without that certainty and assurance, the community is right to ask: does this government care, are they being open and transparent, or are they simply hoarding the money they are receiving from the people who are losing at gaming throughout Queensland, in particular those who are losing at the plethora of machines that are operating in casinos legally here in Queensland? It would seem that the answer is no; this government does not care.

I said in earlier debates about similar legislation in 2022 that the LNP supports legislation that is modern, that is informed by best practice and evidence, that ensures Queensland's casino industry is above reproach, that thwarts criminal activity and money laundering, and that meets community expectations. One of the clear matters that came out of both the Bell inquiry in New South Wales—that is Bell 1—and the Gotterson inquiry in Queensland was that Queensland's casino industry was not above reproach and was failing when it comes to criminal activity and money laundering and meeting community expectations.

The other issue that is quite clear is that the government did not care. They had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the Gotterson inquiry and they substantially limited the remit of the Gotterson inquiry. They hobbled it before the race had begun. The Labor government was caught napping when it comes to the supervision of casinos in Queensland, and it is still the case that this Attorney and this government has no sense of urgency. This bill has been languishing on the *Notice Paper* for months and months. Indeed, it was introduced way back in October 2023.

Despite its objective to facilitate the implementations of the Gotterson review, it is very slow in doing so. Much of the bill's proposals will take months to come into effect, given they require regulation to be enacted. Again, DJAG stated in the committee hearing that they hope to have the regulation for the precommitment technology in place by December 2025 at the latest; not December 2024 this year, but December 2025 the following year—another 18 months down the track from when we are debating the legislation. This is something that has been spoken about since September 2022 when Gotterson delivered his report. This is not something new. By the time the department hopes to have the regulation in place, we will be over three years down the track.

We are still waiting for the government to get its act together and prepare for regulations. Quite frankly, the department under this government is notorious for its delays in getting regulations formulated and promulgated. Indeed, the strata industry is still waiting for regulations for the second tranche of BCC reforms. That bill passed on 14 November and was assented to on 22 November, but the industry and unit owners are still waiting on the majority of the sections to be proclaimed. Of 56 sections, 48 of them are still waiting to be proclaimed five months after the bill was passed. As it was described to me by people in the industry, this is another 'tour de farce' for this Attorney and this government.

Here is what the previous attorney-general, who had some interest in getting things going, said way back in October 2022. This is again farcical. Here is the quote from the media release—

Making sure Queensland casinos operate lawfully is a priority for the Government.

That was in October 2022 and here we are in March 2024. What a laugh. It was such a priority that it has taken another 17 months to get to the stage of implementing 11 recommendations from the Gotterson report, and we still do not have regulations. We will be waiting another 18 months for those. The whole sorry saga has been characterised by delay and incompetence by this government.

Why did the government resist a public inquiry for so long and only act after a series of articles in the *Australian* newspaper highlighting the links between Star and the Labor government? In Queensland, the desirability of a broad-ranging inquiry was demonstrated by the myriad media reports about links between the now banned Labor lobbyist, founder of Anacta Strategies, Labor predecessor to the then attorney-general, the member for Waterford, a member of the left faction and a Labor Party donor—

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I ask the member be brought back to the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): I will just get some advice. Member for Clayfield, I ask you to come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Absolutely. I am happy to do that. Referring to the Gotterson report, the delay in the Gotterson report, the circumstances leading up to the Gotterson report, which the Attorney herself mentioned in her speech just a moment ago, and the contents through that, what we do know is that there was a long delay in the commissioning of the report that led to the 11 recommendations that are the subject matter of this bill. One of those reasons quite obviously is the involvement of Evan Moorhead from Anacta Strategies in the arrangements as a representative of Star.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Standing order 236 is quite clear that contributions in a debate can only be matters relevant to the subject matter of the bill—not matters extraneous. I seek your ruling in respect of the areas the member for Clayfield is straying into. You already asked him to come back to those matters a moment ago.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will get some advice on that. Member for Clayfield, can you explain how that is relevant to the bill?

Mr NICHOLLS: Absolutely. I am happy to continue with my discussion in relation to it because we are discussing the matters that led to the commissioning of the Gotterson report. The results of that report are matters directly the subject of this legislation, as are the terms of reference for that and the breadth of the terms of reference and why the terms of reference were constrained in relation to the Gotterson report.

We are discussing the implementation of recommendations of the Gotterson report. In my view, the terms of reference and the leading up to the Gotterson report are sensibly part of any discussion in relation to this legislation. We cannot have a discussion about legislation without talking about what led to it and what the consequences of it will be.

As I say, the desirability of a full and broad-ranging inquiry, which is the Gotterson inquiry I was talking about, was demonstrated by the media reports calling for an inquiry. There were also links with Gary Bullock, and it is a clear matter that Gary Bullock was opposed to the development of Queen's Wharf until a deal was done by the then Labor government with his union—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Pause the clock. Member for Clayfield, I have given you some latitude. I think you are starting to veer well away from the long title of the bill. I will ask you to come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. These are matters that have been amply ventilated and, in fact, I raised these matters in a bill of exactly the same name—the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill—in 2022.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I ask you to come back to—

Mr NICHOLLS: They are the same matters that were absolutely ventilated in similar speeches, but I am happy to continue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Clayfield. I remind you to come back to the long title of this bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed. It is the same title.

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. You sought clarification from the member for Clayfield, who has continued to just deliver a continuation of his speech. The nature of his speech seriously offends standing orders 234 and 236, and I would ask for your guidance to the member for Clayfield with respect to his adherence to these standing orders.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member. I have given some guidance to the member for Clayfield. I ask you to carry on with your contribution but again remind you to come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. In terms of dealing with the issues regarding the long title of the bill and the contents of the bill itself—the Casino Control Act—it is important to look at how casinos are operated and regulated and matters pertaining to the inquiry that led to the recommendations we are dealing with today. Any other discussion that does not allow for some degree of contemplation of context would be nonsensical and it would serve to hamper, in fact, debate in this House, which I am sure no-one in this House would seek to achieve. A full and free-flowing debate around issues regarding the appointment of Mr Gotterson, the circumstances regarding the influences on Mr Gotterson, the influences on the casino and how the casino is operated are sensible parts of any debate that is wideranging with respect to the long title of the bill. Along those lines, I believe it is appropriate to understand how that came about.

There are important relationships that have been formed that influence and determine the recommendations. There is Star's government relations executive, former Palaszczuk staffer and failed Labor candidate for Petrie Corinne Mulholland, who still holds a position at Star. There are widespread reports of fundraisers hosted by Star for Labor ministers, and these have been widely reported by the *Australian's* Michael McKenna and Sarah Elks. They reported on access to decision-making in relation to Star's operations in this state.

That is why the LNP has consistently said there ought to have been a full and broad-ranging inquiry by Mr Gotterson. In fact, Mr Gotterson, as he freely says in his report, had limited powers in relation to parts B and C of his terms of reference. He had no ability to make recommendations about Star's suitability to hold a licence—that is contained in the Gotterson report. Nor did he have powers of compulsion—that is, powers of a commission of inquiry—to call witnesses outside the specific terms of part A of his inquiry. These are all factors that go to the relevance and to the outcomes of the Gotterson report. He could not look at allegations in relation to junket operations at other casinos—an important aspect of, for example, the Bell inquiry in New South Wales. Nor could he more broadly look at the exercise of influence by the gaming industry on government. Equally and importantly, he could not look at the relationship between the regulator—that is, the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation—and the casino operators. Here we are not just talking about Star; we are talking about the other casinos in the state—The Reef up in Cairns and the casino up in Townsville. These are matters that Mr Gotterson did not have remit over, as I have explained. In this regard, it was a missed opportunity.

Mr Gotterson had no power to compel documents or witnesses to hold public hearings into the relationship of the regulator and those being regulated—a substantial difference between Queensland and the Bell inquiry in New South Wales. There was no power to provide for sworn testimony or to protect witnesses who might have provided vital information about this most important of functions.

Evidence to the committee from the former acting CEO, Mr Hogg, for example, revealed Star had not been prosecuted or fined in the five years prior to the introduction of the bill in 2023—the urgent bill that had to be pushed through to give the then government, the then attorney-general, the power to issue fines. That evidence was not controverted in any shape or form. Mr Hogg also gave evidence that if any action had been taken it was in the main the result of self-reporting by Star and not as a result of actions by OLGR. That was an incredibly concerning piece of testimony and remains an incredibly concerning piece of testimony. In five years of operations, OLGR issued zero penalty infringements. Who could reasonably believe that Star, with the best will in the world and with the best compliance regime in the world, never committed a breach?

I also note that the ABC's state reporter Rachel Riga sought information about prosecutions of other casinos for breaches of liquor or gaming regulations or laws and was told that such information could not be provided due to confidentiality provisions of the Casino Control Act and the Liquor Act. Again, we run into the same lack of transparency because the government refuses to release these days Star's remediation plan. A remediation plan critical to Star avoiding a suspension of its licence has not been released. I asked a question on notice about it. This is the answer from the Attorney—

The remediation plan is The Star's document and may contain commercially sensitive information. It is therefore up to The Star to determine what is released.

In reality, why should that be? Why is 'may' good enough? The department does not even know if there is commercially sensitive information. It says there may be. If you go to the department's website and look at their report on their implementation—the five parts of their program—one of the issues they highlight is openness and transparency of reporting, yet there is none. The ABC cannot get figures on prosecutions from the department because it is confidential, and we cannot get a copy of the remediation plan for a business that has \$113.6 million in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation, that made \$9.1 million in profit and that operates the single largest gaming machine

operation in the state—and an organisation that has been found by Gotterson KC to have failed to comply with its obligations and that the previous attorney-general found was a breach so serious that she was going to suspend their licence, defer it for a year and impose a \$100 million fee. The department does not know if the remediation plan is commercially sensitive.

Why has the deferral of a licence suspension been granted until 31 May 2024? No real reason was given in the release of late last year. Is this another instance of the Attorney not being across the brief and not being willing to make the hard decisions? In my view, it is clearly another case of a lack of integrity and transparency by this government. The Attorney has again demonstrated an unwillingness to step up and be open and transparent.

Let us compare what is happening in New South Wales, because it is instructive to know what we are talking about here and what is happening in New South Wales, where the independent regulator is actually taking action. The New South Wales Independent Casino Commission has announced a second inquiry into Star to investigate the Sydney casino's suitability. The regulator in New South Wales said—

When the manager was extended for the second time last year, the NICC was not satisfied The Star was progressing its remediation in a timely fashion.

So in New South Wales, the independent regulator says 'we are not happy with what Star are doing', and they are being open and transparent about it. Further—

The NICC has had concerns about the extent that remediation is attributable to the manager's oversight and direction versus what is being driven by The Star's reform agenda.

In New South Wales, they are not sure it is because the manager who is in there is doing it or whether it is actually because Star are doing the right thing. The second Bell inquiry will run for 15 weeks and the final report will be due on 31 May 2024. Notice the similarity in dates, Mr Speaker? Queensland, extension of deferral, 31 May, 2024. Bell inquiry, 31 May, 2024. Once again, this Attorney-General appears to be letting New South Wales and its independent regulator and the inquiry do the heavy lifting on whether Star is doing the job on gambling harm, on avoiding criminal activity and on making sure that there is not money laundering going on. They are leaving it up to New South Wales to do the hard work. What is happening here in Queensland is shrouded in secrecy. This Attorney-General has checked out—not interested in doing the job any more—and the OLGR seems unable or unwilling to report. As a result, Queenslanders are being kept in the dark.

We know from the committee report that there was one confidential submission. Of the three that were made, one of them was confidential. It does not take too many guesses to realise who made that confidential submission—and its name is Star. I challenge anyone to say that that is not the case. Why would Star make a confidential submission? If their plan is they tell the Stock Exchange, as they put in their public notices, to be 'open and transparent' and to 'work their way through all the challenges that they face', why make a confidential submission to the committee? Why does the government accept it? Why not say, 'No, this is too important for Queensland. This is too important to restore trust in gaming and integrity in Queensland, not to publish a submission. We do not accept it that way.' They would not do it in New South Wales.

The whole process has been surrounded by incompetence, an unwillingness to be open, an unwillingness to be transparent, a failure to uphold the interests of Queenslanders and a failure by this government to separate its political interest from the real interests of Queenslanders—particularly those Queenslanders who will experience gaming harm. Whether it is a delay in the regulations, whether it is a delay in bringing the legislation on for debate, whether it is shrouding the remediation plan in secrecy, whether it is not compelling Star to release its plan and make sure the public is aware of it, or whether it is in the reasons for extending the deferral of the licence suspension—other than the words of a media report—this government is failing Queenslanders when it comes to one of the biggest businesses in this state. The recommendations in relation to the—

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

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock.

Mr HART: The member for Stafford is making continual interjections. I think if you refer to your warning list, you may find that he is on there.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, he is not on there. I remind all members that the member for Clayfield is not taking interjections.

Mr NICHOLLS: In terms of the 11 recommendations that are still to be implemented—remembering that one was implemented urgently by the government; I did say at the time we would be back doing this, and we are—the recommendations state—

Recommendation 1—Carded Play

Carded play (that is, play requiring the use of an identity linked gambling card) be mandatory in Queensland casinos.

Recommendation 2—Cashless Gambling

Cashless gambling be implemented, save for gambling transactions of \$1,000 or less.

Recommendation 3—Limits on Gambling


There should be a full, mandatory and binding pre-commitment system for all patrons

Gambling on EGMs in casinos, to operate in the following manner:

That has been set out in the explanatory notes and in the legislation itself.

There should be limits on gambling including a ‘binding play and break limit system for all patrons gambling in casinos’. There are limits in respect of EGMs that should mirror those in the precommitment system—that makes sense. The collection of carded play data is obviously necessary, given the Auditor-General’s report in relation to the inability of the department to determine whether its programs are working or not—that makes sense. The availability of carded play data, the terminology used, safer gambling and persons who suffer, or might suffer, gambling harm and gambling related harm instead of, as it has been in the past, problem gamblers—makes sense as well.

The code of conduct recommendation, the supervision levy and the periodic review, which is a power that is used in New South Wales, akin to section 143 of the Casino Control Act, allows for five-year reviews or otherwise. There is a recommendation, as the Attorney has mentioned, that gives effect to the directions given in New South Wales. With that, I will conclude my contribution to this debate. Hopefully we will see proper and better regulated gaming taking place in this state, but it has taken a long time to reach this point.

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (6.26 pm): I rise to speak to the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The former Legal Affairs and Safety Committee in its report No. 67 of the 57th Parliament, tabled in this Assembly on 2 February 2024, has recommended that this bill be passed. The objectives of the bill are to facilitate the implementation of recommendations 1 to 11 of the Gotterson review and to implement a range of other reforms to enhance the casino regulatory framework.

In October 2021, allegations of money laundering, breaches of law and links to organised crime were levelled against Star which, through its subsidiaries, owns and operates Treasury Brisbane and the Star Gold Coast casinos and will, from 2024, operate the Star Brisbane in the Queen’s Wharf Brisbane precinct. The allegations led the Queensland government to subsequently appoint the Hon. Robert Gotterson AO, KC in June 2022 to conduct a review of the Star Queensland casino operations. The Gotterson review found that Treasury Brisbane and the Star Gold Coast licences were being operated in a way that was inconsistent with the achievement of the objectives of the Casino Control Act 1982.

Gambling has become an incredibly insidious presence in our society. Australia has a long history and association with gambling, with Australia’s first official horse race meeting beginning in 1810 in Hyde Park, Sydney at the order of Governor Macquarie. From colonial times, our long history in gambling has evolved and gambling products and are now available in pubs and clubs, at sporting events and in people’s homes. Many online operators take bets on sports, races and even wild and whacky things like which celebrity or public figure will be abducted by aliens first or which country the aliens will attack first. The list of strange activities people can bet on does not stop there. What about how far and how fast you can carry your wife, which is based on a legitimate wife carrying competition in Finland?

Gambling has a firm foothold in the Australian culture with an associated host of repercussions. Australians are the biggest losers worldwide, and it is estimated that Australians lose approximately \$25 billion on legal forms of gambling each year. This represents the largest per capita losses in the world, with the costs of gambling borne not only by the individual gambler but also by their families and the community. In addition to this harm, casinos are a vector for crime and money laundering activities. The Gotterson report has shown that casinos have been willing to overlook, and even encourage, these illegal and socially harmful activities.

The key issues raised during the committee's examination of the bill include: default play and break limits; access to and use of player data; measures to reduce gambling harm; review of gambling licences; a mandatory code of conduct for casinos that includes penalties for noncompliance; and anti-money-laundering measures. The committee heard that there has never been greater public consciousness and support for gambling reform, and this bill addresses some of these concerns.

The remaining 11 recommendations of the Gotterson report that are addressed in the proposed bill are aimed at minimising the destructive impact of problem gambling and criminal influence inside casinos. The measures proposed to be introduced include requiring the use of an identity linked gambling card, setting player times and loss limits, and introducing cashless gambling for transactions over a thousand dollars.

During our examination of the bill the committee heard that cashless gaming with partial, voluntary, non-binding precommitment is currently available at many licensed venues in Queensland for machine gambling at the licensee's discretion. Players who reach their preset expenditure and time limit may remove their card and continue to play anonymously using cash. The Alliance for Gambling Reform strongly supports gambling products having mandatory identity linked cards with the object of both minimising gambling harm and preventing money laundering.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General's response to submissions stated that the bill does not propose to apply mandatory carded play to Keno and wagering in Queensland casinos as Keno and wagering systems are not casino property. Instead, casino operators offer Keno and wagering through agency agreements with the respective Queensland Keno and wagering licensees. The department stated that other jurisdictions undertaking similar reforms are not initially capturing Keno and wagering either and that if mandatory carded play was to be applied to Keno and wagering in casinos in the future it would be appropriate to do so through the Keno Act and the Wagering Act.

The committee noted that the purpose of the bill is to implement the recommendations of the Gotterson review and create a regulatory framework for mandatory carded play in casinos. Such a framework includes the requirements for carded play and the introduction of cash limits, mandatory precommitment limits, and play and break limits. The proposed bill is aimed at casinos, as were the recommendations made by the Gotterson review. The committee recognises the potential to expand this framework to other areas once it has been rolled out, but that is the objective of this proposed bill.

According to the explanatory notes and the Gotterson review, the success of several Gotterson review recommendations relies on casinos collecting real-time data on gambling behaviour through player cards. However, the Casino Control Act does not require collection of player data. Accordingly, the Gotterson review made two recommendations for the collection and the availability of player card data. Such data would be collected for the purposes of research and to inform casino staffing levels and the proper supervision of casino activities. The committee believes that the bill strikes the right balance between the protection of a player's personal information and upholding the public good that can be achieved when the information is shared to disrupt crime or carry out important research.

The Gotterson review noted a tendency to blame individuals for gambling harm. Gambling harm was dismissed as a symptom of personality disorders rather than the effect of effective gambling products that were designed to be addictive. The Gotterson review recommended changes to terminology in gambling legislation to reduce stigma and shame and the implication of personal irresponsibility for gambling behaviour. The bill proposes to implement the modernising of terminology and replace terms that can stigmatise, shame or imply sole personal responsibility for gambling problems rather than a shared responsibility with gambling providers. The committee noted the importance of terminology in public policy and also noted the support the alliance has for the bill. Removing stigmatising language is part of recognising that gambling can be a powerful and addictive activity. That addiction is not solely the fault of the gambler.

Currently, Queensland has no requirement for casinos to comply with the code of conduct for safer gambling under the Casino Act. Casinos can choose to follow the voluntary Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice and associated casinos resource manual. The Gotterson review found that a voluntary safer gambling regime was not enough to deter casino operators from conduct that may facilitate gambling harm. The committee saw the value in creating a mandatory code of conduct for Queensland casinos. The committee believes that self-regulation is not always appropriate when the industry is large, concentrated or has the potential for major public impact such as the gambling sector. Modern casinos are more vulnerable to money laundering, criminal influence

and exploitation and have the potential to cause considerable gambling harm. An appropriate level of regulation and oversight of casinos is required to protect players and the community and to prevent criminal activity. The Gotterson review recommended a 'user pays' levy, noting—

It is appropriate that those who benefit financially from the casinos pay for the regulation of those activities.

However, it warned that the levy—

... ought to be structured in a way that leaves no doubt that the casinos are not 'clients' of the regulator, and that they cannot control or direct that which the regulator does.

The bill proposes to amend the Casino Act to provide for an annual supervision levy. The levy will be used to fund the regulation and oversight of casinos. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Before I call the next member, I will remind the House of those members who are on a warning. They are the members for Bancroft, Woodridge, Buderim, Currumbin, Nanango, Moggill, Mudgeeraba, Maryborough, Bonney, Clayfield and Sandgate.

Mrs GERBER (Currumbin—LNP) (6.36 pm): The Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 proposes to give effect to recommendations 1 to 11 of the Gotterson review including around carded play, cashless gambling, limits on gambling, amendments to the code of conduct for safe gambling, imposing a supervision levy, periodic review, and to give effect to interstate police commissioner directions in relation to exclusion directions. I want it noted that these amendments have been waiting to be implemented since 2023 and since the Gotterson review was tabled in this parliament. Further, I note that many of the proposals in this bill will take some months to come into effect, with DJAG stating in the committee hearing that they hope to have the regulation for precommitments by December 2024 at the latest. That is almost three years of delay. This is a government that has absolutely no sense of urgency when it comes to properly regulating gaming and the casino industry.

When looking at this bill, to properly understand its provisions we need to understand not just the backdrop of the Gotterson review and what that entailed but also the previous six years of investigations into casinos and casino related misconduct in various states, because that was the reason we had the Gotterson review. Over the last several years from state to state there has been inquiry after inquiry. However, here in Queensland it was only the revelations of misconduct in New South Wales that finally forced Labor to belatedly commence an inquiry into the operations of Star Entertainment Group in Queensland. The serious allegations included secretly bringing illegal Chinese junket operators and their clients to casinos. The junket operators found wealthy operators lent them cash and Australian casinos did business with them. The junket operators had well-known criminal links to Asian criminal gangs, and the casino provided customers with China UnionPay facilities that worked around Chinese regulations to facilitate the gambling of around \$900 million deceptively masked as 'hotel expenses'. It is against this very serious backdrop that we are looking at this bill today.

Gotterson's findings included that the Star actively encouraged persons excluded at the direction of the police commissioners in New South Wales and Victoria to gamble. He observed that Star was, at worst, deliberately misleading about its use of China UnionPay facilities to disguise gambling withdrawals as 'accommodation costs'. However, what we do not see in the Gotterson review is a full investigation into the role of the regulator. Why do we not see that? Why do we not see this Gotterson review able to fully look at the role of the regulator and what the regulator could do and did not do? That is important because we have a regulator in Queensland, so how could this conduct have happened under the regulator's nose?

I will tell members why. It is because the terms of reference set by this government for Gotterson's review were so narrow that he could not fully investigate the role of the regulator. He could not investigate what it knew, he could not investigate what it did not know and he could not investigate what it acted on or, more importantly, what it did not act on. Gotterson had no power to compel evidence and he had no power to call for statements. He had no powers to protect people. These are the powers that the independent inquiry in New South Wales was given in the Bell inquiry. However, in Queensland we see this constrained, hamstrung review that is tightly shrouded in secrecy and tightly constrained.

If the government was serious about bringing integrity and sunlight into the operation, surely the body tasked with setting the standards would have been part of the review. Further, the terms of reference set by this government were also so narrow that Gotterson was also not able to consider the undue influence of a minister. Given the close connections that were publicly reported between the Labor Party and the Star Entertainment Group—including that Star secretly engaged Annastacia Palaszczuk's former deputy chief of staff, Evan Moorhead, to give the Star advice on how to deal with

the government—that Gotterson was precluded from looking at this relationship as part of his inquiries remains very concerning and tells us everything we need to know about this secretive Labor government that operates in the shadows.


The LNP called for a wideranging review with powers to ensure that Queenslanders got a casino industry that was regulated beyond reproach. That would have ensured that any form of money laundering and any form of corruption could be stamped out, but this third-term government refused to do it. It is a missed opportunity in this bill and it needs to be called out for what it is. Why did we call for a well-regulated industry? Part of the reason is the important role that Star plays in our community, particularly on the Gold Coast. It would be one of the biggest employers after council. There are around 8,000 team members based throughout Star. There are thousands of men and women who turn up to work there every day who have done nothing wrong, who deserve to be paid well and who are working through the ranks and have the opportunity to work through the ranks and receive promotions and where, importantly, they offer an incredible tourism product. All of this is something that our community should be proud of and why the industry has to be administered beyond reproach but, sadly, unless this third-term Labor government changes its behaviour to put the microscope on itself Queenslanders cannot have confidence that we will not see a repeat of the findings against Star.

We need casino operators to operate with the utmost integrity. Queenslanders expect and deserve nothing less. We in the LNP will always support any measure to reduce gambling harm and therefore those elements of the bill are something that we should all embrace and work together on. Let us not forget that we also have the Auditor-General's findings regarding minimising gambling harm which were released in early February this year. These findings demonstrate that in fact this Labor government is not serious about minimising gambling harm and has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to preventative strategies. The Auditor-General noted that work undertaken by this government lacks sufficient productive preventative initiatives, lacks adequate targeting potential for harm and lacks being tailored to the needs of at-risk groups. While the government receives taxes and levies from gambling activities, a disproportionately small amount—0.62 per cent—is funded back to the department to deliver harm minimisation services.

Further, at the time of the audit the implementation of the programs and initiatives was significantly behind schedule and has been subjected to limited oversight. Over the past five years the funding for harm minimisation by this government has not kept pace with the significant increase in gambling revenue and the significant increase in problem gambling. In 2022-23 gambling losses totalled \$6.1 billion—that is up 36 per cent since 2018-19—and the government's taxes and levies were up too. They are up 43.4 per cent. However, despite this, the government has only given additional funding of a one-off \$3.4 million injection, and a real direct lack of funding has prevented the department from undertaking comprehensive research or further studies. In fact, the department has not conducted any targeted research specific to gambling in Queensland for over nine years, resulting in Queensland having an outdated understanding of gambling prevention and risks.

For all these reasons—that honest Queenslanders deserve honest casinos, that the many employees who work in our casinos deserve a workplace that is beyond reproach, that our tourism industry deserves a casino that we can be proud of—I support properly regulating casinos. That is why we will not be opposing this bill, but I want it on the record that this government is not treating this issue with sufficient urgency. This government has had extensive delays in being dragged to the table kicking and screaming to even conduct the Gotterson review in the first place, and then it did not take it seriously enough by not giving Mr Gotterson KC the parameters needed to look at the regulator and the parameters needed to look at the relationship between lobbyists and government and the relationship between the government and Star. If the government was serious about regulating casinos properly, if it was serious about harm minimisation and if it was serious about ensuring casinos are beyond reproach, then it would have ensured that there was a full inquiry. It would have ensured that the inquiry was expanded in the way the LNP called for and in the way that New South Wales has done under the Bell inquiry. In fact, New South Wales now has a second inquiry underway. In the remaining time I have left I want to note that the casino on the Gold Coast offers a great tourism opportunity and tourism offerings for our community, but we do understand that those benefits come with dangers.

(Time expired)

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (6.46 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I thank my fellow committee members: Peter Russo, the member for Toohey; Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; Steve Andrew, the member for Mirani; Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore—

Mr Andrew: Thanks, mate.

Mr HUNT:—you are very welcome—and last of all Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim. I also acknowledge the contributions of Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa, and Laura Gerber, the softly-spoken member for Currumbin, who were both committee members when the subsequent report was written. The secretariat was invaluable as always and I thank it for its efforts.

Gambling is a tricky proposition for our society. At its most benign it is an entertaining distraction and a leisure activity so passive that you can indulge in it while enjoying other leisure activities. At its most insidious it is a highly addictive destroyer of lives, laying waste to entire families and leaving misery and self-inflicted destitution in its wake. To that end, it is entirely reasonable that it be subject to strict controls and rigorous examination. The purpose of the bill is very simple—to facilitate the implementation of recommendations 1 to 11 of the *External review of the Queensland operations of the Star Entertainment Group Limited* which was led by the Hon. Robert Gotterson. To that end, the committee has made a single recommendation, and that is that the bill be passed. The Casino Control Act 1982 will be amended to implement such things as: introducing mandatory carded play; implementing cashless gaming for transactions over \$1,000; mandatory and binding precommitment, including play and break limits; providing for the collection of mandatory carded data play and making this data available to inform research and casino supervision; establishing a compulsory code of conduct for the gambling sector; creating a supervision levy for casino owners; introducing a cost recoverable periodic review for casinos; and creating a new mandatory category for excluding notices for those excluded from casinos by an interstate police commissioner.

My own father was brought up in the household of a problem gambler. He recalled one day coming home from school to find two men rolling up the lino in the kitchen because his dad—my pop—had lost the equivalent value in a poker game. On another occasion my dad's school friends found him out the front of his house cutting the lawn with scissors—not as a special punishment but because his own father had lost the family push mower to gambling. This is indicative of the beginnings of problem gambling, but for many families losing the kitchen lino would be the least of their worries.

One of the Gotterson recommendations called for carded play, also known as card-based gaming. This requires a person to swipe or tap a card before they can gamble—and importantly this includes instances where they are playing with cash—on the basis that it can assist with the detection of patterns of gambling which may be indicative of gambling harm, allow for the collection of particular player data and identify and prevent self-excluders from gambling.

Gotterson also advocated for cashless gambling in casinos, save for transactions of \$1,000 or less, as a means of reducing incidences of money laundering and enhancing the ability to trace, monitor and control patterns of gambling and gambling spending. We also know that limits and breaks are an important part in the struggle to mitigate problem gambling. We know that preset limits and levels are vital. Everything about a casino is designed to enhance the gambling experience. Gamblers are encouraged to eat, play, drink, shop and even seek accommodation, all in the casino. International casinos have commissioned comprehensive studies into what fragrances lure, attract and contain gamblers, so taking a break is vital—a break from the lights, the sounds, the smell, the carnival atmosphere and, most importantly, a break in the momentum of gaming. This, too, was the subject of recommendations.

The bill provides that a regulation may provide that a person may not be allowed to play a stated game or carry out a stated activity associated with playing a game in a stated casino other than under a precommitment system in accordance with the regulation. This is to facilitate the implementation of recommendations 3 and 4 of the review as it relates to full, mandatory and binding precommitment and play and break limits. A regulation may prescribe a range of matters relating to precommitment systems, including the types of precommitment limits which must be made available, how precommitment limits are to be measured, a period to which precommitment limits apply and ways of accessing a precommitment system. A casino operator must ensure a person does not play a prescribed game or carry out a prescribed activity in a casino other than under a precommitment system in accordance with the regulation.


Stakeholder feedback was pretty consistent across the hearing. The Alliance for Gambling Reform strongly supports gambling products having mandatory identity linked cards with the objective of both minimising gambling harm and preventing money laundering, although it did go further and note that cards should be linked to a third-party self-exclusion register and that the card system must be linked to all gambling products, including Keno and sport or race wagering. By way of response, DJAG provided that other jurisdictions undertaking similar reforms are not initially capturing Keno and

wagering and that if mandatory carded play was to be applied to Keno and wagering in casinos in the future it would be appropriate to do so through the Keno and wagering acts. In its own comments, the committee noted that the committee recognises the difficulty in applying a new regulatory framework across multiple schemes simultaneously. Keno and wagering systems in Brisbane have their own statutory framework and regulations. The bill is aimed at casinos, as were the recommendations made by the Gotterson review. The committee recognises the potential to expand this framework to other areas once it is rolled out, but that is not the objective of this bill.

What has become apparent through both the Gotterson report and the committee process is that the success of many of the recommendations will rest on data collection, particularly as they pertain to periods of play—as in date, start time and end time—player turnover, player losses and wins. From this we heard the concerns raised by the Office of the Information Commissioner, who was worried about the private and personal information collected as a result of mandatory carded play. The OIC stated that information collected should be limited to what is strictly necessary to establish players' credentials and that personal information must be adequately secured and only used for legislative processes—namely, harm minimisation and prevention of criminal activity. There should be appropriate restrictions to prevent card data being used for unrelated marketing schemes or loyalty and reward schemes. The department provided that these points could be addressed via measures that included the fact that the bill has measures to ensure the regulator can access player card information regularly and at any time. It also required casino operators to give regular reports containing deidentified player card information to the chief executive at the times prescribed by the regulation. Further, it authorises the chief executive to request player card information from casino operators by a stated day and provides the chief executive with access to particular electronic casino control systems.

Finally, I would touch on the recommendations as they pertain to a code of conduct. The explanatory notes make very plain that the Gotterson review found staff to have a poor corporate culture and attitudes towards compliance. The Gotterson review also found some of Star's actions to be misleading and insufficiently transparent. A code of conduct covering standards of behaviour in key areas of casino regulation would assist and enhance integrity, minimise the potential for harm and restore public confidence.

The bill amends the Casino Control Act to create a regulation-making power to provide for a compulsory code of conduct for casino operators, in accordance with recommendation 8 of Gotterson's review. The code may impose regulations on casino operators, their employees and agents to ensure safer gambling in casinos. It may also impose obligations to ensure the appropriate conduct of casino operations and the implementation of appropriate practices, systems and procedures relating to the governance, accountability and integrity of casino operators. The recommendations surrounding cards, spending limits and anti-money-laundering measures are all very intelligent amendments, but a code of conduct will hold casinos to a standard that they very clearly need to be held to. On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (6.55 pm): I rise to speak on the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill was introduced in response to concerns about the integrity and accountability of the state's casino sector. These concerns were stoked by allegations of money laundering, criminal infiltration and other integrity issues, particularly in relation to the Star Entertainment Group Ltd, which operates the Treasury Brisbane casino and the Star Gold Coast casino. Star is also a key backer of the \$3.6 billion Queen's Wharf casino development still under construction.

The bill follows the initial reforms enacted by the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2022 in October 2022. In July 2022, the former attorney-general appointed the Hon. Robert Gotterson AO, KC to conduct an external review of the Queensland operations of the Star Entertainment Group Ltd. In addition to inquiring into the operations of Star's Queensland properties and providing advice to inform government's concurrent suitability investigations into Star Entertainment Group Ltd, Mr Gotterson was tasked with considering what improvements might enhance the integrity of casinos. Mr Gotterson made 12 recommendations for reforms to the legislation, all of which the government has undertaken to implement.

The bill provides a regulation-making power that will allow the details of these technology-driven reforms to be defined and refined in accordance with best practice harm minimisation. The bill introduces a requirement for casino operators to observe a mandatory code of conduct, the details of which are to be prescribed by regulation after the bill passes. The code, or so we are told, will deal with the appropriate conduct of casino operations and the implementation of appropriate practices, systems and procedures relating to the governance, accountability and integrity of casino operators, all of which should have been included in the primary legislation.

The bill also amends the Casino Control Act to provide for periodic cost-recoverable reviews into each casino licence at intervals of not more than five years, unless extended to a maximum of seven years. According to the government, these reviews will cover the suitability of the casino entities associated with the casino licence, the compliance of each casino entity with casino legislation, the operation of the casino and whether it is in the public interest that the casino licence remains in force. However, once again, the details on this will not be known until enacted by regulation once the bill has been assented to.

Significantly, the bill also creates the framework for Mr Gotterson's recommendation that mandatory carded play be implemented in Queensland casinos, accompanied by mandatory precommitment along with restrictions on the use of cash. The bill will also restrict casinos from accepting more than a prescribed amount of cash from a person for gambling transactions within a 24-hour period. Mr Gotterson recommended a \$1,000 limit, noting that the limit relates only to the use of cash and is separate from any default expenditure limit as set under the provisions relating to mandatory precommitment. These types of government-run income management programs set a dangerous precedent for the future of privacy and financial autonomy in Queensland. Such schemes always end up with governments implementing the most coercive possible measures for an ever-expanding number of people, irrespective of their behaviour and regardless of consequent harm.

I also have serious misgivings around the threat to ordinary people's privacy posed by this bill. The Office of the Information Commissioner expressed similar concerns over the bill's privacy implications. The Information Commissioner also noted that the Queensland parliament is presently dealing with a number of bills with significant privacy issues around some of their provisions. As the OIC points out, clause 43 of the bill allows for regulations mandating carded play which will require individuals to gamble by way of a card linked to their identity against which all their carded play data will be monitored, stored and shared for research purposes.

According to the commissioner, this obligation for cashless carded play has direct and serious privacy impacts. Restricting how a person can access and where they can spend their own money interferes with a person's right to personal autonomy and, therefore, their right to a private life. It also impacts on how a person is able to conduct their private life and marks a sinister extension of government regulation into the private and family lives of persons engaging in perfectly lawful activities. The government has also failed to clearly demonstrate that these cashless gambling measures are the only means by which its objective might be achieved. The language of the Human Rights Act is very clear, as is the concept of proportionality. We need a solid evidence base before we agree to run another poorly designed social policy experiment on the people of Queensland.

Debate, on motion of Mr Andrew, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Moranbah Discount Tyres & Mechanical; New Vehicle Efficiency Standard



Mr LAST (Burdekin—LNP) (7.00 pm): As someone who has operated their own small business, I know that there is nothing easy about being part of a sector that, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, employs more than five million Australians. A host of challenges faces the small business owner, from the wider economy to local conditions and, of course, government policy. Such are those pressures that in the 2022-23 financial year over 385,000 small businesses closed their doors.


In the Burdekin electorate, one business that conquers any challenge they face is Moranbah Discount Tyres & Mechanical. Since 2005, this family owned business has provided a one-stop shop for clients across the Bowen Basin. It is very obvious that, in addition to knowing cars inside and out, the team from Moranbah Discount Tyres & Mechanical also know a thing or two about customer service, having recently been announced as a finalist in the Business of the Decade category in the Australian Small Business Champion Awards. When the award winners are presented in April, the entire Burdekin electorate will be barracking for Moranbah Discount Tyres & Mechanical.

At the same time, the federal Labor government has businesses like Moranbah Discount Tyres & Mechanical clearly in their sights. Why? Because, like businesses across Queensland, they sell the vehicles that their customers need. Federal Labor's national vehicle emissions scheme poses a direct threat not just to businesses but also to the people of rural and regional Queensland. Many times I have stood in this place and spoken about the appalling roads that have damaged school buses and even ambulances—roads that are nothing more than goat tracks. In addition to the appalling roads, drivers also have to contend with wildlife. For many families an SUV or four-wheel drive provides a level of

safety that many living in larger centres take for granted. Thanks to federal Labor, we now know that the cost of safety for families in regional Queensland is up to \$25,000, and if you need a ute to operate your small business or pick up supplies for the farm get ready to pay up to \$18,000 for that privilege. Perhaps the most insulting part of this initiative is the fact that federal Labor refuse to release the modelling at a time when families are battling a cost-of-living crisis.

There is only one thing more certain than the Burdekin electorate's pride in Moranbah Discount Tyres & Mechanical and that is the fact that, when it comes to regional Queensland, Labor either does not know the truth or they simply do not care. For rural communities, four-wheel drives such as SUVs and utes are a way of life. They are a necessity in those areas. In many cases, they are tools of trade. To impose these massive price increases on that class of vehicle will have a huge impact on rural and regional communities right across Queensland.

Redland City Council, Election; Redland Hospital

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (7.03 pm): After Saturday, a wave of relief washed over the Redlands with the incredible victory by Jos Mitchell who has taken out the mayoral position. I cannot tell you the number of people I spoke to on Sunday who were so relieved to see that result, which was overwhelmingly in favour of Jos and the campaign that she ran over 14 months. I thank every Redlander for making sure that world balance was kept in place for all of us. I would hate to imagine for even a moment what the alternative would have looked like.

A huge congratulations to Jos. She ran a fantastic campaign. She was out for over 14 months. She met with so many different community organisations. She ran a campaign that was about connecting with community and building confidence, trust and faith that she will work hard to restore integrity after what was an absolutely dysfunctional council under Mayor Williams for the past close to two years. Again, I give her my heartiest congratulations. I also congratulate Wendy, Lance and Paul on their re-elections, which is terrific. As I know the member for Capalaba is, I am really looking forward to working with somebody who is actually focused on delivering for our community because we know that by working together we will always deliver more and deliver better. There are really exciting times ahead for the Redlands.

On polling day I had the chance to be at Victoria Point State School, which was quite an interesting space to be in. It was really lovely that the student council established their own democracy sausage sizzle. They did a fantastic job. I am ashamed to admit that I ate three sausages on the day. Well done to Summer, Jason and all of the students who ran the whole day. They did a terrific job.


I want to finish by mentioning that today I noticed a little thing pop up on my Facebook page. It was a fake petition campaign run by the LNP on our Redland Hospital. I am sure that the member for Springwood will concur that we are delivering in the healthcare space. We have opened the new Lagoon Ward. Maybe when you take the video you might want to walk around the corner from the front doors and see ADCO Constructions going gangbusters on delivering our new intensive care unit and 37 beds. I know the member for Oodgeroo will follow me in this debate. I can tell you that your fake petition is nothing more than that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Direct your comments through the chair.

Ms RICHARDS: I am sorry, Deputy Speaker. It is a data harvesting exercise. You only need to walk around the corner to see how well advanced ADCO is on our new intensive care unit and additional 37 beds, which will build on our Lagoon Ward. Hutchinson Builders did a fantastic job. I do not take the nonsense of the LNP and their suggestion that work is not happening at our Redland Hospital. We will keep delivering for Queenslanders.

(Time expired)

Liberal National Party, Women; Faith-Based Schools

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (7.06 pm): LNP women are leading the way in South-East Brisbane with the recent preselection of Susanna Damianopoulos for the seat of Springwood and Pinky Singh for Mansfield, joining Amanda Stoker for Oodgeroo and Rebecca Young for the Redlands. They are coming. In 2021, the LNP leader, David Crisafulli, set a target of 50 per cent of new candidates in winnable seats—

Government members interjected.

Dr ROBINSON: I am getting a lot of encouragement from those on the opposite side for our women coming through. For the October election, we set a target of 50 per cent of new candidates in winnable seats to be women. As of last week, 10 of 14 key seats had preselected women, passing the 50 per target and without forcing quotas. Therefore, it is possible that four more LNP female members of parliament from South-East Brisbane alone will enter parliament following the October state election. I ask the residents of those electorates to get behind them.

Susanna Damianopoulos is a long-term local of the Springwood electorate who is putting her hand up to fight for the people of Springwood. As an accountant and a former small business owner, Susanna knows how much the skyrocketing cost of living is hurting the Springwood community under this tired state Labor government. Every day she hears from residents about how rising crime is making people feel unsafe. It is one of the reasons Susanna is putting herself forward. She wants a better future for her community and for her family. Springwood deserves strong representation in parliament and that is what Susanna brings as the LNP candidate.


Pinky Singh says it was an honour to be announced as the LNP candidate for Mansfield and she has hit the ground running. Through her community work she has been hearing from locals about how the cost of living is only getting worse with electricity bills and insurance premiums soaring. She has seen how the escalating youth crime, deteriorating health services and rising rents are also affecting residents in Mansfield.

On a different matter, independent schools, Catholic schools and other faith-based schools—Muslim and Jewish—are worried. They are worried about Labor's plans to interfere with whom they employ to teach in their schools. Faith-based schools have always employed teachers with their religious values. Large numbers of Queenslanders choose to send their children to those schools for those very reasons and values. An alliance of the nation's most senior spiritual leaders warned Labor last year not to prevent schools from preferencing the employment of teachers who share their beliefs and spiritual outlook. I call on the Attorney-General to drop this unnecessary plan.

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): I remind members that if they are interjecting—not that they should be—they need to be doing so from their own seat.

Gladstone, Easter

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (7.10 pm): I rise tonight to tell the House why Gladstone is the best place in Queensland to be over Easter. Do not just take my word for it, Mr Deputy Speaker. Thousands of visitors will travel to Gladstone at this time of year to enjoy the fresh seafood, the famous Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race as well as the fantastic line-up of community events over the weekend. This free family event starts on Thursday, 28 March and runs right through Easter weekend, drawing crowds of more than 50,000 locals and visitors. Rides, stage entertainment, sideshow alley, market stalls and delicious food are on offer. It is the perfect way to kick off your Easter festivities. There is no better way to get into the festive spirit than the annual Easter Saturday Race Day. Punters will flock to Ferguson Park to watch six local races and Fashions on the Field.


Easter weekend in Gladstone also marks the arrival of the Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race and its competitors. Now in its 76th year, the Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race is Queensland's oldest race and one of the most celebrated yacht events in the Queensland calendar. This year, the fleet of 37 yachts will sail from Redcliffe in Brisbane to the finish line in the Gladstone harbour. I acknowledge former minister Stirling Hinchliffe, who will send off the boats for the festivities in the future.

One of the highlights of the weekend is the three-day B2G Village festival. It certainly celebrates all there is about the Gladstone region, particularly the celebration we have over Easter. The village festival offers the Yachtsman's Long Lunch on the Friday, followed by the seafood festival the next day before we welcome the yachties all the way from Brisbane in the line-crossing party, celebrating everything there is about the Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge and say a big thank you to Mayor Matt Burnett and not only his old councillors but also his new councillors for their commitment to and support of this festival and the Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race. I also thank them for their support of the Gladstone Harbour Festival, which is one of the last free festivals in Queensland. People can take their family and watch entertainment over the long weekend.

Easter in my electorate certainly is a special time. I encourage everyone, particularly members in this House, to come along and experience what Gladstone has to offer during this period. Gladstone is certainly the place to be at Easter. If members want to come for a visit, I am more than happy to show them around and maybe take them to the races, give them a tip and buy them a beer.

Coolum Surf Club; Coolum State School, Road Safety

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (7.13 pm): I have some breaking news. I have just received a text message from someone at the Clubs Queensland Awards at the convention centre to report that one of my clubs, the Coolum Surf Club, has just won Surf Club of the Year. Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, I know that you are a big fan of the surf club. I know of your close connection to Coolum, as your mother was formerly a constituent of mine. I was honoured to have her in my electorate. I want to be the first to give Coolum Surf Club a massive shout-out. I will have to find some time maybe later this week to go into a bit more detail about that.


The most chronic long-term issue in my electorate—apart from the acute issues of cost of living and crime—is congestion and road safety. In my first speech I spoke about the congestion at Coolum and about how our local road network has not kept pace with the escalating population growth, particularly around Coolum State School. Every morning and afternoon the Coolum State School roundabout fails, causing cars to tail back onto the motorway and causing the motorway and the big roundabout at Coolum to fail. It is not just the school traffic that causes this. I am mindful that it is not all their responsibility. The biggest issue and the first part of that puzzle we had to solve was the school drop-off area. Over the past 100 years the school has grown from a handful of students to over a thousand students today. The school drop-off area, which had only four car spots close to the intersection at the School Road roundabout, was no longer sufficient. Parents used to tail back onto the roundabout, causing it to fail.

Recently, thanks to principal Anthony Ryan, the school P&C, the SafeST committee and our broader community, which has been running campaigns and petitions for funding to upgrade the school drop-off area, we have been able to secure the funding. I am happy to report to the House that upgrades will happen over the Easter holidays in the next couple of weeks. As students return to school after the Easter holidays we will see an upgraded school parking and drop-off area with room for up to 10 cars so parents can drop off their kids safely. As I said, this is only the first part of a bigger puzzle. This needed to be done before we could upgrade the roundabout at School Road, which I spoke about in my first speech. Recently, we also secured \$5 million. After Easter, I am hoping that before the end of the year we will see shovels in the ground at that roundabout, replacing it with a signalised intersection.

Unfortunately, that is not going to fix all of our problems. The next stage is for the council to extend its road network at South Coolum, at Suncoast Beach Drive to the motorway, so we can get some south-facing on- and off-ramps. I congratulate Taylor Bunnag, who looks to be the new councillor for division 8. I look forward to meeting him in the near future to talk about stage 3. I thank everyone who has fought for these upgrades.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): I highly recommend the Coolum Surf Club!

One Nation

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (7.16 pm): In 1996 an elected senator of Queensland disgracefully stood up in the Australian Parliament and said—

I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate.

That senator, of course, was One Nation leader Pauline Hanson. Since then, she has maintained her hateful and divisive views towards minorities, be they migrants or First Nations people. Indeed, she called for a ban on Muslim immigration. Sadly, since 1998 we have consistently seen the LNP and its predecessors, the Liberal and the National parties, get into bed with One Nation on a series of dodgy preference deals. I am proud that Labor has always maintained that the toxic politics of One Nation are not acceptable to the majority of Queenslanders. We have never stood for these dodgy deals and we have always maintained the principled position of putting One Nation last. We have done so even in situations that have cost us seats.

Every couple of years, though, we have a new leader of the LNP. We hear a lot about how the LNP has changed—how it is listening to Queenslanders and supporting multicultural communities, how it is not the LNP that it used to be. Well, actions speak louder than words. Let's look at their actions. There is a One Nation representative in this House who is only here because he received preferences

from the LNP. That is a fact. In 2022 the LNP decided to preference Senator Hanson, helping her along to another six-year term and giving Australia another six years of divisive political tactics. On the weekend we saw even more evidence that the LNP has not changed, preferring One Nation in the state by-election. That certainly was not advertised by the LNP in my community.

Local multicultural community members and leaders were kept in the dark about the LNP's dodgy deals with One Nation. It is the same old LNP trick: preference One Nation everywhere except in multicultural communities such as Stretton or Toohey. In my communities they try and keep it quiet but, frankly, it is wrong. It is weak leadership from the Leader of the Opposition. If he believes that what Pauline Hanson has said and done is wrong, he should come out and commit to putting One Nation last across the whole state of Queensland—not just in electorates with multicultural communities. I am proud to represent one of the most multicultural communities in Queensland.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members!

Mr Millar interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Gregory!

Mr MARTIN: I share my community's disappointment again that the LNP has done a dodgy deal with a political party—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Resume your seat, please. Member for Gregory, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr MARTIN: I am proud to be part of a government—

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Pine Rivers, that interjection was not appreciated and you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr MARTIN: I am proud to be part of a government that will always put One Nation last everywhere—in every electorate, in every election—because that is the right thing to do.

Mr MILLAR: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence at what the member for Pine Rivers said about me. I find it absolutely disgraceful and I want you to withdraw—call me a redneck!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Gregory! Your comments will come through the chair.

Mr Millar interjected.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Gregory, you are actually under a warning. I understand your state of emotion. I am trying to give a ruling and I would appreciate it if I can do that. Taking points of order is not an opportunity for people to engage in debate or to give speeches, but you have made a valid point of order. I ask the member for Pine Rivers to withdraw.

Ms BOYD: I withdraw.

Mr MARTIN: In every election, in every electorate across Queensland, we will continue to put One Nation last because it is the right thing to do. If the Leader of the Opposition meant what he said, he should do the same thing.

(Time expired)

Children, Gender Dysphoria Treatment

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (7.20 pm): I rise to express deep concern over the affirmation model of gender care provided to children with gender dysphoria in Queensland. In Queensland, children with gender dysphoria are treated using this model, which involves immediately accepting the child's stated gender identity, encouraging social transition and the prescription of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and then gender-affirming surgeries. Under Queensland Health's policy, they are butchering our children by automatically setting these kids on a pathway to unproven harmful gender treatments.

Mrs McMahon interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Member for Macalister, you are not in your seat. You are warned. I have given instructions in relation to that. You have been interjecting from outside your own seat. You are warned under the standing orders.

Mr KNUTH: Countries such as Finland, Sweden, Norway and England have conducted independent reviews of the available research evidence behind the affirmation model. Due to insufficient evidence supporting its use, these countries have changed their approach to instead recommend psychosocial intervention and restrict the prescription of puberty blockers to children. Praise the Lord!

Last week in England the National Health Service announced the banning of prescriptions of puberty blockers for gender dysphoria. England's health minister said—


We welcome this landmark decision by the NHS to end the routine prescription of puberty blockers and this guidance which recognises that ... care must be based on evidence, expert clinical opinion and in the best interests of the child.

Unfortunately this has not led to a similar independent reassessment of the existing affirmation treatment model used by Queensland Health. I have been advised that the government's current review of gender clinics has been stacked by known advocates for this affirmation model.

Doctors have been forced by Queensland Health to affirm the social transition of children. It is sickening that doctors are not being allowed to use their trained professional discretion to take a more cautious clinical approach in line with international advice. Queensland doctors are too scared to raise concerns about the affirmation model due to fear of losing their employment and Ahpra registration. Mr Deputy Speaker, when you go to a doctor you expect to get the best medical advice based on training and evidence. However, doctors are being forced to accept the state government's narrative.

I call on the health minister to launch an independent parliamentary inquiry into the affirmation model to ensure health professionals are not forced to provide harmful treatments so that Queensland children and parents can trust the care being provided to them is safe and evidence based.

Stem Cell Donations

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (7.23 pm): Members, tomorrow on your desk will be two documents that I ask you to display in your offices to encourage people in your electorates to become stem cell donors. Every 28 minutes someone in Australia is diagnosed with blood cancer and, for many, a blood stem cell transplant from a complete stranger is their only hope.

I want to express my thanks to Mr Speaker for allowing this esteemed place to be lit in yellow, white, black and red, as these are the colours of the Simply Human organisation. Not only will Parliament House be lit tonight but also on Wednesday and Thursday this week. I am very grateful.

Simply Human are a not-for-profit organisation who have a mission to help those facing situations like cancer. They help those people who may also be away from loved ones by providing support in a number of ways. They also work to raise awareness that here in Australia we need people willing to be donors.

On 25 October last year I spoke in this chamber about bone marrow donations and being an influencer. It is my hope that I can influence every member of this House to reach out to their local communities and encourage people to register as stem cell donors.


Diversity is the key. Patients are more likely to find a match with donors of similar ethnicity. Unfortunately, those from non-European backgrounds often face challenges in finding suitable donors. Research shows that people of Indigenous or ethnic heritage are underrepresented in the Australian Bone Marrow Donor Registry. Stem cell transplants from volunteer donors are usually the last option for the medical treatment of patients with life-threatening blood cancers, bone marrow failures and severe immune disorders.

The Australian Bone Marrow Donor Registry is the primary source of voluntary stem cell donors for patients in Australia, and they have been around for over three decades helping to match donors to patients in need of their help. There is a lot of misconception around the process. However, it can be as simple as donating blood.

I want to acknowledge the founders of the Simply Human organisation, along with their colleagues, who have shown me that there is a gap that needs to be filled. They also made it clear that, when many of us hear the words 'cancer', 'leukaemia', 'bone marrow' and other medical terms, we do not really understand them.

Simply Human is about being human, acknowledging our similarities as well as our differences. Facing hardship and difficult times can bring out humanness and kindness in us all.

Calliope State School; Maternity Services

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (7.26 pm): Calliope State School is part of a fantastic community in a fantastic town. Recently I attended their leadership ceremony and presented the new school captains with their badges. As always, it was an absolute pleasure.

This great school has one major issue that is the bugbear of the entire community. The pick-up and drop-off area is along a major highway and is a complete shemozzle in peak times. Alongside local parents, we have launched a petition calling on this to be fixed with the utmost priority. Parents, community members, local councillors and the school have all spent many hours trying to see this situation fixed, with no success to date.

This highway is a major route for heavy vehicles, with many trucks transporting dangerous goods such as ammonium nitrate along this route, only exacerbating the risk to their 500 students and the wider community. I encourage everyone to get behind this petition and support one of our great local communities. In turn, I call on the government to follow through on this, listen to the already more than 300 people who have signed this petition and stump up to fix this problem.


Maternity services are critical for prosperous communities. Instead of increasing maternity services, this tired, old, chaotic Labor government continues to close them across rural Queensland. Last sitting week I called on the minister to apologise to local mother Chloe who, due to the Gladstone maternity bypass, gave birth on the side of the Bruce Highway. Has the minister apologised? No. The government previously claimed that no babies were born on the roadside due to this maternity bypass. Try telling this to Chloe.

Instead of fronting up to have the tough conversations, the Minister for Health turned up last week in Rockhampton for yet another photo opportunity, meanwhile the Biloela maternity ward remains on bypass. Today it has now been on bypass for a total of 572 days. Staff, doctors and nurses are suffering. Staff, doctors and nurses are all leaving in their droves, and you cannot blame them. The roof at the Biloela Hospital even fell in the other day such is the chaos and crisis under this Labor government.

The community is suffering. The community of Biloela and the staff of the Biloela hospital are victims under the Labor health crisis. Instead of fronting up to the community of Biloela to have a tough conversation, the Minister for Health turns up for yet another photo opportunity. It is time for the minister to front up and start having some tough conversations, rather than turning around and splashing cash and cutting ribbons.

It is clear that Queensland is in the grip of a health crisis. Only the LNP has the right priorities for Queensland's future. The LNP will deliver easier access to health services.

Keppel Electorate, PET Scanner; Dorey, Mr B, OAM

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (7.29 pm): Last week the Minister for Health attended the community cabinet in Rockhampton, where she announced a \$7 million investment for a PET scanner that will immensely help the people of Callide, the people of Rockhampton, the people of Mirani and the thousands of people who suffer from cancer every year. The Minister for Health announced the investment for the Rockhampton Hospital, but it will save the people of Biloela having to travel to Brisbane or further in order to get those very important scans. If the LNP candidate for Rockhampton thinks you can get a lead-lined bunker, storage for radioactive isotopes and specialist radiographers who are able to undertake PET scans in a matter of weeks since they have started this campaign, which is really just an email—

Mr Head interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. I am going to take some advice. Member for Callide, you are warned under the standing orders.

Ms LAUGA: That PET scanner is incredibly important to the people of Central Queensland, including the people of Biloela. I very much look forward to that PET scanner being delivered, which the Minister for Health so rightly committed to last week after hearing the stories of people like Nathan and Amanda White. Amanda has stage 4 cancer and has to travel to have PET scans. The Minister for Health listened to her concerns and she has delivered. That is exactly what a good Labor government does, and that is exactly what this good Labor government has done in this case. The people of Biloela will be well served by that PET scanner. It will be able to diagnose very serious cancers. People will be able to have PET scans on a regular basis without having to travel the long distances they currently do. I stand up for the people of Central Queensland. The Minister for Health stands up for the people of

Central Queensland. The member for Callide would not have a clue about what maternity services are required and what is being delivered. He probably does not have any idea about what a PET scanner does and how important it is to the people of Central Queensland.

In the 54 seconds I have remaining, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Mr Brian Dorey a very happy 95th birthday. I would probably call Brian Dorey 'Mr Yeppoon'. He is one of the most amazing and charming people in my electorate. Just a few weeks ago he celebrated his 95th birthday with the launch of his book titled *Wheeling my own Barrow*. Brian's motto is 'You have one life, one shot, and you have to make the most of it'. This is the motto that Brian has lived by, and what a life he has lived. He served 37 years as a councillor on the Livingstone Shire Council. He was the agitator for Yeppoon State High School, which is now 55 years old. He is the patron of the high school and a great believer in the importance of education. 'Mr Yeppoon'—Brian—happy 95th birthday, and thank you for everything that you do for the community.

The House adjourned at 7.33 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Andrew, Bailey, Bates, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Camm, Crandon, Crawford, Crisafulli, D'Ath, Dametto, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Gerber, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hart, Head, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Janetzki, Katter, Kelly, King A, King S, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lister, Lui, Mander, Martin, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Mullen, Nicholls, O'Connor, O'Rourke, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Skelton, Smith, Stevens, Stewart, Sullivan, Walker, Watts, Weir, Whiting