



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

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# WEDNESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2024

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The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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



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

## REPORT

### Ombudsman



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from the Ombudsman the *Cairns and Murgon watch-houses inspection report: Focus on detention of children*. I table the report for the information of members.

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Ombudsman—Inspector of Detention Services: Cairns and Murgon watch-houses inspection report: Focus on detention of children, September 2024 [[1793](#)].

## PRIVILEGE

### Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 30 May 2024, the member for Glass House wrote to me alleging that 17 members deliberately misled the House on 21 and 22 May 2024. I have circulated a statement on this matter. I seek leave to incorporate the statement.

Leave granted.

#### SPEAKER'S STATEMENT—ALLEGED CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

MR SPEAKER Honourable members,

On 30 May 2024, the Member for Glass House wrote to me alleging that the following members deliberately misled the House on 21 and 22 May 2024:

- Premier;
- Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment;
- Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women;
- Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development;
- Minister for Child Safety;
- Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs;
- Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Innovation;
- Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships;
- Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts;
- Minister for Resources and Critical Minerals; Member for Caloundra;
- Member for Inala;
- Member for Stretton;
- Member for Hervey Bay;
- Member for Maryborough;
- Member for Greenslopes;

- Member for Lytton; and
- Member for Cooper.

The matter relates to statements made by the government members during the Cheaper Power (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill.

The government members all made statements asserting that the Opposition opposed coal royalties, and/or did not support coal royalties into the future.

The member for Glasshouse argued that these statements were deliberately misleading because when the question of progressive coal royalties was put to the House in the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, the legislation passed without division and the Opposition members did not oppose progressive coal royalties during the debate.

I sought further information from the government members about the allegations made against them, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The Deputy Premier made a submission on behalf of all government members. He provided several statements from both the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Opposition, arguing that those statements were evidence that the Opposition does not support coal royalties into the future.

I consider this matter very similar to my recent ruling on 24 May 2024 relating to a complaint by the Member for Glass House about the Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice. That matter also dealt with coal royalties.

The government members have failed to provide evidence that the Opposition both opposed progressive coal royalties and do not support them into the future.

Government members clearly have an opinion as to the Opposition's view of Coal Royalties and what they will do in the future.

The government members concede this view in the submission where they state:

The LNP is desirous of repealing progressive coal royalties, subject to budget capacity, and may release formal policy to do so, closer to the election, or may do so if they form government.

The submission uses the words 'may' on two occasions, which emphasises it is speculation or opinion. Where these members have fallen into error is expressing that speculation or opinion as fact.


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

This is an important matter. There will likely be an opportunity for members to clarify their statements this week and I look forward to that clarification before I make a final ruling on the matter.

I table the correspondence received to date.

*Tabled paper:* Correspondence relating to an alleged contempt and misleading of the House by various Government members [\[1794\]](#).

### **Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House**

 **Mr SPEAKER:** On 20 June 2024, the member for Glass House wrote to me alleging that the member for Stretton deliberately misled the House on 14 June 2024. I have circulated a statement on this matter. I seek leave to incorporate the statement.

Leave granted.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT—ALLEGED CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

MR SPEAKER Honourable members,

On 20 June 2024, the member for Glass House wrote to me alleging that the member for Stretton deliberately misled the House on 14 June 2024.

The matter relates to a speech made by the member for Stretton during the cognate debate on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill, Appropriation Bill, Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Bill.

Specifically, the member stated:

'We have made the choice to use our increased mining royalties to support cost-of-living measures, something the Leader of the Opposition has criticised and said he will renegotiate with mining companies.'

The member argued that these statements were deliberately misleading in relation to the position held by the Opposition on the current royalties regime. He stated that when the question of progressive coal royalties was put to the House in the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, the legislation passed without division.

I sought further information from the member for Stretton about the allegations made against him, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The member for Stretton provided several statements from both the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Opposition, arguing that those statements were evidence that the Opposition plans to renegotiate coal royalties in the future.

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


I consider this matter very similar to my previous rulings on coal royalties. Whilst there is evidence that the Leader of the Opposition criticised the changes to coal royalties (both the process, and in substance), there is insufficient evidence put forward to support the member for Stretton's proposition as stated.

This is an important matter. There will likely be an opportunity for members to clarify their statements this week and I look forward to that clarification before I make a final ruling on the matter.

I table the correspondence received to date.

*Tabled paper:* Correspondence relating to an alleged contempt and misleading of the House by the member for Stretton [\[1795\]](#).

### Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 25 March 2024, the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development wrote to me alleging that the member for Burleigh deliberately misled the House on 21 March 2024. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. I seek leave to incorporate the statement.

Leave granted.

#### SPEAKER'S RULING—ALLEGED CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

MR SPEAKER Honourable members,

On 25 March 2024, the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development (the Minister) wrote to me alleging that the member for Burleigh (the member) deliberately misled the House on 21 March 2024.

The matter relates to a statement made by the member during debate on the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

The minister argued that a statement made by the member was deliberately misleading because the member was making serious allegations of corruption and 'rigging' of laws without providing any evidence.

I sought further information from the member about the allegation made against him, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The member advised me that he stood by his statement and provided me, with what he asserted, was material to support his statement. This material included anecdotal evidence relating to committee business and several media articles.

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

I did not consider the material that the member put forward to be cogent evidence of corruption, or 'rigging' of laws.

However, I also note that the member's statements were non-specific and general and that there was no particular allegation against any individual.

The statement appears more like a statement of opinion than an allegation of misconduct against any particular person.

The Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee in its early reports referred to some matters as 'puffery'. (See Report no. 17 Report on a matter of privilege—The alleged misleading of the House by a minister on 20 August 1997)


Speakers have elucidated this approach in various rulings as including: matters that are clearly semantics; matters that cannot be objectively determined; and matters regarded as political exaggeration in the cut and thrust of parliament. (See Reynolds (S) 02/12/2008 PD p3927-8; Mickel (S) 26/10/2010 PD p3762-3; Simpson (S) 31/07/2012 PD p1263-4; Wellington (S) 24/02/2016 pp 469).

It is my view that the member was making general statements of his opinion rather than specific allegations of misconduct, and the matter is akin to puffery, hyperbole or political exaggeration. It is not a matter that can be objectively determined, as it is a subjective opinion.

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

I will not be tabling the correspondence in relation to this matter given some statements are inflammatory and untested.

### Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Contempt of Parliament

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 3 May 2024, the member for Glass House wrote to me alleging that the Premier published a false or misleading account of proceedings on the social media platform X on 3 May 2024. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. I seek leave to incorporate the statement.

Leave granted.

## SPEAKER'S RULING—ALLEGED CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

MR SPEAKER Honourable members,

On 3 May 2024, the member for Glass House wrote to me alleging that the Premier published a false or misleading account of proceedings on the social media platform 'X' on 3 May 2024.

Specifically, the post said:

"David Crisafulli and the LNP voted to sell our assets and want to hand back billions to multinational mining companies"

The member for Glass House argued that this post was false and misleading because it misrepresents the position of the Opposition and what occurred in the House. The member for Glass House stated that the Opposition voted against the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023 because they did not support the placing of a limit on the public ownership of state assets.

The member further argued that the statement regarding multinational mining companies was false and misleading because when the question of progressive coal royalties was put to the House in the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, the legislation passed without division and the Opposition members did not oppose progressive coal royalties during the debate.

I sought further information from the Premier about the allegations made against him, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The Premier argued that there was no link between the post and debate in the House, and that the statements in the post were a genuine interpretation of Opposition policy.

The Premier then provided a news article from 2014 relating to the sale/lease of assets as evidence that it is Opposition policy to sell assets.

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

The post makes two assertions. First that the Opposition voted to sell state assets, and second that the Opposition wants to hand billions of dollars to multinational mining companies.

With respect to the first statement, the member for Glass House referenced the member for Nanango's speech on the House where she explicitly states that the LNP want to keep assets in public hands. The member for Nanango's speeches makes it clear that the Opposition are concerned about the potential sale of state-owned generators. Further, the explanatory notes tabled by her state the Opposition's support of continuing public ownership of state assets.

The material that forms the official Record of Proceedings for the House does not support the statement that the LNP voted to privatise energy assets and there is clearly no evidence that the Opposition voted in the Legislative Assembly to sell state assets.

With respect to the second statement, the member for Glasshouse provided evidence that the Leader of the Opposition individually, and the LNP as a party, did not oppose progressive coal royalties when they were legislated in the Parliament. The Premier provided no evidence to the contrary, except to say that it was a genuine policy interpretation that they would hand billions to multinational mining companies.

This matter has come down to a jurisdictional matter. The Premier argued that there was no link between the post and debate in the House.

It could be argued that the Premier's assertion that there was no reference to debate in the House in the post is tenuous. It is arguable that a reasonable person would consider the use of the word 'voted' in the post is referencing a vote in the House.

However, the post does not reference the Legislative Assembly, House or Parliament.

Accordingly, I accept the Premier's explanation that the post was not referencing any parliamentary proceeding.

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

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

*Tabled paper:* Correspondence relating to an alleged false or misleading account of parliamentary proceedings by the Premier and member for Murrumba [1796].

I think that is 'shout the bar' territory, if I am not mistaken. I remind members to please put your phones on silent or on flight mode. The exits are here and here!

### Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 28 June 2024, the member for Nanango wrote to me alleging that the Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs and Leader of the House deliberately misled the House on 26 May 2021 and 21 June 2022. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. I seek leave to incorporate the statement.

Leave granted.

## SPEAKER'S RULING—ALLEGED CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

MR SPEAKER Honourable members,



On 28 June 2024, the member for Nanango (the Member) wrote to me alleging that the Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs and Leader of the House (the Minister) deliberately misled the House on 26 May 2021 and 21 June 2022.

The matter relates to two answers to Questions on Notice.

Specifically, on 26 May 2021, the minister stated:

‘... We can guarantee that all of the maintenance work that is required to be done on all of our power stations has been done.’

And on 21 June 2022, the minister stated:

‘... We cannot avoid the maintenance requirements of these plants. If we do ignore those maintenance requirements, those statutory requirements, not only are we in breach of the national electricity laws; we also put the lives of Queenslanders at stake.

It was only a year ago that I travelled to the Callide Power Station after an explosion that occurred there—not because of a lack of maintenance.’

The member alleges that both statements are deliberately misleading and argues that the recently released ‘Brady Heywood Report’ makes it clear that lack of maintenance was considered central to the failure of the power station.

I sought further information from the minister about the allegation made against him, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The minister advised me that at the time he made the statements in the House, he was relying on advice from CS Energy, and there was no evidence available to suggest that he would have known or suspected that the advice or his statements in the House were untrue.

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

I considered the material put forward by both the member and the minister.

Accordingly, I consider the minister has made an adequate explanation.

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

I note that following the referral being made to me, both the member for Kawana and the member for Nanango made comments in the media regarding the fact that the member for Nanango had written to me, requesting the minister be referred to the Ethics Committee and prosecuting their argument. This is very disappointing.

As per my statement on 29 October 2021, a member must make the choice when they believe there has been a breach of privilege or contempt—either follow due process in the Standing Orders or prosecute the case in the House and/or media. It is discourteous and an abuse of procedure to do both.

While I have considered this matter, I reserve the right to dismiss future matters that are raised in the media while under my consideration.

I also note that the member alleged that the minister made a deliberately misleading statement on 2 August 2022 at an Estimates Hearing of the then Transport and Resources Committee. I have not considered this statement, as it is for a committee to determine if there is a matter that has occurred during its proceedings that warrants referral to the Ethics Committee.


Finally, the minister raised the time delay between the statements being made in the House, and the allegations being raised by the member for Nanango.

While 1130 and 739 days have elapsed since the two statements were made, the evidence that the member was relying on for the truthfulness of the statements, being the Brady Heywood Report, was only released on 24 June 2024. Therefore, I consider the matter has been raised in compliance with Standing Orders.

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

*Tabled paper:* Correspondence relating to an alleged contempt and misleading of the House by the Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs and member for Springwood [\[1797\]](#).

### Speaker’s Ruling, Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 17 June 2024, the member for Callide wrote to me alleging that the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing deliberately misled the House on 12 June 2024. I have circulated a statement on this matter. I seek leave to incorporate the statement.

Leave granted.

SPEAKER’S RULING—ALLEGED CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

MR SPEAKER Honourable members,

On 17 June 2024, the member for Callide wrote to me alleging that the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing deliberately misled the House on 12 June 2024.

The matter relates to a statement made by the minister during the cognate debate on the Resources Safety and Health Legislation Amendment Bill and Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

Specifically, the minister stated:

'Then we have the member for Callide ... telling the people that he is an experienced geologist in Queensland and that carbon capture and storage in the GAB is a good idea.

...

Tonight in his speech he made no mention of the Great Artesian Basin and the fact that the LNP supports carbon capture and storage being a good thing.'

The member argued that these statements were deliberately misleading and that the minister was misrepresenting the LNP's policy on carbon capture in the Great Artesian Basin.

I sought further information from the minister about the allegation made against him, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The minister submitted that his statements were factually correct and stated that he had relied on information from others to support his claims. He also provided information that he submitted was evidence of a policy position in relation to the Great Artesian Basin.

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

Accordingly, I consider the minister has made an adequate explanation.


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

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

*Tabled paper:* Correspondence relating to an alleged contempt and misleading of the House by the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water and member for Gladstone [\[1798\]](#).

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS


### Prowse, Ms J

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise that in July 2024 Janet Prowse, the Director of the Information Services Division and Parliamentary Librarian, left the service. During her tenure Janet was a valued member of the executive leadership team, contributed to its internal governance and managed a number of significant digital transformation projects, such as a new library management system, the transition of AV services in-house, the restructure of IT Services and the augmentation of our cybersecurity capability.

Janet was also the inaugural leader of the Heritage Management Group and led various initiatives including the War Service Honour Board. Janet also facilitated a number of excellent joint ventures with the Royal Historical Society of Queensland.

I am sure that you will join me in thanking Janet for her seven-year contribution to the Parliamentary Service and the Queensland parliament, as well as acknowledging her long career with the Queensland Public Service where she held a number of senior roles including that of Queensland State Archivist.


### Legislative Assembly, Members' Desks

 **Mr SPEAKER:** I have some housekeeping. Honourable members, in preparation for the dissolution, all members are required to remove any items from their space in the chamber by close of business tomorrow. Other items will be sold in the gift shop!

**Ms Grace:** You may not want to do that.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I think we will get a bit for it, member for McConnel.

### School Group Tours

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

## PETITIONS

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

### Darlingia Forest School

**Mr Knuth**, from 34 petitioners, requesting the House to save our non-state democratic school, Darlingia Forest School [\[1788\]](#).

### Atherton Tablelands and Cairns, Road Infrastructure

**Mr Knuth**, from 3,858 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the urgent repair of the current Barron River Bridge and to fast track a new inland highway from the Tablelands to Cairns [\[1789\]](#).

Petitions received.

## TABLED PAPERS

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (Hon. Furner)—

[1790](#) Response from the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (Hon. Furner), to an ePetition (4069-24) sponsored by the Clerk under the provisions of Standing Order 119(4), from 746 petitioners, requesting the House to remove any provisions in the Animal Care and Protection Act 2007 that permit the use of an electric collar on a dog

MEMBERS' PAPERS

The following members' papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Member for Hill (Mr Knuth)—


[1791](#) Nonconforming petition requesting the House to ensure the urgent repair of the current Barron River Bridge and to fast track a new inland highway from the Tablelands to Cairns

Member for Ninderry (Mr Purdie)—

[1792](#) Nonconforming petition regarding lights at the T-intersection of Scrub Road and David Low Way Coolumb Beach


## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Miles Labor Government, Public Service

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Premier) (9.36 am): Today we will hear a lot about records in government. On this side of the House, we are proud of what we have delivered, especially when it comes to rebuilding the Public Service. We are always two steps ahead when it comes to supporting frontline workers, so here are some quick statistics.

This government has delivered more than 50,230 frontline workers. That is 18,401 more nurses and midwives, 7,910 more teachers, 7,731 more health practitioners, 5,320 more doctors, 4,807 more corrections officers, 2,104 more child safety caseworkers, 2,045 more firefighters, 1,751 more ambulance officers, 1,144 more youth and caseworkers, 1,085 more disability support workers, 1,068 more teacher aides, 676 more police and 392 more TAFE teachers and tutors. That is just to name a few. My government is in the business of building the front line, not cutting it. We understood the assignment.

### Miles Labor Government, Women and Girls

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Premier) (9.38 am): Queensland women make up 50.4 per cent of the population, and we have the fastest growing population of women and girls compared to every other state in Australia. That is why I am proud to lead a government that delivers for women. I am proud to have been the health minister when we decriminalised abortion in Queensland because abortion is health care.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Waterford. I will make some clearer guidance to the House.

**Ms Leahy** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Warrego, I am giving a ruling. You are warned under the standing orders. I do not believe I hear anything that the Premier, who has the call, is saying which is outrageous. I am listening to the statement. I would ask that the House does also.

**Mr MILES:** That is why I am proud to lead a government that delivers for women. I am proud to have been the health minister when we decriminalised abortion in Queensland because abortion is health care. I am proud to have helped women in Queensland have better access to the pill and UTI treatments straight from the chemist. That is saving women and girls time and money at the GP. We have also opened satellite hospitals and expanded the midwifery workforce, and we will soon open nurse-led clinics that specialise in women's health care. This is all underpinned by our \$1 billion Women and Girls' Health Strategy—because that is what matters.


We are also working to close the gender pay and superannuation pay gaps. This year, I joined Minister Grace on Labour Day to announce nation-leading 10 days paid reproductive leave to all those working in the public sector, including our government owned corporations. This will come into effect from the end of this month. We are also paying superannuation on all 52 weeks parental leave, regardless of whether it is paid or unpaid leave, because, on average, women have lower superannuation balances than men and I think we should do something about that.

Today I have some good news. I can also announce that the 2024 pay equity dashboard shows the gender pay gap in Queensland's public sector is at an all-time low. It now sits at just 5.94 per cent. That is almost half the national gap of 11.5 per cent. This is significant for every one of the 215,000 women who make up our workforce, and it shows that what we are doing now is making a difference. The dashboard also shows an increase in the number of women in leadership—now up to 55.12 per cent. That is no small feat and a testament to all the women at the forefront—because women deserve to have a seat at the table and that is something I am proud to champion.

Yesterday we passed historic laws to eliminate sexual harassment and gender discrimination from Queensland workplaces. Those laws will establish a new positive duty on all employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and other discriminatory conduct. It is simply unacceptable that this sort of harassment could take place in the workplace which is why I am sending a clear message that it must stop.

This is just a snapshot of the important reforms we are leading to make Queensland a better place for women and girls. There will always be more to do, but my message to Queensland women is simple: we see you, we hear you and we will do what matters for you.


## Budget

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (9.42 am): This year's Queensland budget is doing what matters for Queenslanders. Our budget will deliver our record \$107 billion Big Build, and we are doing so in the face of the escalating cost of building materials and global supply chain pressures. We are transforming our energy system, allowing the development of new jobs in new industries to ensure Queenslanders can continue to make the products our global customers demand. While other jurisdictions are delaying or scrapping major infrastructure projects, the Miles Labor government is forging ahead. We are forging ahead because our growing state needs that infrastructure. To delay would be to drop the anvil of austerity on the Queensland economy.

This is not some arcane economic theory. It is the lived experience of Queenslanders. It is the brutal lesson of a budget delivered in this House exactly 12 years ago today. Cloaked in misdirection about the need for supposed budget repair, the 2012 Queensland budget saw public investment slashed by 30 per cent. Those cuts dragged private business confidence down as well. Private investment in Queensland fell 15 per cent following the 2012 Queensland budget. Without a global financial crisis or a global pandemic, the 2012 Queensland budget precipitated an entirely homegrown financial crisis, one that had a profound and lasting impact on hundreds of thousands of Queensland families. Over 160,000 Queenslanders found themselves unemployed.

In stark contrast to the nation-leading jobs growth that has been the hallmark of our Labor government, it was a time when Queensland underperformed on our national share of jobs. Now, in 2024, we see interest rates remaining stubbornly high and national economic growth stuttering. The return to a government that placed ideology and vested interests before the wellbeing of Queenslanders is something that our state simply cannot risk.

## Industrial Relations; Farm Safety Calendar

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.44 am): As was just stated, it was 12 years ago today that the Newman government embarked upon a savage bloodletting of Queensland's Public Service—a shameful anniversary. Mass Public Service sackings devastated thousands of Queensland families, depriving many people of their livelihoods and causing huge financial and emotional stress. Queensland's unemployment rate peaked at 6.7 per cent under the Newman government, fuelled in part by their callous cuts even as they were hiring consultants to replace the public servants they had sacked.


Queenslanders have not forgotten these shameful Public Service cuts by those opposite, which included: sacking 14,000 public servants after telling them they had 'nothing to fear'; cutting common law workers compensation rights for injured workers; cutting long-held employment conditions, including redundancy rights; cutting workers' pay with a 16-month wage freeze; and introducing industrial laws that were unconstitutional.

Since 2015 we have been restoring and enhancing workers' rights—despite those opposite frustrating our efforts. Those opposite voted against labour hire licensing laws, voted against paid domestic and family violence leave, voted against the wage theft inquiry which led to wage theft becoming a criminal offence, voted against industrial manslaughter laws and voted against industrial protections for workers subject to sexual harassment and sex-based and gender-based harassment.

We have worked tirelessly to restore the rights and entitlements cut by those opposite, including: restoring the rights of injured workers to access common law compensation—under our common law adjustment scheme, since 2015 nearly 800 workers injured through no fault of their own have received over \$16 million in compensation, which are payments denied to them by the LNP's savage cuts; reversing legislation which allowed a worker's compensation history, believe it or not, to be used against them in future career prospects—we got rid of it; restoring the rights of health and safety representatives; reinstating the Electrical Safety Commissioner and important electrical safety laws; and providing employment security for Queensland public sector workers. On this side of the House, we are proud of our record of delivering for all Queensland workers.

It is that time of the year again. Today I can also announce the winners of the much anticipated 2025 Farm Safety Calendar competition—yet another example of the Miles government's commitment to supporting safety in rural and remote communities. I want to congratulate the 12 Queensland schoolchildren whose work features in this great calendar. I see the member for Nanango has one of her state schools in the calendar, as has the member for Greenslopes. From the bush to the city, we can send a message about farm safety. Those children have come up with some outstanding drawings and safety messages. I hope everyone enjoys their copy of the calendar which has been placed on their desk.

## Health System

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (9.48 am): The Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queenslanders by investing in and growing our health system. Whether it is delivering innovative and expanded services, building thousands of new beds or hiring the staff our growing state needs, only the Miles Labor government has a plan for our health system. On this side of the House we do not slash funding from the health budget and we do not sack frontline workers. We are building the infrastructure our growing state needs.

Since we were elected, we have delivered over 2,000 beds across countless projects, including close to 600 in the last year alone. We plan to build almost 2,700 more over the next four years. That is on top of the additional capacity we have created through our nation-leading Satellite Hospitals Program, which is taking pressure off our emergency departments and means that Queenslanders can get the care they need.

We are not just building the beds our growing population needs; we are also hiring the health workers to staff those beds. Since 2015 we have hired more than 24,000 health workers, including more than 14,000 nurses and midwives, 4,200 doctors and 1,500 ambos. These will be bolstered by our \$1.7 billion workforce strategy.


All of this is only possible because of our record investments in our health system—\$28.9 billion this year alone, almost double what it was in 2015. This investment means we can be at the cutting edge of health delivery in Australia. We were one of the first jurisdictions to legislate safe nurse-to-patient ratios, opposed by those opposite, and we will lead the nation in allowing nurses and midwives to prescribe MS-2 Step, also opposed by those opposite.

This government puts Queensland women and girls at the centre of what we do. Earlier this year we announced our more than \$1 billion Women and Girls' Health Strategy, delivering dozens of initiatives like women's health hubs, support for pelvic pain and endometriosis, and boosting social workers to support women and girls in their mental health.

We know that investing in women means more than investing in women's health. We have also introduced targets to increase the representation of women on government boards and bodies, something that those opposite cut when they were in government. We are also ensuring 50 per cent of the clean energy workforce are women. In an Australian-first, we are tackling the superannuation gap by changing the laws so superannuation contributions are paid on all parental leave.

We also know that women need to be safe from violence to fully participate in economic opportunities. We have invested over \$1.9 billion in preventing domestic, family and sexual violence and supporting women and children escaping violent relationships. I am immensely proud of what the Miles Labor government has achieved, but all of these achievements and more are at risk under the LNP if they are elected in October.

### Energy System

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Clean Economy Jobs) (9.51 am): More progress has been made in this term of government than in any other when it comes to the development of the Queensland energy system. The Australian Energy Market Operator confirms Queensland's energy system holds the mantle of the most reliable in the nation, and Queenslanders have the lowest power bills in the nation.


In 2024 we have delivered certainty to our energy system workforce. This year the Miles government has enshrined the world-first Energy Workers' Charter and public ownership of energy assets into law. This government has legislated a world-first job security guarantee, a commitment to protecting the lifestyles and livelihoods that we have even extended to include dependent adjacent coalmine workers. It is backed by a \$150 million fund in the budget. We have mandated the Queensland Renewable Energy Procurement Policy to ensure regional communities especially benefit from an historic \$26 billion in energy investment over the forwards.

We are investing in the workforce, securing their future and creating future jobs today. There is a veritable army of energy tradies and professionals in government owned corporations including graduates and apprentices. They are a dedicated workforce who are often the heroes of our summer storm seasons right across Queensland. Under this Miles Labor government, we have respected them like heroes. We have not and we will not close their workplaces, like that which occurred 12 years ago, and they are certainly not for sale.

We are also ensuring they remain the most skilled energy workforce globally. Right now we are supporting a whopping 581 apprentices in Energex and Ergon alone, and we are running the nation's largest engineering graduate program. We have built new training hubs at Beenleigh, Pinkenba, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Townsville with millions in state investment, and we are building and operating some of the most impressive infrastructure anywhere in the world, whether it is the \$6.2 billion CopperString project or the world's most powerful pumped hydro, or the 6,600 megawatts of renewables online or under construction. I can inform the House that we are now finalising a further 2,485 megawatts of large-scale wind and solar projects and a further 1,584 megawatts of medium-scale storage.

I can further inform the House today that we are on track to meet Queensland's legislated renewable energy targets, but only if we maintain momentum—and all of this momentum only continues with a Miles Labor government. We are recruiting even more Queenslanders to our booming energy sector workforce through our new online jobs portal. Go to [energyjobs.initiatives.qld.gov.au](https://energyjobs.initiatives.qld.gov.au). Today we can also recommit to Queensland's energy workforce, to your lifestyles and to your livelihoods because they are what matters to Queensland and what matters to this Labor government.

## Housing

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works) (9.55 am): I want to read some comments I came across when I visited a hotel we recently bought and transformed into homes in South Brisbane—

I feel so blessed with all the support we've had... as soon as I saw this unit I thought, yes, I'm taking it. It will be my love and joy, my prized possession.

[My son] has always shared a room with me, and he's over the moon to have his own bedroom. He keeps running around, saying, 'Mum, look at this!'

It is a reminder of the power and opportunity a safe and secure home can have, and it is why, despite the opposition not supporting purchases like this, our government has and always will put housing front and centre.

We have come a long way from where we began when we had to clean up the mess and the savage cuts of the Newman government. We have added and delivered thousands of social homes, and we have brought QBuild back from the ashes, with hundreds of tradies now on the tools to build, maintain and repair the homes we need. Under our new Premier, we are doing even more with our Homes for Queenslanders plan. It is an ambitious blueprint to deliver one million new homes, 53,500 social homes, help for first home buyers, support and reforms for renters, and critical funding and resources to work towards ending homelessness. We are doing what matters, with shovels in the ground on more than 1,000 social homes and data showing our housing industry is bouncing back.


It was not too long ago when many of the faces that sit across from us today orchestrated a symphony of cuts to Queensland's housing system—slashing 1,600 QBuild jobs, cutting critical support for renters and sending social housing backwards by 428 homes.

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the interjection from the member for Broadwater because it was only two weeks ago that Peter Dutton signalled billions of dollars in cuts to social and affordable housing and home ownership. A shared equity scheme is on the chopping block under the LNP.

It is only a Miles Labor government that will do what matters for Queenslanders—a government with a plan to deliver one million more homes and to help Queenslanders into home ownership and renters with the support and reforms they need.

## Road Safety

 **Hon. BJ MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services) (9.57 am): The period 26 to 30 August was Queensland Road Safety Week, and it was a terrible week on our roads. My heart goes out to everyone impacted by these recent incidents, including the broader community, first responders, drivers and, of course, family, friends and loved ones. Road Safety Week highlights the role we all play in keeping people safe on our roads.

I welcome the advocacy of RACQ, the Queensland Trucking Association, the *Courier-Mail* and other media outlets and many other stakeholders for their work in keeping our roads safer and, in particular, for a return to 80-20 funding for the Bruce Highway. A return to 80-20 would double the investment in the Bruce Highway. It is unacceptable for the federal government to reduce the funding ratio from 80-20 to 50-50 for the regional sections of this critical national highway and we will continue to fight against this move.

The Miles government has committed to providing AusRAP data to the Australian government from 2025 onwards. We are one of the first states to do so. We are committed to improving these star ratings.

In June this year we released the 15-year vision and action plans for the Bruce Highway and the Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan. This is the work of the independent Bruce Highway Trust Advisory Council, which included input and agreement from important stakeholders like the Queensland Trucking Association and the RACQ. Our plan for the next 15 years on the Bruce includes three five-year rolling action plans, plus the Safer Bruce 2030 Action Plan which outlines real upgrades to guide our future investment—unlike the fake promise of \$30 billion for the Bruce Highway from the member for Nanango. Queenslanders will never forget the member for Nanango's Bruce Highway hoax.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

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

**Mr MELLISH:** We have \$6 billion in funded commitments along the Bruce Highway. Building on an already strong record, in this term of government alone the Miles government has delivered 98 projects worth over \$4.6 billion.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The minister is a low talker. I do not want anyone wearing a puffy shirt in this place as a result. I am having great difficulty hearing the minister's contribution and he should be heard. Cease the interjections members, or I will start naming you and sending you out of the chamber immediately.

**Mr MELLISH:** Some of the key outcomes of major road projects delivered include: more than 250 kilometres of wide centreline treatments; 100 new overtaking lanes; 60-plus new and upgraded rest areas; and over 500 kilometres of roadside safety barriers; however, if there is more to do, the Miles government will always do what matters for Queenslanders.

In 2020, the LNP claimed it would cost \$30 billion to dual-lane the Bruce, for which they have allocated only \$30 million. Let us never forget that they sacked over 2,000 TMR staff when they were last in power, including over 700 RoadTek staff. The cost of delivering infrastructure has significantly increased since then, impacting the supply chain and construction costs. This has been experienced in major projects the world over. Regardless, dual-laning the Bruce will simply not be possible without a return to 80-20 funding arrangements with the Australian government.

I am pleased to advise the House that I have accepted an invitation to be part of the Australian Livestock & Rural Transporters Association and Livestock and Rural Transporters Association of Queensland 'Ride Along' campaign focusing on road safety in Queensland. I will be travelling to Central Queensland in the coming weeks. This is a region I have visited six or seven times since becoming minister. I am also pleased to advise the House—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members!


**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Kawana you are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr MELLISH:** I am pleased to advise the House that, commencing this week, the Miles government's remote freight subsidy scheme will increase to 20 per cent to provide cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders in remote and regional communities in the Far North. I thank the member for Cook for her strong and persistent advocacy on this issue.

I would also like to acknowledge the receipt of a petition from the residents of Elements Retirement Living to improve public transport for their community. I thank the member for Springwood for bringing it to my attention. I have asked my department to investigate options with the residents. The Miles government will always prioritise the projects and initiatives that matter to Queenslanders.

### Multiculturalism

 **Hon. C MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.02 am): The Miles government is committed to celebrating and fostering Queensland's rich multiculturalism. Our Celebrating Multicultural Queensland program is a prime example of how we are doing just that. Today I am pleased to announce that this fantastic statewide program is delivering \$950,000 for 119 events and festivals in 2025. These events bring Queenslanders together and promote unity and inclusion.

Since 2020-21, we have invested more than \$3.6 million to help deliver 465 events. Increased investment across the past three years means our annual support for multicultural events and projects is \$3 million. Next year there are some incredible new events including Jamaica Independence Day on the Gold Coast, Latin Vibes on the Sunshine Coast and a celebration of the cultures of the Pacific islands and Timor Leste in the Whitsundays. We are also welcoming back the all-time favourites including the Taste of the World Cultural Festival in Rockhampton and the hugely popular Eid Down Under in Brisbane. These events are not just fun days out. They are about building connections between communities, strengthening understanding and fostering the unity that makes Queensland so special.




In the past 10 months I have travelled to Germany, Sri Lanka, China, Japan, the South Pacific, the Philippines and Vietnam to name a few—all without leaving Queensland. I am very much looking forward to our Indian community reception this evening hosted by the Premier. This is a wonderful opportunity for several hundred representatives from our many Indian organisations to come together to celebrate culture and community.

This is what our government stands for and will always stand for. Unlike some, we believe in an inclusive, harmonious state where everyone—no matter where they come from—feels they belong is very important. It is part of our vision for Queensland and we are backing it with serious investment. Today's announcement about multicultural events does not just benefit the communities hosting them, it benefits everyone. Events such as these provide an opportunity for all Queenslanders to experience new cultures, cuisines and traditions. They break down barriers between different cultural groups and create spaces—spaces where people can connect, learn from one another and celebrate what makes Queensland so unique.

The Miles Labor government understands that a united state is one where diversity is celebrated. That is why we continue to invest in programs such as Celebrating Multicultural Queensland. We want to see a Queensland where people from all walks of life come together to build a better future. The tens of thousands of Queenslanders who attend these events every year see the true value of this. It is something of which we should all be proud.

### Community Safety

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Community Safety) (10.05 am): I start by acknowledging that the 15th Wall to Wall police remembrance ride commenced from the front of Parliament House this morning. I take the opportunity to once again, as always, remember those officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of all of us. With honour they served.

Community safety is paramount and, through its actions, the Miles government has demonstrated its commitment to this foundational value. This year has seen the introduction of new and tougher laws and the commitment of extra funds to lay a strong bedrock to support community safety across Queensland. The centrepiece of this community safety framework is the Community Safety Plan for Queensland which this parliament recently supported with legislation that was only passed last sitting week. This is a comprehensive plan the likes of which Queensland has never seen before. It has many elements, including the expansion of Jack's Law. The expansion of this groundbreaking law sees the authorisation of wandering operations in a much broader range of venues including retail precincts, licensed venues and sporting venues. That law now has royal assent and is being used by the Queensland Police Service.

We have introduced laws to ban the retail sale of knives to juveniles. We have introduced a new law targeting those who ram emergency service vehicles, including police vehicles, with perpetrators facing up to 14 years imprisonment. We have introduced another new law, Susan's Law, which imposes up to a 20-year sentence for those who evade police and go on to cause the death of another road user.


This year we are expanding the Polair fleet across the state. Three new helicopters will increase the fleet from two to three aircraft in South-East Queensland and deliver increased flying hours. The new aircraft will also feature vastly improved safety technology, camera and night-vision capabilities. In addition, the community safety plan will deliver a permanent Polair capability for Townsville and police helicopter capability to Cairns in the Far North and the Sunshine Coast and Wide Bay regions.

We have entered important partnerships to help educate young people and to support them around good decision-making. For example, this year we have committed to supporting Jeff Horn's Bullyproof program which goes into schools across the state. We are making significant investments right across the state to support the delivery of new and upgraded PCYC facilities—with the recent announcement of \$15 million towards a new PCYC at Caloundra South. We are also extending the crime-fighting Project Booyah to more places across the state.

Thanks to the biggest investment in policing in more than 30 years, the combined number of police officers and recruits employed in our academies is now at a record high. We have come a long way since the LNP cuts to police personnel, equipment and capital works. The total increase in overall personnel under our government is almost 4,500. Moreover, we have increased the police budget by more than 100 per cent to \$4.3 billion this year. We have delivered body worn cameras, tasers, integrated load-bearing vests and QLITEs. We value the Police Service and the police officers, who are its constituent parts, with what has been described by the Queensland Police Union as the 'best

enterprise bargaining agreement in the nation'. We are investing in the infrastructure that police need to accommodate the growing Police Service with, for example, this year works starting on the Kirwan police precinct—a new state-of-the-art police station and nation-leading police academy. The government is supporting police with its targeted operations including Operation Whiskey Legion, Taskforce Guardian and Operation Whiskey Unison. All of this is about supporting community safety and shows that the Miles government is doing what matters for Queensland.

### School Infrastructure

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice) (10.09 am): Last week I announced the names of two new schools and the two great principals who will welcome the first students at the beginning of next year. Following comprehensive community consultation, the schools will be named Corymbia State School in the electorate of Logan and Collingwood Park State Secondary College in the electorate of Bundamba. There are some very excited local members. Both will be open for term 1 of 2025 and respective foundation principals Nicole Morris and Ben Jack are already working hard to ensure a great welcome to the families who will be at their schools next year.

Together, these two new schools represent an investment of over \$212 million and they are the 28th and 29th new schools the Miles Labor government will have delivered since 2015. It was a huge pleasure to open the 26th and 27th schools this year: Scenic Shores State School in the electorate of Redlands and at Bellbird Park in the electorate of Bundamba—and Bundamba is obviously a very big growth area. These new schools are testament to the \$20.9 billion investment our government is making in education this year alone for now and the future, along with our investment in facilities of \$1.2 billion. It is such a stark contrast to the LNP when in government, when they closed eight schools, had another 50 on the list and wanted to sell off parts of schools to the highest bidder—

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.


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

**Ms FARMER:**—like my local school Balmoral State High School, whose playing field was only saved because of the strength of my community's protest. Just as we are investing in our facilities, we are also investing in our teachers and other school staff. Going to the last election we promised 6,100 new teachers. We have employed 6,200. We promised 1,100 teacher aides. We have employed more than 2,500. That is a stark contrast to the LNP, who sacked the very people who shape our kids' futures—that is, our teachers.

Despite our success in recruitment, we are not immune to the workforce shortages which are affecting every sector and every region. Earlier this year I set up a workforce round table, bringing together every significant education stakeholder to come up with innovative ideas to address current and future projected teacher shortages. It has been a fantastic project and I want to thank all of those people for their commitment to and passion for the task. We have launched a number of initiatives as a result. I was very pleased on the weekend to announce the most recent of these: \$39.4 million to provide financial support to pre-service teachers to complete their final prac in a Queensland state school in a priority region—a \$5,000 grant to undertake that final professional experience. I also announced our beginning teacher support payment, which offers up to \$20,000 across four years to beginning teachers to start their career in those same high-priority regions, giving early-career teachers the opportunity to address cost-of-living challenges and assist with any HECS debt they may have incurred during their teaching degree.

We know that by investing in education we are giving our kids the best start in life. It is only a Labor government that will invest in our kids' futures. We are doing what matters and we always will.

### Environmental Protection

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Innovation) (10.12 am): The Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queenslanders by protecting Queensland's iconic natural environment and the species that call it home. An important part of this work is protecting areas of high environmental and cultural value in perpetuity. Thanks to our Labor government, since 2015 around 1.88 million hectares of land has been added to the protected area estate in Queensland. That is an area the equivalent of 14 times the Brisbane local government area. This historic expansion has seen the total area of protected land in Queensland increase from 13.1 million hectares to almost 15 million hectares, or an area roughly the size of England and Wales combined. Since the start of this year, the Miles government has acquired

more than half a million hectares of environmentally significant land for future dedication as protected areas, all part of and made possible by a record \$262½ million funding commitment over four years. Only Labor has made a long-term commitment to increase protected areas to 17 per cent of Queensland's land mass and we are delivering on that commitment.


I am pleased today to advise the House of the latest example of our Labor government's determination to protect Queensland's environment with the establishment of a 54,000-hectare Greater Glider Forest Park. The Greater Glider Forest Park will expand and link protected areas of eastern hardwoods from Conondale National Park near Maleny northward to Cordalba National Park near Childers. Within the areas of the Greater Glider Forest Park, native timber harvesting will no longer be permitted. The greater glider is an iconic marsupial, listed as endangered under both Queensland and national environmental laws. It is critical for the conservation of the greater glider and other species that we protect Queensland's high-value ecosystems. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Queensland Conservation Council, with whom we were pleased to work to make this announcement and protect Queensland greater gliders.

The Miles Labor government has a proud track record in working to protect threatened species and their habitats in Queensland. We will always value the biodiversity of this state and we will never water down reef protections, weaken tree-clearing protections, abandon the waste levy, axe renewable energy projects or cut climate change programs, which was absolutely and very clearly the record of those opposite. Only a Labor state government can be trusted to protect Queensland's unique environment and only a Labor state government will take real and credible action on climate change in this state.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Nanango, if you would like to rise to a point of order you are most welcome to do so.

## PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND CORRUPTION COMMITTEE


### Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Commissioner, Report

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (10.15 am): As chair of the PCCC, I lay upon the table of the House the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Commissioner's report titled *Report of the work and activities of the Crime and Corruption Commission under chapter 11 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000*, dated July 2024. The committee received the report on 24 July 2024 and I am tabling the report within 14 sitting days of receipt as required.

*Tabled paper:* Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Commissioner: Report of the work and activities of the Crime and Corruption Commission under chapter 11 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, dated July 2024 [[1799](#)].

## NOTICES OF MOTION

### COVID-19, Response Review

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (10.16 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House notes:

- (a) The Queensland COVID pandemic response had wideranging and significant impacts to Queenslanders both during and after the pandemic.
- (b) In order to make provisions for future pandemics, it is imperative that an independent analysis be undertaken to assess these impacts.

and calls on the Queensland government in 2025 to establish an independent review into the COVID pandemic and Queensland response, including the examination of the following:

1. The preparedness and capabilities of Queensland and government for a pandemic
2. Governance of the response to the COVID pandemic, within Queensland, and in interacting with national mechanisms
3. All health, social and economic response measures and their impacts
4. Decision-making underlying those measures, including consideration of the cost and benefits of restrictions
5. Communication and messaging to the public
6. Impacts on Queensland individuals, businesses and the community, throughout the pandemic and continuing to this day, as well forecasts into the future including the inflated costs of products and services
7. Ongoing impacts and changing demands on public sector service delivery
8. Interstate and global responses, reviews of their responses, and make recommendations to assist for future pandemics.

### General Practitioners



**Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (10.18 am): I give notice that I will move—

This House calls on the Labor Government to abolish the GP Patients Tax set to come into effect in July 2025 which will cost Queenslanders more to see a doctor in the middle of a health crisis and cost of living crisis.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, question time will conclude today at 11.19 am.

### Child Protection



**Mr CRISAFULLI** (10.18 am): My question is to the Premier. An LNP government would empower the Queensland Family and Child Commissioner in his role as chair of the Child Death Review Board to do a full investigation into blue card failures and wider child protection systems in Queensland. Does the Premier admit that systemic failures across a decade-old Labor government have failed to keep Queensland kids safe?

**Mr MILES:** I thank the member for Broadwater for his question. The answer is no.

### Child Protection

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** My question is to the Premier. Following the death of Queensland schoolgirl Tiahleigh Palmer, the government promised child safety would get better. Can the Premier explain why after seven years Queenslanders are still waiting for this promise for Queensland kids to be protected?

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

**Mr SPEAKER:** Sorry, but I am taking some advice from the table. I will get to you in one moment. I will hear your point of order now, Leader of the House.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I suspect it may be in relation to the advice that you are receiving. The question, I believe, is anticipating debate of two bills that are before the House currently.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Leader of the House. Members to my left, whilst the bill itself is not directly mentioned, there are aspects of the bill which are clear.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Please allow me to finish. I will allow the question, but I also will give latitude to the way that it is answered. However, I appreciate that it may be somewhat difficult for the Premier to give a fulsome answer given some of the areas that are contained in the bill. It causes a problem for the House but one that is not insurmountable.

**Mr MILES:** I thank the member for Broadwater for his question. Despite increased demand, the child safety system now is much stronger and more robust than it was in 2015. In recent years we have made extensive changes to systems and processes to help ensure more children are protected and safe from harm. That includes new systems that are now in place to ensure better and faster information sharing between police, health and education agencies. Child safety service centres undergo continuous quality improvement site visits. Staff have improved training and supervision. A Chief Practitioner, Child and Family Services, has been appointed to focus on continuous practice improvement. Changes have been made to improve risk assessments in relation to families with a history of drug taking and domestic violence. We will continue to meet the challenges of rising demand while investing in a renewed focus on permanency practice.

I want to acknowledge the dedication and passion of foster carers, kin carers, our partners in the non-government sector and our dedicated frontline child protection workers. Like me and our government, there is not one person whom I have met who works in or supports the child protection system who is happy with the status quo. Every single one of us believes we can and must continually improve the system and what we are doing. Much of our work is done—

**Opposition members** interjected.

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

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr MILES:** Much of their work is done quietly and respectfully inside families' homes. It is ironic to be questioned on investments into child safety by those opposite—

**Ms Camm** interjected.

**Mr MILES:**—on the 12th anniversary of the day they sacked child safety officers, the day they sacked 225 child safety officers.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr MILES:** The member for Broadwater has referenced his child safety policy announcement—

**Ms Camm** interjected.

**Mr MILES:**—which foresees and proposes—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Whitsunday.

**Mr MILES:**—cutting the pay of child safety officers by \$30,000 a year.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr MILES:** The costings in their child safety policy—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Waterford!

**Mr MILES:** Under 'costs'—

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

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

**Mr MILES:**—it shows every single child safety officer by \$30,000.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Pause the clock.

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

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before I deal with your point of order: member for Whitsunday, you are warned under the standing orders. Member for Waterford, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** The Premier's statement is categorically untrue. I find it offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. I did not hear that there was a personal reference but reference to a policy and offence cannot be taken by a policy; it can only be taken by a member. Premier, you have 30 seconds remaining. Do you wish to add anything?

**Mr MILES:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I feel like I need the police minister's calculator to help the member for Broadwater understand what he has done here: take the amount that you have said, take the amount it was costed, divide it by the number of staff and that gives you—

**Mr Janetzki** interjected.

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Toowoomba South, you are warned under the standing orders. Member for Buderim, I have not seen you interact that way in quite some time. You are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr MILES:** Those opposite are right: there is nothing funny at all about their plans to cut child safety officers and their plans to cut their wages by \$30,000 every year.

### **Miles Labor Government, Workers**

**Ms NIGHTINGALE:** My question is of the Premier. Can the Premier please update the House on how the Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queensland and supporting Queensland workers, and is the Premier aware of any risky alternative approaches?

**Mr MILES:** I thank the member for Inala for her question. She is doing a fantastic job working hard for the community of Inala. Because she is so connected into that community, she knows exactly what matters to them and exactly what we need to deliver for them—the infrastructure, the schools, the health facilities and the roads. In fact, the member for Inala joined us at the weekend for that

announcement about starting work on a tunnel between Toowong and Darra. We are delivering the houses that the Inala community needs. In fact, we have just completed some new social houses in Darra and I think this week there will be new tenants in those social homes in Inala, and there are more on the way.

The member for Inala has asked me if I am aware of any other approaches, and today is indeed an important anniversary for the LNP. Twelve years ago today Campbell Newman, with the Leader of the Opposition standing by his side, sacked 14,000 Queensland workers. Some 14,000 Queensland families were left devastated. Some 14,000 Queenslanders were kicked to the kerb by those opposite—discarded by the callous, cruel, heartless LNP. Some 4,400 of them were healthcare workers and 1,800 of them were nurses and midwives, and it did not stop there. This headline said it all—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Premier.

**Mr MILES:**—‘Welcome to austerity’—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier—

**Mr MILES:**—‘Queensland’s horror budget’.

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

**Mr SPEAKER:** You will lower the prop.

**Mr MILES:** Mr Speaker—

**Mr SPEAKER:** You will lower the prop. What is your point of order?

**Mr POWELL:** The Premier is clearly using a prop, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** With respect, member for Glass House, I had clearly just dealt with it. There was no need to continue with the point of order if I have asked the Premier to put the prop down. I do not need to be told how to do my job. Premier, reading from a document is one thing; holding up a prop is another. I ask you to not do that again, otherwise you will be warned under the standing orders.

**Mr MILES:** Queensland’s horror budget from the LNP included massive cuts and 14,000 workers sacked. Basic services like health care, public works and housing were all cut. That is austerity LNP style and Queenslanders paid the price. The member for Inala knows all too well. She worked at the Barrett Adolescent Centre, cruelly closed by those opposite. They have never apologised to the families who lost children because of the decisions that those opposite made. They shut 30 TAFEs and they closed eight schools. Those opposite protest for being held to their record, but the fact is more than half of them are the same people who were there in that government, so it is their personal record as well as the LNP’s record.

### Child Protection

**Ms CAMM:** My question is to the Premier. With over 33 per cent of investigations into significant harm of children in the child safety system not being completed within the government’s own timeframes, does this show this third-term Labor government cannot keep Queensland kids safe?

**Mr MILES:** I thank the member for her question. I know that those matters are better and more quickly addressed because we have more child safety officers. Those opposite sacked 225 child safety officers. We have recruited them back and many more. I can advise the House that over the past year the department received more than 140,000 reports, which is a slight increase on the previous year. They responded to 37,944 notifications requiring an investigation, which is an increase of 4,345 from the previous year. Child Safety commenced 2,481 investigations, which is 2,800 more than the previous year. Ninety-two per cent of the most urgent investigations were commenced on time.

Our hardworking child safety officers and the NGOs who work alongside us work very hard. I know many of them personally. What they do not deserve is to be sacked, like they were in 2012. What they do not deserve is to have their pay cut, as those opposite now propose to do. On this side of the House we will always recruit more child safety officers and we will pay them an appropriate wage because the job that they are doing is important—because we respect them and because we respect their work. We will not cut their numbers, as those opposite will do.

### State Finances

**Ms LUI:** My question is of the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier please update the House on where the Queensland government gets cash injections from, and is the Deputy Premier aware of any risky alternatives?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the member for the question. I also thank the member for Cook for her incredible hard work in the north of our state. Our government is providing record cost-of-living relief, infrastructure and frontline services to Queenslanders across the length and breadth of our great state, from the Torres Strait down to the border at Coolangatta. We are also accessing global financial markets through the Queensland Treasury Corporation to fund our infrastructure program.

The member for Cook asks about risky alternatives. Just this morning the *Courier-Mail* revealed some of those risky alternatives. Despite his point-blank denial yesterday, the LNP leader was trading while insolvent when he was the sole director of SET Solutions.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member knows that is untrue. It is offensive and I ask the member to withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Just a reminder to members that if something is deemed to be factually incorrect then there are ways to deal with those matters. However, the member has found it personally offensive and I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr DICK:** I withdraw. When the LNP leader was looking for a cash injection to prop up his failing business, where did he go? The LNP leader called on one of the masterminds of the Storm Financial crisis that left thousands of Queenslanders in financial ruin. Most of them were from his home town—and I do not mean his home town of Hawthorne, where he is enrolled to vote. I mean his former home town of Townsville. However, the leader of the LNP did not care about those victims, did he? Instead, he struck a deal for a \$1 million cash injection from a Storm Financial profiteer—a person who required a paraplegic pensioner to give a personal guarantee and mortgage over his specially modified home; a person who was labelled a ‘cowboy’ by a judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

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

**Mr DICK:** How much of that \$1 million cash injection would have come from the victims of Storm Financial? In the end, even the Storm Financial cowboy would not buy what the LNP leader was selling. The LNP leader’s next target was a charity that helps women fleeing domestic violence. What possible interest could the Muslim Women’s Association have in bankrolling the LNP leader’s failed training company? They had a member of staff who is the sibling of a major donor, another member of the Krayem family. That same family was the beneficiary of a \$320,000 grant that the LNP leader boasted of securing when he was a Newman government minister.

The media is not going to let this go. The *Courier-Mail*, the ABC and the AAP will not let this go until the Leader of the Opposition gives a truthful answer to a straight question on this issue. They are going to keep going. They are going to keep digging until the leader of the LNP provides a full, detailed and truthful explanation, because the LNP leader simply cannot be trusted.

### Child Protection

**Mrs GERBER:** My question is to the Premier. Parents of victims, teachers, childcare workers and Queenslanders have all called for an inquiry into the failures of Queensland’s child protection system. Why will this government not do what matters when it matters to protect Queensland kids?

**Mr MILES:** I thank the member for Currumbin for her question. As I have outlined, we have increased the number of child safety officers while those opposite sacked them. We have ensured that child safety officers are paid an appropriate wage—

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

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

**Mr MILES:**—while those opposite have pledged to cut their pay by \$30,000 per year. On this side of the House, our record on supporting the people who keep children safe is very clear.

### Miles Labor Government, Industrial Relations

**Mr TANTARI:** My question is of the Minister for Industrial Relations. Can the minister advise the House of the Miles Labor government’s achievements when it comes to industrial relations and any risky alternative approaches?

**Ms GRACE:** I thank the member for Hervey Bay for the question. I know that he is committed to the rights of workers, as is everyone on this side of the House. He knows that the new Miles government has delivered much when it comes to Queensland workers throughout this state. We are providing

workers with greater protections against sexual harassment with a new workplace health and safety regulation that is another nation first. We are expanding our nation-leading industrial manslaughter laws to cover innocent bystanders. We are providing greater protection for health and safety representatives and enhanced worker consultation on health and safety. We are further improving our world-class workers compensation laws through a suite of reforms. We are expanding the scope of cancers deemed to be work related for our hardworking Queensland furies—from 10 to 23 nominated in legislation. We are providing for quicker payments for injured workers and greater worker say when it comes to their own rehabilitation. We are providing future flexibility to extend workers compensation to gig workers. We are modernising our electrical safety laws to ensure they keep pace with new and emerging technologies. For Queensland public sector workers, superannuation is now paid for all parental leave, whether paid or unpaid, in the first 52 weeks.

That is what we have done just this year. That is what we have done since Premier Miles became premier of this state and there is more to come. At the end of this month, our nation-leading 10 days of reproductive health leave will commence for Queensland public sector workers. That is a proud record and we put it up against the record of those opposite.

The member for Hervey Bay asked about risky alternatives. We saw those when we were debating the electrical safety laws. No sooner were we debating those laws than the member for Kawana was at it again. The first thing he did was move an amendment so that workers' representatives would not be able to go into workplaces on health and safety issues without giving 24 hours notice.

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** I take the interjection from the member for Everton. 'Yes', he says. Exactly! We are not putting the safety of our hardworking Queenslanders into the hands of those opposite. Somehow, after all we have heard this morning, we have to believe that those opposite have a renowned respect for Queensland public sector workers. Despite the way that they treated them the last time they were in power, somehow we have to agree that now they will protect them, they will support them and they will respect them. All I can say is that actions speak louder than words, and our actions show that we protect workers in this state.

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for McConnel, you are warned under the standing orders. Member for Everton, you are warned under the standing orders. The cross-chamber quarrelling will cease.

### Child Protection

**Mr BLEIJIE:** My question is to the Premier. Following the death of their son Daniel at the hands of a child sex predator, the Morcombes have been advocating for a public child sex offender register. Why, with fewer than 50 days to the election, is the third-term Labor government now happy to look at it if they are elected to a fourth term after 10 years of ignoring Denise and Bruce's call for Daniel's Law?

**Mr MILES:** I thank the member for Kawana for his question. The member for Kawana might recall that, when he was the attorney-general, he oversaw a parliamentary inquiry into a paedophile register that had an LNP majority and recommended against it. However, I have said that we will look at what the LNP has proposed and, if there are sensible measures that we should implement, we will consider those.

We also work very closely with the Morcombes on a number of fronts, including implementing the Daniel Morcombe child safety curriculum, which is available in every single one of our schools. That curriculum includes Australia's biggest child safety lesson and focuses on children recognising, reacting and reporting unsafe conditions. The Morcombes are Queensland's leading advocates on child safety and we will always listen to them and consider what they propose to us. We will, as I have said, consider what has been put forward here and, if there are reasonable elements, we will implement those.

### Women, Health Services

**Ms BUSH:** My question is to the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women. Can the minister update the House on how the Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queensland's women by strengthening health services, and is the minister aware of any risky alternative approaches?



**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for Cooper for her question. She is a tremendous advocate for the women and girls in her community and making sure they have access to first-class health services close to home. Central to women being able to access health services is having access to abortion services. I am so proud to be part of a government that removed abortion from the Criminal Code in 2018—well overdue! It was an historic day for women and girls and broadly welcomed by the community.

Earlier this year, we were the first state in the country to allow nurses and midwives to prescribe MS-2 Step, but we know that all of that is at risk if the LNP wins the election in October. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Mudgeeraba both voted against these reforms, along with almost every other member of the LNP. I give full credit to the member for Clayfield—he was one of the handful of LNP MPs who actually voted in favour of decriminalising abortion but apparently it seems that, much like the poor old member for Mudgeeraba, he is getting caught up in this game of musical chairs with the Leader of the Opposition about who is going to do what if they win the election in October.

We know that the LNP have been running around saying that Amanda Stoker is likely to be the attorney-general if the LNP win the election. That has been the chatter and now it seems that the federal LNP are weighing in and are also telling people that Amanda Stoker is going to be the next attorney-general if they win. Henry Pike, a federal member of parliament, has actually put in writing to one of his local constituents that Amanda Stoker is going to be the next attorney-general. In response to a query from a constituent, he said—

Have you had a chance to brief anyone from the LNP state team? I suspect that Amanda Stoker may hold a role in the new government that could influence their approach.

This was in response to someone wanting to meet with the state Attorney-General. I table that letter from Henry Pike.

*Tabled paper:* Email, dated 29 August 2024, from the federal member for Bowman, Mr Henry Pike MP, regarding the royal commission into defence suicide [\[1800\]](#).

You need only look at Amanda Stoker's record on abortion to know what is in store for Queensland women and girls. This is someone who has said that she does not support late-term abortions for rape victims. That is potentially their future attorney-general. This is someone who regularly attends anti-abortion rallies.

*(Time expired)*

### Child Protection

**Mr POWELL:** My question is to the Premier. On 27 March 2019, the Premier and the Labor government voted against establishing a public child sex offender register, with senior ministers saying it was ill-conceived and offered false hope. Does a decade of denial in protecting children through a register show a re-elected fourth term Labor government would never implement Daniel's Law?

**Mr MILES:** I thank the member for Glass House for his question. If he had been listening earlier, he might have been reminded that he too voted against such a register in 2013 when the LNP rejected a proposal from the Katter Australian Party for such a register. What I have consistently said is that, if there are reasonable measures to keep Queensland children safe, we will take them. That is our record and that is what we will do.

### Credit Rating

**Mr SULLIVAN:** My question is of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Can the Deputy Premier please update the House on the state of Queensland's credit rating, and is the Deputy Premier aware of any risky approaches to debt?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the member for Stafford for his question. Our government is, of course, delivering the largest cost-of-living relief package in the country, as the member for Stafford and all members of the government know. Our Labor government is transforming our energy grid and we are investing in the teachers, police officers, nurses, doctors and frontline workers that our growing state needs. Even with all of this investment, I am delighted to inform the House that our credit rating remains strong and unchanged with both major ratings agencies. Both of these agencies know the Miles Labor government is managing the economy and is very capable of repaying its debt.

The member also asked about risky approaches. We know the LNP leader cannot be trusted with debt, as we have seen with his SET Solutions integrity inferno. Yesterday, the LNP leader finally faced the media gallery. The LNP leader denied SET Solutions was trading while insolvent when he

was the sole director. He denied it. A reporter asked, 'If SET Solutions wasn't trading insolvent, why did the LNP leader need to make a \$200,000 settlement payment?' That was a very good question. The LNP leader said, 'You have obligations so you meet them, and I was with the company for four months so read the report. I met my obligations.' I have the report. It does not say that. I table the liquidator's report and call on the LNP leader to substantiate the claim.

*Tabled paper:* Australian Securities & Investments Commission report, undated, titled 'Statutory report by a liquidator to creditors' [1801].

I call on the LNP leader to look at the report, speak to the liquidator's report and tell the people of Queensland where it says he met his obligations. On what planet does working for a company for four months mean that you have to pay \$200,000 by way of a settlement payment? The only way that makes sense is if you had done something wrong. You do not need to take my word for it. Ask some of the creditors of SET Solutions such as the federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. They have a very different story from the LNP leader. In a statement, the department said the company paid liquidators to—

... issue demands and conduct settlement negotiations in relation to insolvent trading claims against the company's directors.

The department said—

A negotiated resolution was reached between the liquidator and—  
the LNP leader.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr Powell** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Glass House!

**Mr DICK:** That is not what the LNP leader told reporters yesterday. The LNP leader is not telling the truth to the Queensland media gallery.

**Mr POWELL** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Glass House is warned under the standing orders.

**Mr DICK:** The LNP leader is not telling the truth to this parliament, nor has he updated his register of interests in relation to that liability. The LNP leader is not telling the truth to Queenslanders. That is why he cannot be trusted.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at what the Deputy Premier just said and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition has taken personal offence. Deputy Premier, will you withdraw?

**Mr DICK:** I withdraw.

### Community Safety

**Mr DAMETTO:** My question is to the Minister for Police and Community Safety. Townsville crime victims are disgusted with the government's response to motor vehicle theft, with claims that police will not engage with stolen vehicles if they believe juveniles are involved. Can the minister confirm this no-pursuit policy and explain how this kind of policing is making Queensland safer?

**Mr RYAN:** I thank the member for the question. The premise of the member's question is incorrect. The Queensland Police Service does have an operational—

**Mr Dametto** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Hinchinbrook, you have been here long enough to know that you have asked a question and the minister deserves an opportunity to answer it. You are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr RYAN:** I can confirm that the Queensland Police Service does have an operational police pursuit policy. It is engaged following risk assessments and it is engaged based on the expert, professional judgement of officers, not of politicians. These officers are well trained in safe driver tactics as well as in making assessments around community safety. It is incorrect to say that there is a no-pursuits policy. That is entirely incorrect. There is a pursuits policy. It is based on risk and on the

expert judgement of the Queensland Police Service. It follows many reviews. It follows recommendations of coroners. It follows assessments by experts in policing and experts in road safety. There is much international research on this. We trust the Queensland Police Service and its expert, professional officers to make judgements around community safety. They make those judgements every single day.

We are also backing the Queensland Police Service with the additional resources they need to help apprehend those offenders, like a new police helicopter in Townsville which is assisting police in apprehending those offenders quicker and more effectively and also in a safer way. The Queensland Police Service is also trialling a new, state-of-the-art tyre deflation device. The Queensland Police Service provided a demonstration of this for the Premier and local members in December last year. This is very effective technology that they are trialling.

The Queensland Police Service is rolling out the engine immobiliser trial subsidy program in places like Townsville. On the advice of the Queensland Police Service, it is having extraordinary success. In fact, of the almost 10,000 vehicles that have a secondary vehicle immobiliser installed, the Queensland Police Service cannot find a single example of one of those cars being stolen. In the words of the Queensland Police Service, that technology has been an extraordinary success and is contributing to some of the positive signs that we are seeing in the reduction of vehicle theft in some locations around the state.

We have to back the Queensland Police Service on this. These are operational policies. They are not policies of government. They are not policies of politicians. They are the decision-making processes of expert, professional officers. We back them and we respect them.

## Housing

**Mr HUNT:** My question is of the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works. Can the minister outline how the Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queensland by creating more homes, and is the minister aware of any risky alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Caloundra for the question. We know that the best thing to deliver more affordable housing is to deliver more supply. It is why we are fast-tracking approvals for developments that include affordable housing. It is why we are providing incentives for well-located infill homes. It is why we are supporting councils to update their planning schemes and supporting them with critical infrastructure.

Delivering more houses also means sometimes making tough calls and stepping in. That is exactly what I have done in Arundel. I have made the choice—

**Mr Stevens:** We have enough open space.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the member for Mermaid Beach's interjection. What I have delivered in that TLPI is 60 per cent open public space, conservation and sport and recreational land. I have also made a choice that we need more homes for young Queenslanders and for workers in the city that I have the privilege of representing, not more privately owned golf courses. The member for Bonney may disagree with more affordable houses in his electorate. We know that the candidate for Noosa opposes affordable housing in her electorate by coming out and saying that she opposes density in her backyard.

I was at least a little heartened to hear the Leader of the Opposition say at the Queensland Council of Social Service last week that he supports more supply and he backs in things that deliver more homes faster. That is until I heard that he said at the Council of Mayors (SEQ) meeting the very same day, 'Actually, I don't really support the state government stepping in and getting homes moving more quickly.' Compare the pair: same day, same topic, different position—a shifty salesperson who will say anything to anyone as long as it suits his political purposes. This is just like he will say anything to the people of the Gold Coast. Did the member for Broadwater tell the people of the Gold Coast that he had cut and run on them as well?

**Mr POWELL:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe that the minister referred to the member for Broadwater as 'shifty', and I ask that those words be withdrawn as they are unparliamentary.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I did not hear that, but if that were the case I would ask the member to withdraw.

**Ms SCANLON:** I withdraw. If the Leader of the Opposition cannot tell the truth about his plans for housing, if he cannot tell the truth about his business deals, if he cannot even tell the truth to Queenslanders about where he lives, then what else is he not telling the truth about? We know that his

political mentor, Campbell Newman, said one thing before the election and another after. Today is the anniversary of when Queenslanders found out that that was a lie. Thousands and thousands of frontline public servants in this state—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member, I believe you just used a term that is well known to be unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw.

**Ms SCANLON:** I withdraw. There were thousands and thousands of public servants who discovered that what they said was not in fact true. Thousands of frontline workers lost their jobs. Queenslanders cannot risk the LNP. Only a Labor government will deliver housing.

*(Time expired)*

### Gold Coast University Hospital

**Ms BATES:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Recently at Gold Coast University Hospital there has been a string of serious patient harm incidents—adverse outcomes because of delays to medical imaging, a patient waiting eight hours for an ambulance, a patient found dead in the ED waiting room toilet and a patient beaten to death. Can the minister explain why these issues are repeatedly happening at major Queensland hospitals on her watch?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. I have previously spoken in this House about some of those incidents. I am aware of two unrelated patient stories from the Gold Coast University Hospital. I am advised that neither of those cases related to a medical imaging backlog.

I am advised that one patient, on presentation to the emergency department, was triaged and received a CT scan. I am advised that that patient is no longer in the ICU and is receiving treatment in a ward. The Gold Coast University Hospital will conduct a clinical assessment of the care provided. Again, if there are any learnings from that we will implement them.

There is also the very sad case of a patient in their 70s who recently received a CT scan to help determine their fitness for a cardiac treatment. Sadly, the patient was not deemed stable enough to receive the preferred treatment. I am advised that, while the CT scan was assessed by the treating specialist within the 24 hours, the formal report by the radiologist—which was provided well within the recommended timeframes—was not issued and in that time the patient sadly passed away. That report revealed an incidental finding unrelated to the primary reason that scan was requested. My sympathies go to this patient's family and friends.

The Gold Coast University Hospital is one of the biggest and busiest in the country. We have invested heavily in making sure they have the staff and beds. I was down there recently with the member for Gaven, our Minister for Housing, to inspect the huge construction on a brand new mental health ward. We are also opening a brand new 70-bed subacute facility. There is huge construction and huge investment into that hospital.

I remember at the last election that in fact the member for Mudgeeraba and the big LNP team on the Gold Coast made not one election commitment to the Gold Coast University Hospital or one Gold Coast health announcement—full stop—whereas we have invested in a huge expansion at that hospital. We have huge plans at Robina Hospital. We recently opened a new emergency short-stay unit—it was wonderful to meet the patients there—and of course we have a satellite hospital at Tugun which the staff there are absolutely loving. It is taking pressure off our busy hospitals.

We are delivering the beds. We are delivering the staff. That is in stark contrast to those opposite. They went to the election with not one dollar promised in health. Why does that sound familiar? They still have not put a dollar on the table or a policy that would help deal with the demand that we are seeing. Only a Labor government will deliver quality health care close to home for free on the Gold Coast.

### Health Workers

**Mr POWER:** My question is to the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services. Can the minister advise how the Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queensland by hiring more frontline health workers, especially in Logan but throughout Queensland, and is the minister aware of any risks to frontline workers?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for Logan for his question. He, along with all of our members across Logan City, has been a huge advocate for the massive investment that is happening at the Logan Hospital—over a billion dollars to expand that hospital, with hundreds of new beds. I say this all

the time but it is true: you cannot drive down Loganlea Road without seeing the huge investment in new clinical services buildings and that amazing new car park for patients. We are doing what matters for the people of Logan and for the people of Queensland.

This year alone we are hiring 2,600 more nurses because Queenslanders deserve to have that care when they need it most. We are 12 years on from that horror budget from Campbell Newman when David Crisafulli, the member for Broadwater, and the member for Mudgeeraba sat around the table. Let's just remember what in fact they slashed from our health system that we have proudly rebuilt here in Queensland. Under the LNP Newman-Crisafulli government they sacked 4,400 health workers, including 1,800 nurses and midwives. They remember those cuts.

I was doorknocking a wonderful woman—Beck from Underwood—the other day. She was a nurse educator. She was one of the first nurses, along with the member for Mudgeeraba, who Campbell Newman sacked. She told me how terrified she was if they won the election again. She has actually taken extra shifts at another HHS because she said she wants some insurance policy. If things go bad at one hospital, she feels like she might still be able to hang on to a job at another hospital. That is the fear that exists within our health workforce.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The member for Mudgeeraba, who is consistently jabbering on over there, and the member for Broadwater have not apologised. Instead, the member for Mudgeeraba has called health workers 'duds'. She has called them 'underperformers'. What I think our health staff want to see is an apology for the huge cuts that they wrought on our health system. One of the first things the member for Logan and I did as candidates was come to a protest with nurses to bring back community midwifery hubs.

**Mr Dick:** Hear, hear—a great initiative.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** That is right. The Deputy Premier, as health minister, actually brought back those local community midwifery hubs in our community because that is what Labor does—satellite hospitals, nurse clinics, maternity hubs in communities, allowing pharmacists to help treat women, to get the pill, to get UTI medication. We stand for making health care affordable and accessible closer to home. They stand for cuts and chaos.

### Parole Board, Former President

**Mr LAST:** My question is to the Minister for Corrective Services. The LNP can reveal an RTI request of the former Parole Board chair's travel claims has been rejected because they form the basis of a CCC investigation. Can the minister explain why an RTI officer can explain there is a CCC investigation of the former Parole Board chair but the minister could not?

**Ms BOYD:** The chair of the CCC has in fact talked about this as well. The chair of the CCC has in fact said that it is not appropriate to comment on it. The LNP came into an estimates process here in this place with serious allegations that they had not referred to appropriate authorities. In fact, the member for Kawana continued to sit on those serious allegations for three more days before they were referred. The integrity of our institutions actually matters to us in government. It is not appropriate for us to comment on allegations that have been referred to the CCC.

### Child Protection

**Ms McMILLAN:** My question is of the Minister for Child Safety. Can the minister outline to the House how the Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queensland by ensuring Queensland children are safe, and is the minister aware of any risky alternatives?

**Mrs MULLEN:** I thank the member for Mansfield for her question—a person who has spent most of her working life empowering children and young people in our state.

I am really proud to be part of a Miles government that has invested \$2.3 billion in the child protection system this year alone and delivered more than 518 child safety officers since 2015. That is an increase of almost 60 per cent in child safety officers in our state. At a time of nationwide workforce pressures, in one year—2023-24—we have halved the vacancy rate for child safety officers. We have brought case loads down from a high of 21 under the Newman LNP government to 15. We are investing in new models of therapeutic care, investing in our carers and in earlier interventions. We are a government that puts children first.

Last week the LNP released a policy—it had more than four words and some figures. After what can be described as the longest bout of policy constipation, it was nice to see them finally get one out. What we saw last week from the LNP is that they will always back their mates in business first. Their child safety announcement was a half-baked policy written by the for-profit residential care sector. It is a policy with imaginary numbers. They promised to increase CSOs by 20 per cent for \$69.75 million. A 20 per cent increase is another 280 CSOs. That would cost more than \$111 million. That is a \$42 million discrepancy.

It is all good because the Leader of the Opposition intends to make up his 20 per cent by magically reducing the vacancy rate to zero. His policy is not a 20 per cent increase. It is not even a 10 per cent increase. It is a cut. He is cutting extra positions that would exist under Labor.

The LNP also committed \$171 million to deliver a two-worker 24/7 residential care model. Our experience says that does not even pay for the first year. Over four years it is likely to cost Queenslanders more than half a billion dollars. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition has used weasel words saying that this centrepiece policy would not be realised until 2030—well after the next election.

Let me be clear: this is not a policy that delivers outcomes in the best interests of children. It just delivers bigger profits for the LNP's big business mates. The LNP has also committed \$50 million to a secure 12-bed facility for children. We know the cost of single secure therapeutic bed. It will cost \$93.6 million—wrong again.

### Parole Board, Former President

**Ms LEAHY:** My question is to the Minister for Corrective Services. Two weeks ago the minister said she did not know the subject of the allegations for which the Parole Board former chair was referred to the CCC. Since then, has the minister received a brief?

**Ms BOYD:** The matter has been referred—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Ms BOYD:** The matter that the member refers to is an allegation that I understand has been referred to the CCC. It was canvassed—she can read the 'Hanscript' of the PCCC meeting that recently transpired.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members to my left, I need to hear the answer from the minister.

**Ms BOYD:** It is a matter for the public record and if the member for Warrego was interested in the matter she could read the 'Hanscript' from the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Members to my left, the minister is being responsive to the question asked. She is in scope of the question asked. I would ask you to hear the answer.

**Ms BOYD:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. They can read the transcript of that particular meeting—

**Mrs Gerber:** Yes or no?

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

**Ms BOYD:** The member for Currumbin may want to read it as well—where it is clearly articulated on the public record that it is not appropriate for us to comment on these matters.

**Mr POWELL:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118(b) on relevance. The question was: since then, has the minister received a brief? It is a very simple question.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Yes, it is a simple question in parts. However, the minister still has one minute and 43 seconds to answer that question, which I will allow her to do if she has anything further to add.

**Ms Boyd:** No.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Unfortunately, the minister chose not to respond.

### Housing

**Mrs McMAHON:** My question is of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning. Can the minister update the House on how the Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queensland by ensuring every Queenslanders has a place to call home, and is the minister aware of any risky alternatives?

**Ms SCANLON:** I thank the member for Macalister for the question. I know that she is a big advocate for housing in her community and, of course, Logan is a big growth area for our state which is why we are focused on building more homes faster. It is also why we are focused on getting more tradies on the tools, and we are doing that through free TAFE and free apprenticeships as well as by providing first-year apprentices with a tools bonus.

Last week I had the opportunity to announce \$3.5 million in funding to get more women into the building and construction industry, in what has traditionally been a fairly male-dominated sector. The new fund will be led with reputable industry leaders like the National Association of Women in Construction, because on this side of the House we have a track record of working with reputable training organisations. We also are transparent about the organisations that we work with—unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who was the sole director of a training company that was effectively run into the ground under his watch. He left a trail of debts in his wake and all he has to say is ‘no obligations, no findings’—despite the fact that it was reported that he was pursued in the court and paid \$200,000 in hush money. Why on earth would someone say ‘no obligations’ but then pay hush money to liquidators? Why did he say that creditors were paid when evidently hundreds of those businesses were not? Why did he say the company had—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members.

**Ms SCANLON:** They do not like talking about it. Why did he say the company had no links to LNP donors? The Leader of the Opposition thinks he can keep Queenslanders in the dark. He thinks he can just slip into power without facing any of these difficult questions. If he cannot run a company, then he cannot run the state of Queensland. He says—

**Mrs D’Ath:** His figures don’t add up.

**Ms SCANLON:** His figures do not add up; I take the Attorney-General’s interjection. They say that they will deliver lower debt. Today is the anniversary of when those opposite delivered savage cuts, so it is about time they were up-front about what cuts they will make to frontline services here in Queensland. At a time when we need more houses and more tradies, their track record was to axe 1,600 QBuild jobs—the very people who build and maintain public housing in this state. They say that they support renters—well, actually they do not really say that very often—but of course they axed critical rent support. How on earth are they going to balance the books and deliver lower debt if they think they are going to match all of our commitments? Those opposite need to be up-front on all of their policies and their dodgy deals.

### Corrective Services Staff

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Minister for Corrective Services. Can the minister confirm media reports that a former inmate has been employed as a prison guard at the Townsville correctional facility?

**Ms BOYD:** I thank the member for the question. I am advised that criminal history checks are conducted as a matter of course when recruiting a corrective services officer. The commissioner has advised that processes around criminal history checks are being reviewed. This will identify any improvements to existing systems and processes that may be required.

### Manufacturing

**Mrs GILBERT:** My question is of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing. Can the minister please update the House on how the Miles Labor government is supporting local manufacturing, and is the minister aware of any risky alternatives?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question. I know how passionate she is about manufacturing in Queensland. I had the pleasure of being up in Mackay last week talking about manufacturing in Queensland and how great it is that the manufacturing sector has continued to grow in Queensland, because our government cares for them and actually supports them not only in government but also in the funding that is available to them.

We visited High Amp Maintenance. They received more than \$176,000 from this government which they were extremely grateful for. Our grants are enabling these businesses to continue to grow in Queensland. As part of that one funding opportunity for those people, they are putting on 10 extra staff members in their local business. Our grants programs are continuing to be extremely well received from our people, with over \$6.2 million from our Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program moving forward with over 500 jobs.

I note that the member asks about risky alternatives, and I mentioned this in the media while I was up there. The only risk to these programs is an LNP government. We know what the LNP did to manufacturers in Queensland when they were last in government. They not only sent train manufacturing overseas; there was a downturn in jobs, with 10,000 people not in the manufacturing sector when the LNP were in government. On this side of the House, we are open and transparent about what we do to support our manufacturers, but we have an opposition leader who is shrouded in secrecy. He is still dodging questions about his company that he set up. That is their record with the Leader of the Opposition—no obligations, no findings, no credibility in Queensland.

It was strange to hear last night from our manufacturers. Every single one of them I talked to said, 'Can you please stick with it and keep doing what you're doing? We are thriving in Queensland under this government.' Under our watch, businesses are growing and our manufacturers are growing. The opposition leader cannot run his own business so why would he want to run Queensland? After sacking Queenslanders when he was a minister in the Newman government, he went on to be a director of a company in Queensland that is suspected of trading while insolvent the entire time he was in control. We talk a lot in this House about the pub test. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition—

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The comments from the member are incorrect. I find them personally offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member has found those comments personally offensive. Will you withdraw?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I withdraw. We hear a lot in this House about whether something passes the pub test. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to come to one of the taverns in Gladstone and talk to the tradespeople and the business owners about how they would feel if a company they were engaged with ripped them off and did not pay them. If we are talking about pub tests, the Leader of the Opposition should come clean to all Queenslanders and all small business owners in Queensland and tell them the truth about his company that was trading insolvent.

### CFMEU

**Mr McDONALD:** My question is to the Premier. Have all CFMEU members been removed from government and GOC boards?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, you have two minutes to respond.

**Mr MILES:** I thank the member for Lockyer for his question. I understand that Minister Grace has written to the administrator of the CFMEU to request advice as to if any directors of Queensland government owned corporations or other statutory bodies are amongst those individuals who have been suspended, removed or terminated by the administrator. As soon as we receive that advice, appropriate action will be taken.


### Cost of Living

**Mr BAILEY:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice. Can the minister update the House on how this Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queenslanders by lowering household bills, and is the minister aware of any risky alternative approaches?

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

## HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Introduction

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (11.18 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 and the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 [[1802](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, explanatory notes [[1803](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, statement of compatibility with human rights [[1804](#)].



The bill amends the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 to better protect patients in Queensland and across Australia from sexual and other serious misconduct. Queensland hosts the national law on behalf of all states and territories, which means that any amendments to the national law must be made by the Queensland parliament. The amendments in the bill have been approved by all Australian health ministers.

Health practitioners are responsible for establishing and maintaining safe and respectful therapeutic relationships with people under their care. Sexual and other serious misconduct by health practitioners is an appalling abuse of the trust placed in them and cannot be tolerated. Health ministers agreed to amend the national law in response to an alarming increase in the number of complaints about sexual misconduct by health practitioners. In 2022-23, there were over 800 complaints received across Australia about violations by health practitioners. This is 223 per cent higher than three years ago and represents a growing and concerning trend of reported inappropriate behaviour.

The bill will require all practitioners who have had their registration cancelled by a tribunal to obtain a reinstatement order from the tribunal before reapplying to a national board for registration. This requirement also applies to practitioners whom a tribunal has disqualified from registration, including, for example, a practitioner who surrendered their registration during or prior to a disciplinary proceeding. The bill uses the term 'disqualified person' to describe both types of practitioners, as they are essentially disqualified from applying for registration until a tribunal issues a reinstatement order.

The bill requires the responsible tribunal for each jurisdiction to decide, in every case, whether a disqualified practitioner will be allowed to reapply for registration under the national law. In Queensland, this will be the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, QCAT. The bill provides a clear process and criteria for tribunals to follow, which will promote national consistency and ensure these decisions are both rigorous and transparent. In deciding an application for a reinstatement order, the tribunal may consider whether the practitioner is a fit and proper person to be registered in the profession, and whether they are able to practise competently and safely. The bill also requires the tribunal to consider the complaints history of the practitioner.

If the tribunal grants the reinstatement order, it can order conditions be placed on the practitioner's registration. If the tribunal dismisses the application, it can set a period in which the practitioner cannot make another application. In Queensland, QCAT will have the power to permanently ban a practitioner from making an application for a reinstatement order. Importantly, a reinstatement order only allows a disqualified person to apply for registration. It does not automatically entitle the person to be registered. The person must still apply to a national board. While the national board may consider the tribunal's reasons for granting a reinstatement order, it may also decide not to register the person. The reinstatement order requirement raises the bar and provides greater transparency for a disqualified person seeking re-registration.

The bill expands the information on the national public registers of health practitioners regarding findings of serious sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct is an egregious violation of the trust that is core to the practitioner-patient relationship, particularly given the power imbalance in that relationship, and it is important to be able to know if a practitioner has a history of serious sexual misconduct. Currently, the national registers record any sanctions imposed on a practitioner who has engaged in professional misconduct. However, these sanctions are removed from the register once they are no longer active. As a result, consumers and employers cannot easily find out whether a practitioner has a history of serious misconduct. The bill addresses this gap.

The bill requires additional information to be included on the public registers for practitioners whom a tribunal has found to have engaged in professional misconduct involving sexual misconduct. This additional information will remain on the registers permanently. The additional information includes a statement that the tribunal's finding of professional misconduct was based on sexual misconduct, related sanctions, and a link to the tribunal's published decision. This information is already publicly available in most cases, but is difficult for most health care consumers to find and interpret. Importantly, the new information requirement will be applied retrospectively to any professional misconduct findings that included sexual misconduct since the relevant profession came under the national law. For most professions, this will be since 1 July 2010.

Sexual misconduct is not defined in the bill and so takes on its ordinary broad meaning. However, national boards can provide guidance to practitioners through codes and guidelines. Sexual misconduct that amounts to professional misconduct can include a violation of a professional boundary between a practitioner and a person under their care, such as clinically unnecessary touching or intimate examination. Sexual misconduct can also include criminal offences, whether committed in connection with the practice of the profession or not, for example, sexual assault.

The bill provides safeguards, including that the published information must comply with any court or tribunal non-publication order to protect victims' identity. By permanently including practitioners' regulatory history relating to serious sexual misconduct on the public register, the bill will allow consumers and employers to make better-informed choices about health practitioners.

The bill will also provide stronger statutory protections for notifiers under the national law. In Queensland, notifiers are referred to as complainants. The bill expands existing protections by making it an offence to threaten or intimidate a complainant, take negative employment action, or cause other detriment to a complainant. The maximum penalty will be \$60,000 for an individual and \$120,000 for a body corporate. For Queensland, the bill also updates corresponding protections in the Health Ombudsman Act to cover threatening or intimidating conduct.

The bill also clarifies consumer rights in relation to non-disclosure agreements. Recent reviews have identified that patients who have signed a non-disclosure agreement are not always aware of their right to make a complaint to a regulator. The bill makes it an offence for a health service or practitioner to enter into a non-disclosure agreement with a person that does not clearly state that the person may make a complaint or assist regulators. The bill also voids a non-disclosure agreement to the extent it seeks to limit a person from making a complaint or assisting regulators. This will apply to existing non-disclosure agreements, regardless of when they were made.

The bill raises the bar for disqualified persons seeking re-registration, improves the information on the public register about health practitioners with a history of serious sexual misconduct, and strengthens consumer protections.

I thank health ministers from across Australia for their commitment to these reforms, to improve safety for all health consumers. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

**Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (11.26 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.


Bill read a first time.

### Referral to Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee

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

## ARTS (STATUTORY BODIES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Message from Governor

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algerie—ALP) (Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts) (11.27 am): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): The message from Her Excellency the Governor recommends the Arts (Statutory Bodies) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

ARTS (STATUTORY BODIES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

*Constitution of Queensland 2001*, section 68

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

A Bill for an Act to amend the Libraries Act 1988, the Queensland Art Gallery Act 1987, the Queensland Museum Act 1970, the Queensland Performing Arts Trust Act 1977, the Queensland Theatre Company Act 1970 and the legislation mentioned in schedule 1 for particular purposes

GOVERNOR

Date: 10 September 2024

*Tabled paper*: Message, dated 10 September 2024, from Her Excellency the Governor, recommending the Arts (Statutory Bodies) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 [1805].

## Introduction



**Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algerst—ALP) (Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts) (11.27 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Libraries Act 1988, the Queensland Art Gallery Act 1987, the Queensland Museum Act 1970, the Queensland Performing Arts Trust Act 1977, the Queensland Theatre Company Act 1970 and the legislation mentioned in schedule 1 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Community Support and Services Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Arts (Statutory Bodies) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 [[1806](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Arts (Statutory Bodies) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, explanatory notes [[1807](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Arts (Statutory Bodies) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, statement of compatibility with human rights [[1808](#)].

I present the Arts (Statutory Bodies) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, a bill that amends the enabling legislation of the arts statutory bodies to enshrine a greater recognition of First Nations peoples and to modernise the governance of these key cultural organisations. Since the passing of the historic Path to Treaty Act in May 2023 with bipartisan support, we have seen significant progress in building a more inclusive and equitable future for Queensland's Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as part of a journey to reconciliation and healing. Working alongside our government's commitment to Path to Treaty, this bill sets out a range of provisions to ensure a greater recognition of First Nations peoples in the governing acts of these bodies.

Our state's leading arts and cultural entities—the Queensland Performing Arts Trust, Queensland Museum, Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, the State Library of Queensland and the Queensland Theatre—play a significant role in engaging audiences and sharing the knowledge, stories and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through performance, exhibitions, research and care for, and repatriation of, collections. The current acts, which have been in place for some 30 years, have only one single reference to First Nations peoples. These amendments are critical to ensure our leading cultural institutions fully realise their important role in working to elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices.

These provisions, which extend and define the roles of the arts statutory bodies, include: an overarching statement recognising First Nations—in particular, the value of First Nations art and cultures; and improving the guiding principles to give a detailed framework to guide each of the bodies in their work relating to First Nations communities, including a section which focuses on fair and transparent arrangements for First Nations art. These amended guiding principles will help to ensure our statutory bodies are leading the sector in Queensland as well as nationally. It includes taking a strong stance against fake First Nations art, which has seen artists in First Nations communities across the state not paid appropriately for their work, or having their stories and performance works changed without their authorisation.

The amendments will mandate that two board members for each of the bodies will be First Nations people. Of equal importance is the establishment of a First Nations committee to provide cultural leadership and governance and to advise the boards on how to integrate cultural knowledge into their decision-making. The First Nations committee will select its own members. This is in line with the acknowledgement that self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a human right, as articulated through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and as acknowledged in the Queensland Human Rights Act 2019.

Importantly, the bill seeks to modernise the acts to address governance provision and other key issues that have arisen since the legislation was enacted 30 years ago. These vital changes were developed through a governance working group and CEO forum to identify and analyse governance provisions—in particular, accountability and integrity elements. This includes amendments to allow the addition of external members to subcommittees and mechanisms to allow criminal history checks to take place as required by the statutory bodies.

For the QPAT Act, amendments include provisions for ticket scalping. These provisions incorporated feedback from counterparts interstate, where there is evidence that ticket-scalping legislative provisions have had an impact on deterring ticket scalping and reducing potential subsequent impact on ticketholders. These key governance amendments, alongside other changes to the acts, seek to clarify and modernise governance arrangements within each of the five arts statutory bodies. I am very proud to present this amendment to our arts statutory bodies legislation. I am confident that this will set a new benchmark in both contemporary governance approaches and First Nations initiatives.

I want to thank and acknowledge the First Nations Arts and Cultures Panel, who co-designed the amendments and shaped this important change. The panel's guidance to my department is deeply appreciated. I would also like to thank each of the arts statutory bodies who worked closely with my department in drafting this legislation. These First Nations and contemporary governance amendments demonstrate the importance of progressing the way we work to reflect the evolving nature of audiences and communities alike. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

**Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeester—ALP) (Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts) (11.33 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### Referral to Community Support and Services Committee

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


I issue a reminder to those members on a warning: the members for Warrego, Kawana, Whitsunday, Waterford, Buderim, Toowoomba South, Clayfield, Nanango, McConnel, Everton, Glass House, Hinchinbrook and Currumbin.

## CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS BILL

### WORKING WITH CHILDREN (RISK MANAGEMENT AND SCREENING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Child Safe Organisations Bill resumed from 12 June (see p. 2082) and Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill resumed from 12 June (see p. 2079).

### Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

 **Hon. C MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.33 am): I move—

That the bills be now read a second time.

In June this year, two bills were introduced into the Legislative Assembly to provide additional safeguards for children in Queensland. These bills are the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I will speak to each bill in turn.

The Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 has now been considered by the Community Support and Services Committee. On 2 August 2024, the committee tabled its report, making one recommendation—that the bill be passed. I thank the committee for its examination of the bill. I would also like to thank the stakeholders who participated in the committee's inquiry, providing valuable input for the committee's consideration. I thank everyone who has contributed to the consultation process over the past few years to make sure we have a child safe organisations model that is right for Queensland.

The Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 is a new piece of legislation to establish a child safe organisations system for Queensland. The bill will improve the safety and wellbeing of children in Queensland organisations. It will ensure children who are at risk of experiencing abuse, or who have experienced abuse, in these settings are supported. The bill delivers the Queensland government's commitment to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in relation to the establishment of child safe standards and a reportable conduct scheme. The bill establishes mandatory compliance, with 10 child safe standards and a universal

principle of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The bill also provides for a nationally consistent reportable conduct scheme that enables oversight of reports of, and investigations into, allegations of reportable conduct by workers within organisations.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission, referred to as 'the commission', is proposed as the independent oversight body responsible for administering the child safe organisations system. The commission was established to promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people and improve the child protection system. The bill gives the commission the functions and powers it will need to oversee the child safe organisations system.

A key aspect of the commission's role will be to facilitate a collaborative regulatory approach, working with sector regulators to promote compliance. The bill will not change the existing functions of sector regulators or expand the scope of their current regulatory responsibilities. For unregulated sectors, and where there is no sector regulator, the commission will work directly with in-scope organisations.

For child safe standards, a collaborative regulatory approach will reduce regulatory duplication and help the commission to develop sector-specific capacity-building resources. Under the reportable conduct scheme, sector regulators will play a role in collaborating with the commission and in-scope organisations to share their expertise, knowledge and skills.

I will now discuss the child safe standards aspects of the bill. The 10 standards are designed to accommodate the diverse nature of services, activities, unique characteristics and risk factors of each organisation. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The bill also establishes a universal principle, requiring in-scope organisations to provide environments that promote and uphold the right to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The universal principle is to be applied across all 10 child safe standards to ensure cultural safety is embedded within the implementation of each standard.

The bill refers to organisations in scope of the child safe standards and universal principle as 'child safe entities'. The bill applies to a range of sectors engaging with children. It includes schools, early childhood education and care, child protection, youth justice, arts, sports and recreation, transport, community and commercial services. The scope aligns with the royal commission's recommended categories. It also covers the existing range of organisations required to develop a risk management strategy under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000. Clause 10 and schedule 1 of the bill clarify that a child safety entity is an entity that provides services specifically for children or provides facilities specifically for use by children who are under the supervision of the entity.

The bill establishes expanded functions and powers of the commission. Primarily, the role of the commission will be to support child safe entities to implement the CSS and universal principle through education and capacity building. The first response of the commission to noncompliance will be to provide support, education and capacity building. Where this is not sufficient, the bill also provides the commission with a suite of compliance and enforcement powers. These powers are to be exercised in a way that is proportionate and responsive to the characteristics and risk profiles of each child safe entity.

The bill also implements a reportable conduct scheme. This scheme requires organisations with a high degree of responsibility for children to report and investigate allegations of abuse and misconduct against children by their workers. This is known as reportable conduct. The commission will provide central independent oversight of the scheme to ensure that organisations are taking the right action to prevent and respond to concerning behaviour and systemic risks to children.

The bill defines reportable conduct as child sexual offences, sexual misconduct, ill treatment, significant neglect, physical violence or behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm. This may include criminal conduct as well as behaviour that does not reach a criminal threshold. Organisations in scope, known as reporting entities, include those in prescribed sectors that care for, supervise or exercise authority over children. This includes early childhood education and care, disability services, education services, supported accommodation services, religious bodies, health services, child protection services, youth justice services and government entities. The definition of 'reportable conduct' and the scope of the scheme was informed by the royal commission's recommendations as well as the types of conduct captured in existing reportable conduct schemes in other jurisdictions. The bill enables this scope to be expanded by regulation.

The bill introduces new obligations on the head of a reporting entity to have systems in place to prevent, identify and respond to allegations of abuse. They will need to make reports of allegations of reportable conduct to the commission within prescribed timeframes. They need to investigate those reports and advise the commission of their findings. The bill provides functions and powers for the commission to monitor and support organisations during an investigation. The commission may ask a sector regulator to conduct the investigation on behalf of the organisation or the commission may conduct its own investigation in limited circumstances.

It is anticipated the commission will focus on educating and assisting reporting entities to understand and comply with the scheme. The commission will reserve stronger enforcement powers for more serious noncompliance. It is also anticipated that the commission will partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and peak bodies to inform its education and capacity-building function and ensure the scheme is implemented in a way that is culturally safe. The reportable conduct scheme will complement existing reporting requirements by introducing uniform reporting for a broader range of misconduct beyond criminal conduct. This scheme will provide oversight of how organisations respond to reports of harm across a range of sectors.

The bill provides a broad proactive information-sharing framework. Information sharing is a key oversight mechanism and an essential part of boosting the commission's oversight by enabling prescribed entities to inform the commission of compliance issues. For the child safe standards and universal principle, information sharing is facilitated between prescribed child safe entities. This may include the commission, sector regulators and other entities such as the Queensland Human Rights Commission and the Queensland Ombudsman.

Similarly, for the reportable conduct scheme, relevant information under the scheme may be shared between the commission, prescribed RCS entities, reporting entities, sector regulators, Queensland Police and other oversight bodies. The bill requires the commission to share findings of reportable conduct with Blue Card Services to inform assessments under the working with children check. Reporting entities must also notify police if there is suspected criminal conduct. The bill allows the commission to share information with similar oversight bodies in other states and territories.

For both child safe standards and the reportable conduct scheme, the bill allows for the appointment of officers of the commission with powers to investigate, monitor and enforce compliance. These powers include entering premises and gathering information to determine compliance. To prevent unnecessary regulatory duplication, the bill makes transitional amendments to repeal the existing requirements for organisations to develop and implement a risk management strategy under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000. As the child safe standards and universal principle obligations commence for each sector they will replace the existing risk management strategy requirement. No protective mechanisms for children within institutions will be lost with a repeal of risk management strategy requirements.

The bill provides a staggered and phased approach to commencement, achieving full implementation of the child safe organisations system by July 2027. Following a 12-month preparation period for the commission, the CSS and the universal principle will be implemented first, in three stages, from October 2025. This will establish a foundation of child safe environments, with RCS obligations introduced, in three stages from July 2026.

The Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 takes an important step towards ensuring our children have the best environments to learn, play and grow. I will now turn to the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee members for their thorough consideration of this bill. A total of 23 submissions were received by the committee. I also extend my thanks to those stakeholders, organisations and individuals who made submissions and took part in the public hearing.

I am pleased to inform the House that on 2 August 2024 the committee tabled its report and made two recommendations. They were that the bill be passed and that the bill be amended to remove the requirement that adult household members of kinship carers hold a blue card. The bill includes important reforms to remove the requirement that approved kinship carers hold a blue card. Kinship carers play an incredibly important role in our child protection system. They care for children to whom they are kin and ensure these children remain connected to family, community and culture. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to all kinship carers.

When a child is not able to live safely with their parents, the preferred care arrangement is for the child to be with kin. Currently, all approved kinship carers and their adult household members require a blue card. The reforms in this bill represent the first stage of the government's response to the QFCC report *A thematic analysis of provisionally approved kinship carers who receive a subsequent Blue Card negative notice*. The report found that the blue card system is not designed for kinship care and is creating barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being cared for by kin. Amendments to remove this requirement reflect that caring for family is not employment.

During the committee's inquiry into the bill there was significant stakeholder support for removing this requirement. There was also strong advocacy from stakeholders to further remove the blue card requirement for adult household members of kinship care households to ensure the reforms are effective. This government supports the committee's recommendation to remove the blue card requirement for this cohort.

I foreshadow that my colleague the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence will move amendments to the bill during consideration in detail to implement the government's response to recommendation 2 of the committee's report. These amendments will provide for the removal of the requirements for adult household members of kinship carer households to obtain a blue card. Removing the blue card requirement for kinship carers and their adult household members will not compromise the safety of children living with kin. Following passage of the bill, the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services will work with stakeholders to design a new framework for screening kinship carers and their adult household members under the Child Protection Act. My department will work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to ensure the new framework is fit for purpose, culturally safe and continues to provide for the protection of children.

As well as making this important amendment, the bill does a number of other things to improve the blue card system. The bill removes the existing exemption for practising lawyers who provide legal supports to children. Some legal stakeholders, including the Queensland Law Society, have questioned why this is necessary as lawyers are already regulated under the Legal Profession Act 2007. Whilst the government acknowledges the screening of lawyers undertaken by the QLS, the scope of information considered and the tests applied to determine the suitability of a legal practitioner and the suitability to work with children are not comparable. The steps we are taking will provide broad alignment with most other jurisdictions with a majority of states and territories requiring lawyers to obtain a working with children clearance. Specific transitional arrangements are included in the bill. Lawyers already providing support services to children will be given a year from commencement to apply for a blue card.

The bill also includes new self-disclosure requirements. The effective and timely disclosure of information is crucial to the operation of the blue card system and its objective of promoting and protecting the rights, interests and wellbeing of children. The bill sets out the matters which may be disclosable and applicants will only be required to disclose the specific matters stated in the application form. Blue Card Services will ensure the self-disclosure questions included in an application form are clear and easily understood to limit any unintended consequences. This new requirement is consistent with the disability worker screening framework set out in the Disability Services Act 2006.


With the Department of Justice and Attorney-General assuming responsibility for the administration of both blue card worker screening and disability worker screening from 1 September, it is appropriate to align the safeguards where possible under both schemes. Consistent with recommendations of the royal commission, a working with children check is not an employment-specific screening process. A person who receives a blue card is able to use their blue card to engage in any child related work in Queensland. Importantly, the new decision-making framework established by the bill moves to a 'risk to the safety of children' threshold to guide blue card decision-making. This will require a decision-maker proposing to issue a negative notice to any person to demonstrate the nexus between a person's conduct or alleged conduct and a real and appreciable risk of harm to children.

In its report the committee notes that the shift to a risk-based statutory threshold will support a more nuanced decision-making framework and improve recognition of rehabilitation and reintegration in decision-making. In addition, as part of the new decision-making framework, the bill gives Blue Card Services the ability to establish an advisory committee or to seek specialist or expert advice to assist in making decisions in more complex cases. In acknowledgement of the importance of ensuring stakeholders understand the impacts of changes to the blue card system, I can advise that following the passage of the bill Blue Card Services will take a methodical and staged approach to

implementation. As part of this work, risk assessment guidelines will be developed to assist and instruct decision-makers. The publication of the new risk assessment guidelines will contribute to transparency and accountability.

Whilst on the subject of accountability, I want to correct a figure I used during question time. I said that I was proud to be part of the Miles Labor team delivering more than 418 child safety officers since 2015. That figure is in fact 518 child safety officers—an even better record. Blue Card Services supports stakeholders to navigate the reforms through the continuation of existing work, including a dedicated call centre to provide immediate assistance to inquiries, information on its website, written responses to email and letter inquiries, industry-specific face-to-face information sessions and a general face-to-face information session. Blue Card Services will also partner with its existing stakeholder groups to ensure new and revised communication material meets stakeholder needs and expectations.

On the whole, I am pleased to note the consistently strong overall stakeholder support for the reforms made by the bills. The legislative frameworks proposed in each bill will make a real difference to children across Queensland, strengthening the safeguards available to protect them from harm. I commend the bills to the House.

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (11.51 am): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the cognate debate and will commence my comments with the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024. Queensland's history of institutional child sexual abuse is a shameful part of our state's history which should never have happened, but unfortunately it has happened too often. The atrocities that vulnerable children were put through at the hands of those who were supposed to be the ones to care for them are unspeakable and at times unimaginable.

From 2012 to 2017, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse heard the stories of many victim-survivors. While they are hard to hear, it is important that we listen and that we believe—and they are still important to ensure we do all we can, as legislators in this House, to put in place safeguards so it never happens again. The adults who told their stories have demonstrated courage, and it is clear that the actions of others while they were children will remain with them forever, altering their lives. Many of them never experienced a safe childhood, allowing them to be kids, or had it robbed from the first instance of abuse. A number of Queenslanders shared the impact that this abuse has had on their lives. One stated—

My inner being was cut to the core. My physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological wellbeing was shattered.

Another spoke to the complex mental illness she carried into her adult life when she said—

For as long as I can remember I have been painfully sad, I have suffered from major depression all my life, post-traumatic stress, anorexia, debilitating anxiety, panic attacks ... self-harming, sexual dysfunction, confusion, traumatic nightmares, phantom body pain and general malaise.

These and many other victim-survivors bravely shared their stories in order to provide a better and safer future for all and in particular our next generation of Queensland children.

The recommendations of the royal commission were a pathway to protect our institutions and community from a repeat of the past. While far too many institutions have failed and betrayed our children in the past, it must be acknowledged the work that many have done to bring transparency and safety to their organisations now and into the future. Many have already taken the measures this bill introduces and will welcome these provisions. They have listened, admitted the mistakes of the past and made changes to prevent it from happening in the future. They have rightly taken on the costs to change infrastructure, systems and practices to protect children and limit the potential for predators to perpetrate offences against vulnerable children. It will not take away the pain of victim-survivors and what they endure each day. We know that nothing can do that. However, if change is genuinely instituted, at least there is hope for a better future.

It would be good if we had seen the same attitude from this government in the past decade. Once again, it has dragged its feet, dishonouring victims who have stood up for change. There was a purpose to the royal commission, and by neglecting the changes recommended this government has reduced it to another report that sits gathering dust on the shelf, ever waiting for a government to act. Victims stood up for justice and change and this government continues to make them wait. In 2017 the final reports were handed down. There were 317 recommendations directed at the Queensland government. Some 97 of those were outstanding by the fifth annual implementation report in December 2022. Over 30 per cent were still not implemented.



Recommendations around child safe standards and a reportable conduct scheme have been among those the sector has been waiting for, with many organisations informally implementing them. In 2021 a consultation draft was issued—three years ago—and we heard nothing after that. Until a horrific case was reported in the media last year, there had been no real progress. Other bodies like the Queensland Family and Child Commission were calling on the government to introduce these changes. In its policy submission to the regulatory impact statement, the QFCC stated—

The QFCC acknowledges the work undertaken by the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Service and the Department of Justice and Attorney General to analyse and develop the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement ... however, five years has passed since the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Exploitation of Children recommended these schemes, and Queensland has fallen behind other Australian states and territories in establishing these protections.

In Queensland, we do not have a coordinated system that oversees the people who pose a risk to children nor a system that advocates for prompt and united action to build systems that protect children. Our Blue Card scheme is only effective against people who have been caught. In New South Wales ... the Office of the Children's Guardian responded to 1,531 complaints about individuals in 2021-22. In Victoria the number of allegations reported to the Commission for Children and Young People was 2,898. It is likely that there is a commensurate number of concerning cases in Queensland that warrant our attention.

It is time for Queensland to commence implementing both schemes, and there is no reason why they cannot be fully legislated within the current term of Parliament.

As a key body for children and young people, the QFCC would welcome a role in the implementation of child safe standards and a reportable conduct scheme in Queensland.

Queensland has fallen behind other states and territories in this critical area, as it has with all numbers in child safety. How is it that the safety and protection of children does not matter to this state government? We are now seven years on from a royal commission and it should not have taken this long to get here. The LNP welcomes the changes and we will support them throughout the debate. They are the right changes we need to increase the safety of children in the organisations they interact with, but they are long overdue.

The child safe standards and the recommendations around these standards are important. The standards include that child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture; children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously; families and communities are informed and involved; equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account; people working with children are suitable and supported; processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused; staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training; physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur; implementation of the child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved and not left on the shelf with time lagging; and policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe and checking annual reports on progress.

These standards are principle based so they can be adapted to various organisations across our diverse state. With this basis, organisations can assess how they can best protect children and minimise the risk of harm, from providing education on child safe practices to ensuring doors have windows in them to reduce hidden sections of facilities. I know that many organisations have already implemented these standards and are doing all they can to mitigate risk. Having the standards legislated will increase education and awareness and provide prevention to ensure any organisations that have yet to take this on board do so. There will be some considerable cost to those organisations that are yet to implement the standards and they may need support to implement them effectively. It will be important for the department to work with those organisations to ensure outcomes are reached.

The reportable conduct scheme is very important. The royal commission found systemic issues with institutions when it came to responding to complaints. There needs to be a scheme in which people can raise complaints and concerns, and a reportable conduct scheme will achieve that. In early 2017, in their response to the royal commission the government released a public discussion paper on reportable conduct schemes. The government said, 'The establishment of a reportable conduct scheme is a priority for Queensland.' They also said 'as a priority, continue to work with stakeholders and with other states that have schemes to finalise a Queensland reportable conduct scheme'. That was 2017. It is unacceptable that it has taken this long. The work to finalise the scheme has taken seven years, so clearly when Labor say something is a priority in Queensland we know that it will mean years before they act.

The royal commission recommended a reportable conduct scheme include: an independent oversight body; obligatory reporting by heads of institutions; a definition of 'reportable conduct' that covers any sexual offence or sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child;

a definition of 'reportable conduct' that includes the historical conduct of a current employee; a definition of 'employee' that covers paid employees, volunteers and contractors; and protection for persons who make reports in good faith. It also includes oversight body powers and functions that include: scrutinising institutional systems for preventing reportable conduct and for handling and responding to reportable allegations or reportable convictions; monitoring the progress of investigations and the handling of complaints by institutions; conducting, on its own motion, investigations concerning any reportable conduct of which it has been notified or otherwise becomes aware; the power to exempt any class or kind of conduct from being reportable conduct; capacity building and practice development through the provision of training, education and guidance to institutions; and public reporting including annual reporting on the operation of the scheme and trends in reports and investigations, and the power to make special reports to parliament.

The reportable conduct scheme will add another layer of protection where complaints can be raised, investigated and recorded. The royal commission also demonstrated the interconnection between the scheme and child safety organisations. It stated—

The creation of a child safe environment requires vigilance and necessitates paying attention to systemic issues. A complaint of child sexual abuse could indicate wider systemic child safety issues within an institution, or that there may be deficiencies in its child safe approach.

Never has that been more pertinent given what communities across the state are feeling and given what many families have been observing with a case before the courts.

We welcome the expanded role of the QFCC and the related increase in investment. The QFCC will provide oversight to the schemes by both providing some education to the public and the sector and also administering, monitoring and enforcing compliance. It is right to have this body look over the schemes given that they have been advocating for them for so long. I know that they will welcome it.

I turn to the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. The proposed changes to the blue card system are another case of a seven-year-old report that has sat dormant and this Labor government is now desperately playing catch-up to look as if they are getting the job done in the dying days of this term. Following the tragic death of Tiahleigh Palmer, the QFCC published the report *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: review of the blue card system*. That review was commissioned by the government. However, once again they forgot that when you receive the report of a review you have to put it into practice. On the release of the report, the government released a media statement which stated—

My government has had the courage to take a detailed look at how we can keep children safer and the fortitude to follow through on the recommendations in these reports.

This government does not have a demonstrated record of keeping Queensland kids safe and has not prioritised those recommendations. It is not good enough to request a report, do some media, release it and then forget about it. It must be followed through and there must be accountability to deliver work for change. Last year it was revealed that out of 81 recommendations only 28 had been completed. That is the disgraceful record of those opposite. The Blue Card System Review Implementation Reference Group stopped meeting after April 2022 and was not reconvened until September 2023, a month after blue cards were back in media headlines. Time and time again, the priority of this government appears to be protecting their own image rather than protecting Queensland kids. The website now states that 52 recommendations have been completed. There is a reason we have a blue card system, and to treat it as anything other than a high priority to protect our most vulnerable is unforgivable.

The bill introduces a new decision-making framework, simplifies the disqualification framework and provides the chief executive with discretion to impose a suspension when there is a change in assessable information and the chief executive considers the person would pose a risk to the safety of children if the person was permitted to engage in regulated employment or to carry on a regulated business pending the reassessment. It enables the chief executive to seek the specialist knowledge, skills or experience considered necessary to help with making a decision in relation to blue card applications. It makes risk assessment guidelines a statutory instrument; includes new categories of regulated employment and regulated businesses, which includes removing the exemption for lawyers; provides a consistent exemption for parent volunteers; provides the chief executive with a new power to facilitate compliance with the working with children act; and enables genuine researchers to access data about the blue card system for improved research purposes.

For many years the removal of the blue card requirement for kinship carers has been called for by the sector, by family and carers and also by many in this House. Stories from around the state of children being unable to stay with kin due to unrelated offending that occurred many years ago are heartbreaking. Children have been separated from their families and their connection to community and to culture. In some areas, that has led to devastating outcomes for those children resulting in disconnection, mental health and, even worse, suicide.

We do approach this with caution, acknowledging that a rigorous system must ensure checks are still in place for this cohort of carers and that must be consistently monitored to ensure children's safety is at the forefront. However, where those checks are conducted and a home is deemed safe, the increase in kin carer numbers will be welcomed. Given the reducing number of foster carers across the sector, we need to do everything we can to recruit and retain our kin carers. Kin carers need support, they need investment, they need respect and they need appreciation. As I have travelled the state it has become clear that that has not always been the case under the current government policy. If we are to increase the number of kin carers then we need to do things differently.

Today, in question time, was the first time I had actually heard the minister receive a question related to her portfolio of child safety. Our child safety system is under increasing pressure and is at breaking point under this government. Over this term, I have had the honour of serving as the shadow minister for child protection and I have spent the last four years listening to foster families, kinship carers, families, service providers, peak bodies and, most importantly, Queensland kids. Meanwhile, three ministers have cycled through this portfolio. We wonder why it takes years and years to get reform!


This is how much young Queenslanders mean to the Labor government. Those opposite pay lip-service regarding child safety officers. It is the child safety officers who have bravely come forward to me and, off the record, shared that they are at breaking point with their case loads and not being able to investigate serious allegations of harm. They feel that they have been let down by this Labor government.

This minister can barely get up to speed across the portfolio and has given no clear direction to the department for the changes that are needed. This has been recognised by me and others in the last 12 months. Foster carers are leaving at a rapid pace. Residential care has grown 105 per cent in the last five years. The residential care review, commissioned over 12 months ago, served seemingly no purpose to this government. The main priority of that review was to look at under-12s. Not once in that final document, apart from in the terms of reference, were under-12s even mentioned. Now we have this very important legislation, yet there is no focus on those children who are being cared for by residential care providers.

This is the most comprehensive policy put forward by an opposition or government to reform the system and, quite frankly, it was disgraceful to hear the minister in question time today insulting the residential care providers that are picking up the slack from the failures of this government. There is no place for toilet humour in this parliament. While the road map discussed different options, no additional funding was provided so the changes have not been prioritised. We have more children than ever—almost 2,000—in residential care under this state government. That is not a proud record.

I want to acknowledge the work of the committees with regard to some of the content of these reforms. Many of us in the House are confronted each and every day with the tragic circumstances that children have endured across this state when the system has failed them or when somebody they trust has failed them. I would also like to acknowledge the work and advocacy of the QFCC in bringing forward these reforms and ensuring they are implemented appropriately.

The LNP have a plan for safer children and safer communities. We have answered the calls from the sector and will take the steps that are needed. We are listening and we are committed to continuing to listen and continuing to act. The LNP are committed to making our community safer and will keep fighting for that. Today, the Leader of the Opposition committed to a major inquiry, if elected, into the recent child protection failures that we have seen in our community. We have a plan to protect Queensland kids. We have the right plan for Queensland's future and the next generation of Queensland kids. We need to change the government, and Queenslanders can do that on 26 October.

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (12.13 pm): I rise to make a contribution to this cognate debate, although I will limit my comments to the bill that I introduced in relation to my portfolio—the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

I will briefly touch on some of the comments that have been made by the opposition as well. I want to thank the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee members for their thorough consideration of the bill. I table the government's response to the committee report in relation to that bill.

*Tabled paper:* Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee: Report No. 8, 57th Parliament—Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, government response [1809].

I also extend my thanks to those stakeholders, organisations and individuals who made submissions to the committee and participated in the public hearing. I acknowledge that the Minister for Child Safety has mentioned particular issues raised by stakeholders in relation to this bill as part of her second reading contribution in this cognate debate. I reiterate and reinforce those responses.

In relation to the removal of the blue card exemption for lawyers, I would like to make a few further points with respect to the position taken in the bill. As mentioned by the Minister for Child Safety, the government acknowledges the screening of lawyers undertaken by the Queensland Law Society under the Legal Profession Act 2007; however, the scope of information considered and the tests applied to determine the suitability of a person to be legal practitioner and those applied to determine the suitability of a person to work with children are not comparable. As a blue card application by a person with no assessable information is approved in an average of two business days, costs \$101.30 and is valid for three years, it is not considered onerous or prohibitive for lawyers providing services to children to obtain blue cards. I also confirm that lawyers already providing services to children will be afforded a grace period of 12 months to apply for a blue card.

I am immensely proud of the work I have done during my time as Attorney-General to build on the blue card system's long history of mitigating risks to provide stronger safeguards to children. I have continued to progress significant blue card reforms to strengthen protections for Queensland's children while also delivering reforms crucial to improving engagement with, and outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants and organisations. I have overseen the implementation of the government's flagship no-card no-start laws, which commenced in August 2020. These changes required people working in paid employment to be issued with a blue card before they can start working with children. I have overseen the introduction of a new legislative framework for dealing with cardholders and applicants charged or convicted of a serious offence.

Under my watch, significant work has continued to be undertaken to improve the experience of First Nations peoples. The Miles government has expanded support for First Nations Queenslanders wanting to work with children, particularly in remote communities like Yarrabah and Palm Island, where a dedicated First Nations blue card liaison officer provides members of those communities with information and support to obtain a blue card. The blue card liaison officer program is a co-designed, locally managed program that recently commenced in Palm Island following the success of the pilot program in Yarrabah. Having a dedicated First Nations liaison officer in these communities has been warmly received and is having a positive impact. There has been a 31 per cent increase in applications finalised in Yarrabah compared with the year before as well as significant improvements in the turnaround time for resolving requests for information. Therefore, the blue card liaison officer program will be well placed to continue assisting these communities and First Nations applicants to raise awareness and understanding of the reforms in this bill.

While the bill implements a range of important amendments to simplify and strengthen Queensland's blue card system, I would like to focus specifically on the new decision-making framework amendments. The new framework is consistent with the findings of the QFCC and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse before it. I want to acknowledge Commissioner Luke Twyford and Natalie Lewis from the QFCC—they are in the gallery today—and thank them for their tremendous work. I particularly acknowledge the work that Natalie is doing with our First Nations people and children which I know is having a significant impact.

The shift to a new 'risk to the safety of children' threshold to guide blue card assessments is a major step forward. Requiring a decision-maker proposing to issue a negative notice to a person to demonstrate a clear nexus between the person's conduct, or alleged conduct, and a real and appreciable risk of harm to children addresses long-held concerns that the current framework in the act is too risk averse and disproportionately impacts First Nations people.

The bill provides for greater engagement by First Nations people through the new decision-making framework and statutory criteria, which will directly support the consideration of the nature, gravity and circumstances of the conduct which forms the basis of any assessable information. Consideration will also be given to other factors such as the effect of systemic disadvantage and intergenerational trauma, the historical context and limitations on access to justice.

This change is supported by the inclusion in the overarching principles that guide the administration of the act of an acknowledgement of the importance to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children of recognising their connection to family, community, culture, traditions and language. In that vein, I am also pleased to foreshadow that I intend to move amendments during consideration in detail which will remove the blue card requirement for adult members of kinship households. This builds on the amendments already in the bill which remove the blue card requirement for all kinship carers. These are nation-leading reforms which I wholeheartedly support.

I am proud to leave behind, as part of my legacy, a blue card system that enables increased participation by First Nations peoples and is acknowledged to be one of the most robust in Australia. The blue card system is just one part of protecting children in this state. We have many laws across our statute books that provide that protection, hold offenders to account and continue to hold offenders to account after they leave correctional services through our reportable scheme and our DPSO legislation. We are proud that we put back and extended the parameters that were in place so that more child sex offenders are monitored for longer.

I also point out the work of our Queensland Family and Child Commission, our child safety officers, our Public Guardian, our Public Advocate and our child protection litigation team. All of these agencies, as well as Health, Education, Housing, Youth Justice and the Police Service, work together to try to make a difference for young people and keep them safe.


I pick up on the point made this morning about reportable schemes. They have their place but we need to be so careful. The reality is that it is the people you are not looking for who are most likely to harm a child. You may search for someone who is working with your child or volunteering with your child under the scheme proposed but what you are not searching for is your family member—your dad, your brother, your neighbour, your best friend—

**Mrs Frecklington:** It's not one or the other, Minister, you know that.

**Mrs D'ATH:** No, it is not one or the other, but it is important to understand that the majority of children who are offended against are offended against by someone they know and the family has known. We need to have all these protections in place.

For the member for Whitsunday to say that we have been sitting dormant for seven years since the QFCC and the royal commission recommendations were handed down is blatantly misleading. Any review of the introduction of legislation through this House over the last 10 years will find that there have been numerous reforms to the blue card system and other legislation to protect children from offenders. There have been numerous reforms to the blue card system. It is not the case that this piece of legislation is the only one to be introduced.

I acknowledge the incredible team in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General for working on those reforms and for improving our system over the years. The one thing that is never referred to by those opposite when they talk about the QFCC report is that they acknowledge that we have one of the strongest blue card systems and child check systems in this country. Of course, there is always more we can do. That is why we are here today. We will keep putting our children front and centre in all our reforms. I am very proud of the work that has already been done. I commend the bills to the House.

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (12.23 pm): Before we get too indulgent with the Attorney-General's valedictory speech, when she talks about doing more there is one name I need to mention: Ashley Paul Griffith; 300 offences and 91 cases.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This matter is still before the court. It has not been completed. This is sub judice and we should not be talking about this matter.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Member, the Attorney-General's advice is that this is still before the court. I will remind you of that and of the sub judice rules before you continue your speech.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Indeed, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yes, it is before the court. I acknowledge that. That matter is awaiting sentencing at the moment. I will not be commenting on the matter before the court. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is, in my submission, within the rules to mention that there is a matter that is currently before the courts. I have not commented on any aspect of it other than to say that there is a matter before the courts. I will move on. I accept the concern that has been raised.

Given the failings that have been identified in relation to the child protection system, with respect to working with children and with respect to making sure that our children are as safe as they can be, we cannot be satisfied with what this government has either done or failed to do over the last more than half a decade. Let us have a look at what is has failed to do.

There was the original report produced by the Queensland Family and Child Commission. I acknowledge the very good work Mr Twyford and his commission do. I remind people that it was the Labor Party that voted against the establishment of that commission in 2014. When it comes to the work that that commission does, the LNP is very supportive of it. We established that commission in 2014, against the wishes and votes of the Labor Party at the time.

The QFCC issued a report in 2017 which identified a number of matters that needed to be addressed following the investigation into the tragic death of Tiahleigh Palmer. There were 81 recommendations issued in that report in 2017. Almost nothing was done for a lengthy period of time. The QFCC did a review of the matters in 2021. It recognised and identified that the government had completed 16 of the 81 recommendations. That was 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. Four years after the report, the government had completed 16 of 81 recommendations.

On 8 August 2023, 28 recommendations from the report had been implemented. They had gone from 16 to 28. A further 49 recommendations remained in progress. Then, because I asked questions about this in estimates last year, we found out that virtually nothing had been done. Then we had the horrific matter that has already been mentioned and the government sprang into action.

Given those failings, the LNP has committed to a major inquiry. If elected, we will ask Mr Twyford, as chair of the Child Death Review Board, to conduct a systems inquiry to investigate child protection system failures. He will be able to exercise the powers of the Child Death Review Board under section 29. He will make recommendations about reforms to strengthen the system. He will be able to make a public report upon completion.

That is a plan to protect our most vulnerable—that is, children. That is a plan that will restore confidence in a system that parents have lost confidence in. When they drop their child off at a childcare centre, they want to know that their child will be safe. When they drop their child off at school, they want to know that their child will come home and will not have been attacked, molested or otherwise interfered with. The only way to do that is to make sure that the system is working as it should.

When the Attorney stands up and does her eulogy about how proud she is about those sorts of things, I accept that things have been done, and I accept and read with care the reports that the QFCC and others have put forward. That does not mean that we cannot hold the candle and the fire to the feet of this government for their failures.

One of their big failures that I want to mention, which has been belatedly addressed at the end of the 57th Parliament, is in relation to the reportable conduct system. It was a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It was also a report that was done in 2017. It was a report that then premier Annastacia Palaszczuk—part of the Palaszczuk-Miles Labor government for the last nine years—responded to.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Member, I think the Speaker has already issued direction around reference to former and current governments.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Indeed. The then premier was part of the Labor government for the last nine years. This is what the then premier of the now and still existing Labor government said—

The establishment of a reportable conduct scheme is a priority for Queensland. Institutions need to be accountable for the way they protect children and investigate allegations of harm ...

That response was issued on 15 June 2018. Here we are in 2024, five years—half a decade—later, and it is finally being done. If that is protecting children, if that is acting with alacrity, if that is acting, as the then premier said, with 'priority', then God help Queensland if this government gets re-elected on 26 October. The only way that you will actually get change and have a team that has a plan for change to protect our children is to vote for change on 26 October and show Labor the door in 2024.

**Mr McDonald:** Stop the chaos and crisis.


**Mr NICHOLLS:** Exactly. I take the interjection. There is chaos and crisis across there, and we are seeing that in bills that were introduced in the budget sitting week being passed on the second last day of the 57th Parliament following reports that were issued over five years ago. We have heard nothing from the voices over there in that intervening period. Not one of them has stood up and said anything about it. It is a shameful legacy. It is shameful that that has been allowed to occur.

There is much in the working with children bill that is worthy of support. It is just that it should have been done sooner. The changes that have been made to the way the system works and the manner of assessment which have been outlined by the Attorney in her contribution are welcomed. The introduction of the reasonable person test—I know it is a different reasonable person test from the reasonable person test we were discussing yesterday—is welcome because there are delays in the system. There are terrible delays in the system. One only needs to look at the LawRight submission to the committee of inquiry which indicates there are delays not only with the processing times for people who have perhaps one notifiable offence from a long time ago but also in the appeal process to QCAT—another area where this Attorney has allowed delay to be exacerbated such that a QCAT appeal in relation to a blue card decision can take up to 16 months to get determination, causing significant harm to people.

Of course, we very much welcome the changes that have been recommended and have been reviewed by the committee in relation to the kinship carer system. We support those changes, as our shadow minister has indicated in that respect. We will consider and look at the amendments that the Attorney has just circulated in relation to that and in relation to other adult members of the household. In doing so, we are cognisant again of what the Attorney-General said—that is, often offences occur from those places where you should least expect them to occur, and that is with other family members.

In going down this path—and we acknowledge the recommendation of the committee to do so and we acknowledge the testimony of Commissioner Lewis to the committee in respect of this—we need to ensure there are firm and robust systems in place in relation to placement decisions that are made regarding kinship care and children being placed in kinship care situations. Whilst the ideal would be that no mistakes are ever made, we understand that these things do occur. A system is only a system, but the system needs to be as good as it can be to do what it needs to do to protect the most vulnerable. Children in those circumstances are often the most vulnerable.

Let's not wax lyrical about what this Labor government has done. It has done some things but it has missed a great number of opportunities and who knows how many untold instances where children have not been protected when they ought to have been protected because of the lack of a reportable conduct scheme, because of the failure to implement the recommendations made in 2017. I say again: if you want a team that has a plan for beyond 2024 then you need to vote to change the government on 26 October.

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (12.33 pm): I rise to add my contribution to the cognate debate on the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. My contribution will mainly focus on the Child Safe Organisations Bill, as it was reviewed by the committee that I chair.

Before I commence my contribution, I want to say that I found the words from the opposition spokesperson, the member for Whitsunday, insulting to this side of the House. It was alarming to hear from the other side some of the words used about how we care about children or what we have done in this space. It is just such an insult. Anyway, I do acknowledge that the previous speaker indicated that the government have done a lot in this space, which is good to hear, and said that we still have some failings. With regard to that, you need to raise those simply because we know that there is always more to do in this space.

In the chair's foreword to the Community Support and Services Committee report No. 47 in review of this bill, I said—

There is no denying that our number one priority as a community is to ensure the safety of our children. The thought of having our children exposed to risk, whatever that may be, for most of us brings out the most primal of protective instincts.

This Bill acknowledges this primal instinct at its very heart and enshrines in legislation a core set of principles that create a foundation for all organisations who work with our most precious and vulnerable community asset, our children.

In recommending the adoption of this Bill, Queensland will align with nationally agreed principles for a child safe environment and join with other states, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales, to establish this important legislation.

The purpose of the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 is to protect children from harm and promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children in Queensland organisations. The bill establishes an integrated child safe organisations system for Queensland, comprising mandatory child safe standards based on the national principles of child safe organisations and the universal principle to promote and uphold the right to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in organisations. It is a nationally consistent reportable conduct scheme that requires the heads of in-scope organisations to report and investigate allegations of reportable conduct to an independent oversight body and gives functions and powers for the Queensland Family and Child Commission, the QFCC, to operate as the independent oversight body for the CSO system.

The Miles government is implementing the child safe standards and reportable conduct scheme in response to the final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that recommended that all state and territory governments require institutions in jurisdictions that engage in child related work to meet the 10 CSSs and establish a nationally consistent approach.

The CSS is a framework for organisations to prevent, identify and respond to child abuse through the development of child safety cultures. The RCS provides independent oversight of how organisations investigate and respond to certain allegations of child abuse and misconduct by their workers including employees, volunteers and contractors.

Some of the key changes of the bill were to: facilitate a flexible CSS implementation process designed to accommodate different levels of risk within organisations; build capacity, with the focus of the QFCC to be on educating organisations and providing expert information and advice; and ensure oversight powers have a graduated response where the first response to noncompliance is capacity building. The bill also facilitates an information-sharing framework to enable information sharing between the QFCC and in-scope organisations and entities.

The Community Support and Services Committee reviewed the bill, holding hearings and taking evidence from key stakeholders. I want to thank those who provided expert evidence at those hearings. During the committee's deliberations of this bill, the majority of witnesses during hearings expressed their support for the bill's intent and the child safe standards the bill introduces.

With regard to the proposed changes, the committee saw a strong overall response of support for the adoption of the national principles and the universal principle, which were both strongly supported in consultation, to bring Queensland into line with most other jurisdictions. Some stakeholders indicated that, organisationally, they may not be as ready as some to implement the CSS in 12 months, but most said that they would meet the timeframe. Stakeholders also advocated for a balanced, flexible and proportionate regulatory framework focused on organisational capacity building.

Young people strongly supported laws for Queensland that mandated implementation of the CSS and stated that they feel most comfortable and safe in organisations when they are listened to and supported to reach their goals. Importantly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people said they feel safer and are most likely to raise issues within an organisation, or disclose harm, when they can talk to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Organisations that are in scope for the CSS are specifically for children or have facilities specifically for use by children under supervision of the entities, such as: schools, early childhood education and care; child protection and youth justice services; health and disability services; arts, sports and recreation groups; religious organisations; transport services; and commercial businesses.

With the RCS, the bill defines reportable conduct to include: a child sexual offence; sexual misconduct committed in relation to, or in the presence of, a child; ill-treatment of a child; significant neglect of a child; physical violence committed in relation to, or in the presence of, a child; or behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child. The scope of reportable conduct is broader than criminal offences. The threshold for a reportable allegation is a reasonable belief based on facts that would have led a reasonable person to think the reported conduct may have occurred. It is a higher threshold than a reasonable suspicion. The bill has defined a 'worker' broadly to include an individual who performs work of any kind for the entity—for example, employees, volunteers and contractors.


The bill also enables the collaboration of sector regulators with the QFCC and reporting entities to provide information, reduce duplicate investigations and share expertise, knowledge and skills in relation to entities they regulate. The bill facilitates information exchange between the QFCC and Blue Card Services as a part of the working with children check scheme. The QFCC will share findings of reportable conduct with Blue Card Services to enable Blue Card Services to assist the eligibility of a



person to continue to hold a blue card. Blue Card Services will share blue card negative notices with the QFCC, if they are aware the person has been subject to a finding of reportable conduct, to support the QFCC's cross-sectional oversight of workers under the RCS.

I will touch briefly on the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Principally, the bill implements 12 recommendations arising from the Queensland Family and Child Commission report. Recommendations have also been made by the former Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee. They highlighted the need to consider the decision-making framework. This is the first stage of the government's response to the QFCC report. The bill makes a range of other amendments to simplify, streamline and improve the operation of the blue card system informed by the operational learnings of Blue Card Services, the feedback from stakeholders and the experience of the working with children check scheme systems in Australian jurisdictions.

I want to thank the Community Support and Services Committee members for their deliberations and the committee secretariat for the enormous volume of work they did in preparation for the hearings and their reporting on this bill. This is another set of important legislation that enhances the safety of children who are at potential risk from within organisations. It lays out the solid foundations for protection through the use of child safe standards and reportable conduct requirements and changes to the operation of the blue card. I congratulate the minister and her department on the work they have done on this legislation. I support the cognate bills before the House.

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (12.42 pm): I will spend most of my time on the Child Safe Organisations Bill, which our committee deliberated over. The bill aligns with recommendations from the 2017 final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and it was commended by many submitters to the inquiry. The objective of the Child Safe Organisations Bill is to improve the safety and wellbeing of children in our organisations and to ensure children who are at risk of experiencing abuse, or who have experienced abuse, in institutions are supported early in an appropriate way.

The royal commission reported a sobering reality that tens of thousands of children experienced sexual abuse in almost every type of institution where children lived or attended for educational, recreational, sporting, religious or cultural activities. The findings of the royal commission highlighted the failings of these organisations charged with their protection and recommended the implementation of 10 child safe standards and the establishment of nationally consistent reportable conduct schemes.

Queensland is home to more than five million people, and children make up around 20 per cent of the state's population. It is critical to realise that organisations are an essential part of childhood. Over the next decade, millions of Queensland children will attend early childhood education, engage with schools, have health checks with doctors, be supported by disability services and play in sport and recreation clubs. Children will attend religious institutions and participate in community engagement activities. These organisations must be responsible for delivering services in safe places and in safe ways where children can thrive and be free from harm.

The bill seeks to establish an integrated child safe organisations system in Queensland that includes mandatory child safe standards and a nationally consistent reportable conduct scheme. In addition, it will align with the recommendations from the 2017 final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and specifically its recommendations for the government to implement the following: compliance with child safe standards; cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; a nationally consistent reportable conduct scheme; and independent oversight by the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Implementing mandatory compliance with the 10 child safe standards, based on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the universal principle for cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, reflects a best practice approach to child protection and safety.

The committee heard support for the objectives of the bill and recognition of the importance of establishing robust frameworks to protect children. The 10 child safe standards provide a comprehensive and proactive approach to preventing child abuse and ensuring child safety within organisations. These standards—which include child safety policies, codes of conduct and regular training for staff—are essential for creating safe environments for children. The universal principle for cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is particularly significant for Queensland. Ensuring cultural safety and respect is integral to providing effective and appropriate care and safeguarding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

While there was support for the bill, many recognise the challenges that organisations may face in implementing and maintaining compliance with the new standards. Adequate resources, training and support will be necessary to ensure all organisations, particularly smaller and community-based entities, can effectively meet these requirements. We urge the Queensland government to consider the provision of funding and support mechanisms to assist organisations in this transition.

The committee heard support from submitters for necessary reforms proposed in the current Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. They acknowledged the need for timely and efficient implementation of reform to the blue card scheme alongside the implementation of the child safe organisations system. There was support for the proposed repeal of sections of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act. Submitters believe replacing the requirements for an organisation to have a risk management strategy with the child safe standards and universal principle is a positive step towards reducing some of this overlap. It was raised that the introduction of state specific models still imposes compliance challenges, especially for organisations which operate across multiple states and territories and support families who live across different states and territories.

The direct financial costs of implementing a reportable conduct scheme for non-government organisations are substantial. Organisations will face costs related to policy changes, staff training, secure reporting systems and the human resources needed to conduct investigations and support staff. These directly attributable additional financial costs must be acknowledged and addressed within government service contracts and funding agreements. Without adequate funding, many organisations will find it unsustainable to continue providing the support services that Queenslanders deserve.

It was recommended that the Queensland government work with the Commonwealth government and other states and territories to progress the implementation of a national child safe organisation and reportable conduct scheme framework to streamline regulatory obligations and reduce duplication—and triplication in some cases—across jurisdictions. A unified approach would enhance efficiency and consistency in child safety practices, alleviating the administrative burden on organisations operating in multiple states, and ensure a consistent obligation for the safety of children regardless of where in Australia an organisation is operating.

Every time we hear in the news that a child has been sexually exploited, we ask what more could have been done to prevent this abuse. The opportunity presented within this bill to implement the child safe standards and the reportable conduct scheme—recommended many years ago by the royal commission—provides for a more coordinated and effective system to prevent, detect and respond to child sexual exploitation. The benefits of a community that protects and safeguards its children from harm and abuse are far-reaching.

I want to take this opportunity, in closing, to acknowledge the team at the Family Responsibilities Commission. Over many years it has been rewarding to get to know the team, especially the local commissioners. The Community Support and Services Committee has oversight of the FRC, and the work has included recent amendments to the youth justice trigger, school attendance notifications, trends in community, and recruitment difficulties for the FRC and in welfare reform community areas.


The commissioner recently raised concerns in relation to eligibility of applicants to the position of local commissioner. There is a proportion of aging commissioners, and potential candidates for commissioner positions may have historic convictions or representations with the FRC. This House has tried previously to introduce new requirements for the issuing of blue cards. Although previous private members' bills have not been successful, I do want to take a moment to read the following comment from the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee last year. It says—

We consider that the blue card framework should be reviewed so historical offences of a non-serious nature and not involving children are not taken into account. The criminal justice system is premised on rehabilitation, yet blue cards have the potential to impose 'life sentences' on individuals who have already been punished for their prior crimes.

During the FRC's public briefing in 2024, Commissioner Tammy Williams addressed the issue of blue cards and the difficulty of community members to get jobs driving buses or working on school grounds, for example. Ms Williams said—

The ability to be eligible for a blue card has continuously been an issue that most people recognise has been a difficult bar for First Nations people to meet... A possible suggestion that is worth exploring is whether there could be a provisional or restricted blue card available with restrictions applied—limited to a jurisdiction or location, limited to while a person is in a certain role and reviewed on a regular basis.

In conclusion, I put on record that the FRC has tried to work with these issues that are ever increasing in First Nations communities, particularly where they operate doing amazing work to get these communities back on track, and the blue card continues to be a hindrance to opportunity within those communities.

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (12.50 pm): I rise to speak in the cognate debate of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 and the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024. I will commence my contribution on the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024. I was fortunate to be able to participate in the committee process of the examination of this important bill to strengthen measures to protect Queensland's children. I would like to acknowledge Minister Mullen; the Community Support and Services Committee chair and member for Hervey Bay, Adrian Tantari, and other members of the committee—the members for Burnett, Nicklin, Maiwar and Oodgeroo; our committee secretary, Lynda Pretty; and Hansard.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse presented its final report on 15 December 2017, finding widespread and systemic failings of institutions to protect children and respond to child sexual abuse, demonstrating a need to strengthen measures to protect vulnerable children. 'Institution' was broadly defined to include any entity or organisation that provides, or has at any time provided, activities, facilities, programs or services of any kind that enable adults to have contact with children. The royal commission examined the factors that can influence the risk of harm to children in institutional settings as well as the factors that protect children and make institutions safer. The broad definition of 'institution' encompasses entities and people in whom we put our full faith and trust.

The royal commission identified 10 child safe standards that contribute most effectively to improving the safety of children in institutions and recommended that all institutions that engage in child related work meet these standards. The child safe standards will apply to a broad range of sectors working with children in organisational settings including schools, early childhood education and care, community services, disability services, hospitals and health services, sports and recreation, religious bodies, youth justice, out-of-home-care settings, government departments, transport and commercial services. When you think about the widespread and systemic failings and you consider the many entities that interact directly with children, it is quite obvious that fragmentation exists, playing a big part in the widespread system failures. There is a huge need to bring institutions together to take ownership of child protection as part of the collective and commit to protecting Queensland's children at a societal level. What this bill says is that child protection is our community's and society's responsibility and we are working towards minimising the risk of harm to our children together.

The 10 child safe standards are designed to be principle-based and outcome focused, developing child safe organisational cultures rather than setting prescriptive rules that must be followed or specific initiatives that must be implemented. Given the broad scope of organisations that interact with children, the child safe standards are intended to be applied in a flexible way, guided by each organisation's structure, size, level of risk and characteristics.

The proposed Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 will establish mandatory child safe standards based on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and a nationally consistent RCS that requires heads of in-scope organisations to report and investigate allegations of reportable conduct to the independent oversight body. The purpose of the bill is to protect children from harm and promote their safety and wellbeing by ensuring organisations engaging with children focus on child safety, including preventing harm, and appropriately report and investigate allegations of child abuse.

The bill proposes that the national principles are adopted as Queensland's child safe standards to maintain consistency. Adopting the national principles will enforce strong measures to help promote organisational cultures that prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children. Elements of the child safe standards include, for example: embedding child safety in leadership, governance and culture; ensuring the participation of children and families; respecting equity and diversity; ensuring staff are suitable, trained and supported; developing child focused complaints processes; ensuring safe online and physical environments; and conducting ongoing reviews of implementation. Widespread cultural change is needed, and it is intended that the CSS will help to achieve that to ensure organisations are working together and committing to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people they interact with.

I will now turn my attention to the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The policy objectives of the working with children bill are to: implement, either in full or in part, 12 recommendations arising from the Queensland Family and Child


Commission report *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: review of the blue card system*; implement recommendations made by the former Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee highlighting the need to consider the decision-making framework; make a range of other amendments to simplify, streamline and improve the operation of the blue card system; implement the first stage of the government's response to the QFCC report *A thematic analysis of provisionally approved kinship carers who receive a subsequent blue card negative notice*—the QFCC kinship care report; and provide for the sharing of Childrens Court child protection records with other Australian courts and tribunals, in particular to facilitate information sharing under the National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems.

I want to share some of my thoughts on the QFCC kinship care report. The QFCC kinship care report was released in October 2023. I note that 11 case studies were analysed where a kinship carer applicant was provisionally approved by the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services but went on to receive a negative notice from the blue card chief executive, meaning that they could not be approved as a kinship carer.

The QFCC kinship care report made two recommendations. The first is to remove the requirement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers, as defined in the Child Protection Act 1999, to hold a blue card if caring for children in their family. The second is to retain the existing departmental assessment and approval process in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers, removing the provisional status period in the absence of the blue card condition. The government has supported the QFCC kinship care report recommendations in principle. The QFCC kinship care report found that blue card screening is not designed for kinship care and that its processes create additional barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are highly represented in the child protection system. While placing First Nations children with kinship carers has been the aspiration of many communities I represent to keep children connected to family, culture and country, it presented many barriers with blue card requirements. I welcome these new reforms because I know they will encourage more families to take up kinship care and keep First Nations children connected to kinship. It takes a village to raise a child, and the new reforms relating to kinship, for me, are about supporting the village to raise a child. I commend the bill to the House.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (2.00 pm): I rise to make a contribution on this cognate debate. I will focus on the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I have the pleasure of being on the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee and this was one of the bills which came before us. As is always the case on committee work, I find I learn something new and I am exposed to new organisations, new lobby groups and new identities.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Member for Southern Downs, could you pull your microphone closer? We have been having some trouble with the microphones. I am finding the sound a little faint from back there, which is unusual I know.

**Mr LISTER**: I do not really need a microphone, but I will use one to keep up with the practice in this place!

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr LISTER**: I take the interjection from my honourable friend the member for Logan. Yes, Emu Swamp Dam is a matter that is of great importance to me. I will speak about that more at an appropriate moment. This particular bill introduces the great work that was done by the Queensland Family and Child Commission. I echo the comments which were made earlier by my learned friend, the member for Clayfield, the shadow Attorney-General and shadow minister for justice, when he defended the Liberal National Party's record in this space. He pointed out that the Queensland Family and Child Commission, who were responsible for these reports—*Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: review of the blue card system*, which was the blue card review report, and *A thematic analysis of provisionally applied kinship carers who receive a subsequent blue card negative notice*.

We are very proud of the establishment of that organisation. As the member for Clayfield said, it was opposed by the Labor opposition at the time. We are great supporters of the work of the QFCC; we always have been. We believe that their work should be given a high priority. It is a shame that the Labor government has talked a lot in this space—the amount of time it has taken for the bill to get to

this stage at five minutes to midnight in their third term shines a light on their priorities. It seems to me it is more about making the right noises, rather than getting down to the necessary legislative change to implement the reforms.

Progress has been woefully slow. This review was conducted following the death of a child in foster care. I am quite certain that most members in this House know the case I am referring to. That death was at the hands of one of the child's foster carers. The review was published in September 2017 with 81 recommendations. The premier at the time, Anastacia Palaszczuk, said—

My government has had the courage to take a detailed look at how we can keep children safer and the fortitude to follow through on the recommendations in these reports.


That was a very long time ago, and we are only seeing this action now. The report stated that the nation was shocked when this particular child's foster carers were arrested after their tragic death, and that—

It was important to make sure the blue card and foster care systems were the best they could be. It was time to check whether they had kept pace with changes in service environments, technology and community expectations.

The QFCC was labouring under the understandable, but subsequently shown to be misplaced, view that the government would take this seriously and would work quickly. That has not occurred. I heard some outrageous and brazen political provocations from the government side and from the minister today concerning children in care. I entirely disagree with those remarks. Apart from the fact that they contained some language which I felt was unbecoming for a statement in this House, it also made suggestions that the Liberal National Party opposition is in the pockets of the providers of residential care. That is false.

The state may not have to rely so much on residential care if there could be more foster carers. The concern that foster carers express when they speak to me is they feel they are not properly supported. They may bring a child into a loving and supportive environment and see that child flourish and reach their potential, only to have the child whisked away because it has been decided that mum or dad is now fit to look after that child—they are much better now; they have given up the drugs, or whatever their moral turpitudes were. They see that child taken away, and then regress. I say that as a counterpoint to the observations stated by the minister earlier today.

It is understandable that these changes are necessary in terms of allowing more kinship carers to undertake that important role, particularly in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. I associate myself with the remainder of the remarks made by the shadow minister earlier in this second reading debate.

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (2.06 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Miles government's Child Safe Organisations Bill and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. In 2017, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse published its final report following an extensive five-year inquiry. In its final report, the royal commission recommended that state and territory governments require relevant organisations to comply with 10 child safe standards as a best practice approach to keep children safe, and establish nationally consistent reportable conduct schemes to provide independent oversight of organisational responses to allegations of child abuse across sectors.

The Queensland government has accepted, or accepted in principle, all of the child safe standards and reportable conduct scheme recommendations. The CSS are a framework for organisations to prevent, identify and respond to child abuse through the development of child safe cultures. An RCS provides independent oversight of how organisations investigate and respond to certain allegations of child abuse and misconduct and reportable conduct by their workers including employees, volunteers and contractors.

The bill follows extensive policy development, regulatory impact analysis and consultation. The results of consultation demonstrated strong community support for implementing the royal commission's CSS and RCS recommendations and the preferred Queensland CSO model included in this bill. This bill establishes a comprehensive, integrated child safe organisation system in Queensland which includes flexible CSS implementation. The CSS are designed to be applied flexibly and to accommodate different levels of risks within organisations; for example, it is not intended that sporting organisations and small community groups will implement CSS and the universal principle to the same degree as high-risk settings such as Child Safety funded residential care.

In relation to capacity building, the focus of the QFCC will be on educating organisations and on providing expert information and advice, both proactively and as a response to noncompliance. In relation to collaboration, the oversight body will work with existing sector regulators to harness their

skills, experience and regulatory systems to support compliance, reducing regulatory burden and duplication. Oversight powers have been designed as a graduated response where the first response to noncompliance is capacity building, and the application of enforcement powers is proportionate to the noncompliance and the organisational context.

The bill establishes a broad information-sharing framework to enable information sharing between the QFCC, in-scope organisations and other entities. It is proposed to implement the CSS first as a foundational framework and the RCS later, allowing organisations and the oversight body to focus on implementing one scheme at a time and rolling out each scheme to different sectors at different times to allow the oversight body to provide targeted support as new obligations are introduced.


The bill requires the Queensland Family and Child Commission to adopt the most effective and proportionate means of assisting in-scope organisations to implement and comply with the child safe standards. The intent is that the first response by the QFCC to noncompliance will be education and capacity building, with graduated monitoring and enforcement powers available when necessary. These powers include: directing a child safe entity to conduct a self-assessment, providing recommendations, issuing a compliance notice, entering into enforceable undertakings, making an application to the court for assistance and publishing details of noncompliance.

The bill provides for the QFCC and sector regulators to collaborate on implementing and overseeing the CSS and the universal principle to reduce regulatory duplication, improve the capacity of the CSO system to respond to noncompliance, and develop sector-specific resources. The bill provides a broad information-sharing framework where relevant entities are able to disclose confidential information for the purposes of facilitating an investigation and monitoring of CSS compliance by the QFCC.

The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill establishes the child safe standards and reportable conduct scheme. The bill requires the Queensland Family and Child Commission to share findings of reportable conduct to Blue Card Services to inform assessments under the working with children check assessments. This will provide invaluable information to Blue Card Services to inform their assessment of risk and ensure our children are protected as best we can.

The bill introduces a statutory threshold for blue card assessments that will require BCS to be satisfied an applicant presents a risk to the safety of children which must be real and appreciable in order to refuse an application. The new statutory criteria will require decision-makers to consider a range of factors including the nature, gravity and circumstances of the conduct, how long ago the person's conduct occurred and whether there is a pattern of concerning behaviour. Applicants will have a self-disclosure framework to comply with to include disclosure of domestic violence orders, police protection notices, adverse working with children checks from other jurisdictions, relevant child protection information and disciplinary action. Failure to self-disclose can result in penalties occurring in a situation where there has not been an honest mistake.

The bill expands who will require a blue card to include those in entertainment, beauty and photography services directed at children including costume characters, such as a person appearing as Santa at a shopping centre, as well as gym and play facilities and overnight camps and excursions directed at children. To better align Queensland with other jurisdictions, the bill removes the exemption from screening requirements for lawyers and persons employed at amusement parks. Grace periods have been incorporated to allow sufficient time for impacted persons to make a blue card application. The bill simplifies the screening requirements to make clearer who needs a blue card in a school environment. The bill provides a consistent exemption for parent volunteers. The bill also introduces a new exemption for interstate or international emergency workers deployed to Queensland during a declared disaster or fire emergency. This bill is designed to strengthen the protection of children in Queensland and it has been carefully considered. All submitters have made clear their aims. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.14 pm): I rise to make my contribution on the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Child Safe Organisations Bill. These are both very important pieces of legislation. I note that, once again, they are being debated in cognate. I am genuinely glad, even relieved, to see both of these bills coming back for debate before the end of this session of parliament, but it cannot become the norm for the government to put up essentially completely unrelated bills for debate together.

In the limited time available to me, I have to skip over detailed consideration of the Child Safe Organisations Bill, but I will say briefly that we support this bill. While we support it, I note the concerns raised by Queensland Foster and Kinship Care about any unintended effect of the bill on family-based care, which is distinct from a professional service environment. I also note that many stakeholders have called for additional resourcing and support for the community service organisations to implement the changes. With that, I will turn to the long-overdue changes to the working with children risk management and screening regime, otherwise known as the blue card system.

Blue Card Services plays a vitally important role in the community, but it has long been recognised that the legislative framework and its implementation have been a bit of a mess. We have seen lengthy delays and outcomes that disproportionately punish disadvantaged and vulnerable people. The Greens absolutely support this bill, but it is important in considering these changes to reflect on what has made them necessary and the people who have borne the brunt of the existing system.

Under the current test, negative notices are meant to be issued in exceptional cases where it would not be in the best interests of children for a working with children clearance to be issued. That test has next to no criteria and has been applied inconsistently. Without any criteria to establish what is in the best interests of children, decision-makers have effectively applied their own moral lens, which has not necessarily been founded on the advice of experts or relevant research and at times has strayed towards upholding stereotypes and tropes to the detriment of people who have overcome huge barriers to improve their life circumstances. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face higher rates of criminalisation and systemic disadvantage arising from colonisation, dispossession, poverty and intergenerational trauma. Under the existing scheme, consideration of that context has been at the individual discretion of decision-makers and the effect has been to entrench this systemic disadvantage.

Professor Tamara Walsh has helpfully provided an analysis of published decisions in QCAT. Although these are just a snapshot from those applicants who have had the resources and capacity to see the review process through, they still offer a helpful reference point for us. Professor Walsh points out that tribunal members adopted markedly different approaches, especially in cases concerning past drug use and domestic and family violence. In some cases past drug use was seen as an automatic reason to deny a blue card, while in others the person's ability to overcome these issues was seen as a likely positive influence.

There were instances where women who were subjected to domestic and family violence—women who are themselves victim-survivors—were denied blue cards because of an apparent failure to protect their own children from the perpetrator. I think everyone would agree that is absolutely horrific. Additionally, contrary to the foundational principle of a person being considered innocent until proven guilty, many people have received negative notices purely because of charges being laid including charges that do not have any direct relevance to working with children.

Sisters Inside provided an important perspective in their submission to the committee. They reflected on the difficulties that women accessing their service have in obtaining blue cards, noting that in their experience the department has refused applications in the vast majority of cases where a person has served a term of imprisonment or has a conviction for any indictable offence, again, even where those offences have no direct relevance to working with children. They also reflect on their own difficulties as an organisation that prioritises employing individuals with lived prison experience and that they are generally unable to do so within their programs that support criminalised girls and women and their children.

The effect of the current regime is that a young person might grow up in resi care, be subjected to overpolicing and criminalisation within that setting, be funnelled into the adult justice system and, even if they turned their life around, never be able to work in the environment they grew up in. This process has prevented individuals from meaningfully participating in society and limited the quality of services provided by community organisations that benefit enormously from staff with relevant lived experience. In light of all of that, we are absolutely supportive of the changes in this bill and look forward to monitoring their implementation. The changes mean that a negative notice will be issued where a person over 18 has been convicted of a disqualifying offence and sentenced to imprisonment and that all other applications will be subject to the new discretionary framework.

The primary question is no longer whether issuing a blue card is in the best interests of the child but instead whether the applicant presents a real and appreciable risk to the safety of children. In deciding if a person is a risk to the safety of children, the decision-maker is obliged to conduct a risk assessment that involves considering all of the available information, with a mechanism available to

seek specialist advice from an advisory committee and appointed expert advisers. This mechanism is particularly important and I hope that we see it frequently exercised under the new system. Decision-makers have had so little guidance in the enormous task of deciding what is in the best interests of children and this has resulted in an overly cautious, moralistic approach. While a cautious approach is obviously important when it comes to the safety of children, decisions have not been founded on actual expert evidence.


Having considered all of the available information, the decision-maker then applies the reasonable person test asking whether a reasonable person would allow their child to have direct contact with the applicant while engaged in child related work. To assist, there are clear risk assessment criteria involving consideration of the nature, gravity and circumstances of the conduct; the relevance of the conduct; when it occurred; conduct since then; any pattern of concerning behaviour; and, where a victim is involved, their age, vulnerability and the person's relationship with them.

For applications made by First Nations people, the decision-maker is obliged to consider the impacts of systemic disadvantage and intergenerational trauma and the historical context and limitations on access to justice. While this is a positive change, I would note that it still adopts a deficit focused framing and is not coupled with mandatory consideration of the protective factors that First Nations people can bring to their work and workplaces, including through cultural safety and strength.

The bill expands the scope of regulated employment and businesses and removes some exemptions, meaning that there will be increased pressures on the blue card system with potential consequences for processing times that are already lengthy. Concerns have been raised that the expanded scope is not necessary and will lead to unintended consequences. In saying that, it is important that we have a robust, preventative system and I am pleased to see the expansion of regulated industries to include justice or detention services where staff may have access to young people who are particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable.

The bill also removes the requirement for kinship carers to hold a blue card. However, these changes will not take effect until a new fit-for-purpose screening process is put in place. It is unclear as yet what kind of timeframe this is expected to happen in and the changes are already well overdue. I hope that this process is progressed as a matter of urgency so that these important reforms can commence and First Nations children have greater access to culturally appropriate care within their communities. The Human Rights Commission in its submission, supported by the recommendation of the committee, also suggests that this does not go far enough and that members of the same household should also be exempt from obtaining blue cards. We agree with that.

In all of the grandstanding about the importance of keeping children and young people safe when accessing services in organisations, it is hard to forget that just over three weeks ago this House voted to remove the principle of detention as a last resort—a change that will directly lead to more children being locked up in unsafe conditions and subjected to pat downs and strip searches, use of force and limited access to their families and communities. When we stand here as lawmakers and profess a shared commitment to protecting children, we should be clear about which children we mean and who is excluded. All children and young people deserve safety and support to lead meaningful lives. In supporting this bill, I implore everyone here to apply this same principle each time we are asked to vote on laws that affect children in this state.

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (2.24 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill was referred to the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee for review. The committee made two recommendations—that the bill be passed and that the provisions requiring adult household members of kinship carers to hold a blue card be removed. Working with children checks are crucial for fostering a protective environment for our children. They are just one of the many practices designed to ensure that the right individuals are entrusted to work with children. After reviewing the working with children check processes, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse echoed the sentiment shared by the majority of stakeholders, both government and non-government, that these checks are invaluable in safeguarding children.


The reforms in this bill align with the Queensland Family and Child Commission's, the QFCC, report about keeping Queensland's children more than safe—the review of the blue card system—which builds upon the earlier works done by the royal commission. The bill seeks to implement, either fully or partially, 12 of the recommendations made in the blue card review report. The QFCC highlighted that Queensland's blue card system is one of the strongest and most established in Australia, yet there



is room for improvements to address emerging risks that align with modern expectations. This was also reflected in the recommendations from the former Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee, especially regarding the need for greater participation in the blue card system for First Nations people.

Caring for family and fostering family connections is not considered employment. It is evident that the blue card system creates blocks for kinship care and presents barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families seeking to care for children within their community. The QFCC emphasised that these barriers conflicted with the Child Protection Act 1999, particularly regarding self-determination, the recognition of cultural child-rearing practices and prioritising the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their family and community.

While the committee acknowledges that the bill makes meaningful progress in removing obstacles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers by eliminating the blue card requirement for kinship carers themselves, it raised concerns about the ongoing requirement for adult household members to obtain a blue card. Specifically, the committee is concerned that this requirement shifts the unintended consequences of the blue card system from kinship carers to adult members of their households. Stakeholders have expressed concerns that requiring adult household members to obtain a blue card could undermine the intent of the bill. In some cases, potential kinship carers might face the difficult choice of either separating their household to care for the children or forgoing the kinship care. The committee notes that the department has commenced a consultation process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders during the development of the second stage of reforms to create a framework that is culturally safe and meets the unique needs of these families in kinship care. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (2.28 pm): I rise today to speak on the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The Child Safe Organisations Bill is a step towards addressing the wellbeing and safety of children in Queensland. It reflects the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and makes the national child safe standards a mandatory requirement across all relevant organisations in Queensland. The bill's key components are the establishment of mandatory compliance with the 10 child safe standards and a universal principle for the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. These standards are critical for safeguarding our children and ensuring they are supported in an appropriate way. The bill also introduces a reportable conduct scheme that provides oversight of reporting and investigations into allegations of child abuse by organisations.

While my colleagues and I support the bill, it is important to note that the bill took too long, as most things do with this tired, old Labor government. The recommendations from the royal commission were published back in 2017 and it has taken the government far too long to respond. In the time the government has been failing to respond to those reports, we have seen more harm come to children due to a lack of proper oversight on organisations entrusted with their care. I do not doubt that many organisations have already taken steps to implement child safe standards on their own, but this legislation is important in ensuring consistency and accountability across all relevant sectors.

The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill also seeks to implement key recommendations from significant reviews, including the QFCC blue card review report. This bill introduces a new decision-making framework for blue card applications, simplifies the disqualification framework and provides the chief executive with greater discretion to suspend cards when necessary. The bill also expands regulated employment categories, adjusts exemptions and introduces provisions for interstate or international emergency workers.

We must also recognise that the government has dragged its feet on the Child Safe Organisations Bill. In 2021 there was a brief period of targeted consultation on these issues, but then, once again, nothing happened. Only once the child protection failures of this government went public did they move forward with this bill. This reactive approach cannot continue. Child safety should not be something that only gets attention when it becomes a headline. The safety of children must always be a priority.

The implementation of child safe standards will commence on 1 October 2025 for some sectors, with all in-scope organisations adhering to these obligations by April 2026. Similarly, the reportable conduct scheme will be rolled out between 2026 and 2027. The phased approach will allow organisations time to adapt, but the government must ensure that this timeline is not extended


unnecessarily. The Queensland Family and Child Commission will oversee the implementation of these standards and the reportable conduct scheme. It is pleasing to see that they are being allocated the necessary budget to ensure they can carry out their expanded role.

Most stakeholders expressed their support for the bill, but it should be noted that some mentioned there were concerns about resourcing and duplication of reporting. Queensland Catholic Education Commission and Independent Schools Queensland raised concerns about the impact on their resources given the additional administrative burden of compliance with both the child safe standards and the reportable conduct scheme. Smaller organisations, many in rural and remote parts of Queensland, share their concerns about their ability to meet some of these requirements given the ongoing staffing and resourcing challenges that many already face.

In May 2004, a little over 20 years ago, a grandmother walked into my office to report the abuse of 11 young children at a local gymnastics club. I was a councillor with Gold Coast city council at the time, and I must admit I was at a bit of a loss as to how best to deal with that complaint. When I went back to council and raised it with officers in the council and my own PA at the time, I was surprised that there was actually no process in place. There were no standards or requirements around reporting. There was a lot of head scratching and a lot of people asking, 'Well, what should we do?' Fortunately, my PA at that time had the sense to call Hetty Johnston. Hetty came the next day. She walked us through some of the issues. She agreed to meet with the families of these abused children. Bravehearts took up the issues on behalf of those families and advocated for them. As a result of that, in September 2004 I attended my first board meeting with Bravehearts as a newly appointed director. That is 20 years ago this month.

I want to pay tribute to many people within child safety organisations in this state who have been advocating for these issues for decades. I acknowledge the work of Hetty Johnston. I especially want to shout out to Carol Ronken, who has been the principal research officer and adviser on many government panels at a state and federal level on behalf of Bravehearts. I also give a shout-out to Deirdre Thompson, the director of counselling and therapeutic services at Bravehearts, who has worked tirelessly on many of these issues for decades as well. There are so many others to name. It would be remiss of me not to mention the advocacy of the Morcombes and of ACT for Kids here in Queensland, who I was introduced to nearly 30 years ago as general manager of Sea FM when they came to us and talked about trying to establish a centre on the Gold Coast. I also want to shout out to Jo Compagne, who has been with Bravehearts for as long as I can remember. I think she has just celebrated more than 20 years with the organisation. I particularly want to thank Alison Geale, our new CEO, and acknowledge her work and advocacy in recent years. I also acknowledge our chair, Vanessa Garrard, who has provided outstanding leadership to that board and that organisation in more recent years.

These bills demonstrate that child safety is an ongoing responsibility that requires all of us to pay attention. It requires a government to take meaningful action without delay, and that is why the LNP will not oppose these bills. Like everyone else in this House, we understand that these changes represent significant improvements to the current child protection system. While we support them, it is critical that we continue to move forward with them and that we continue to advocate for the best interests of children in Queensland. The only way to change the chaos and crisis that we have seen in child safety in recent years is to change the government on 26 October and show Labor the door in '24.

 **Ms NIGHTINGALE** (Inala—ALP) (2.36 pm): I rise today in support of the cognate bills and will speak specifically to the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I am proud, as the member for Inala, an electorate that benefits from a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, to sit on the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee and to play a role in this legislation—legislation that will make a significant and positive change in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in my community and in communities across Queensland.


During the committee's inquiry into the bill there was significant feedback. This included recommendations of the Queensland Family and Child Commission's kinship care report and broader stakeholder support for removing the requirements for kinship carers and adult members of kinship care households to obtain a blue card. The committee heard that the current requirements pose significant barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin to care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As the committee noted in its report, caring for family and supporting family connection is not employment and the blue card system is not suitable for kinship care. In response to this feedback the committee recommended that the bill be amended to remove the requirement for adult members of kinship carer households to obtain a blue card.

I have heard firsthand from many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in my electorate of the substantial barriers for kin who wish to care for their relatives and the difference that removing this requirement would make. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families want the best for their children. They want them to grow up in safe homes that allow them to thrive, sustaining cultural continuity and connection to kin and country to create strong future generations. The existing blue card scheme, while well intentioned, was originally designed with a focus on employment suitability rather than the unique needs of kinship care. The scheme has unintentionally created obstacles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who wish to care for their own kin, undermining the principles of family and cultural continuity that are central to the wellbeing of these children. This is particularly concerning given the significant number of Aboriginal children in residential and foster-care placements.

Removing this requirement will allow more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be placed with their extended families, enhancing their chances for improved outcomes and fostering a stronger sense of cultural continuity. This change acknowledges that caring for family members is not an employment role but a fundamental familial and cultural responsibility. By passing this bill and adopting the committee's recommendations, we are taking a crucial step toward a more culturally appropriate and supportive system.

Following the passage of the bill, the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services will work to develop a fit-for-purpose kinship carer screening framework that is both culturally appropriate and effective, upholding our commitment to child safety while respecting cultural practices. The bill aligns with our goals of backing frontline services and honouring the rich cultural history of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. By removing these barriers, we are not only facilitating better care for children but also promoting stronger connections to kin and country. The continuation of culture is an issue that is close to my heart and I am pleased to see that, with the passage of this bill, more First Nations children will have this opportunity.

The bill incorporates a staged approach to reform, providing time for comprehensive consultation and development of the new screening framework. This will ensure that all stakeholders, particularly First Nations communities, have a voice in shaping a system that meets their needs while maintaining high standards of child protection. I am proud of the great kinship carers in my electorate. I want you to know that you matter. I am proud that again, with this bill, the Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queenslanders. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.41 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Child Safe Organisations Bill being debated in cognate with the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. These are important reforms, but if the Labor government really cared about our children then they would have allowed a full and frank debate on them, not the truncated cut-down debate that we are having in the parliament today. The only way to change Labor's chaos and crisis with the management of the parliament and the debate on these really important issues is to change the government on 26 October and show Labor the door in '24.

Children are our state's future but children cannot advocate for themselves. They rely on adults to provide them with protection from harm and abuse. It is disappointing that it has taken quite some time for this legislation to make it into the parliament. In fact, earlier I heard our shadow minister, the member for Whitsunday, say that some of this legislation has taken seven years to make it into the parliament as the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse presented its final report in December 2017.

This bill is of particular interest to local government. Currently, over 30 per cent of Queensland councils provide childcare services for their local communities in the absence of the private sector. There is a market failure in many places in rural and regional Queensland. Rural and regional families struggle to access child care and the shortage of qualified childcare workers is a constant issue in the regions. In fact, recently the Regional Australia Institute did a study, funded by Origin Energy, that looked at the Western Downs Regional Council and Maranoa Regional Council areas. They described that regional area as a 'childcare desert' because of the extreme shortage of child care and the extreme shortage of childcare workers.

I note that, in their submission to this legislation, the Local Government Association of Queensland outlined a number of concerns following feedback from council officers in relation to the 10 child safety standards. That feedback related to training logistics, particularly in remote, rural and regional areas; challenges in delivering that training; cultural considerations; the cost implications for councils; and the retention of staff. I have no doubt that councils providing childcare services are well


aware of recent media reports and the need to ensure that children are well protected in the centres that they operate. I hope that the Queensland Family and Child Commission will consult with all Queensland councils that operate childcare facilities, including those in rural and remote areas and in our First Nations communities, to identify and provide any additional supports that they may require to implement these key changes. These key changes are very important in caring for our children. I am sure that for those organisations there is a pathway with the child safe standards that are outlined in the bill. However, it will take good management and resources to achieve the outcomes and to ensure that we always strive to protect our children.

I turn to the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which seeks to implement recommendations from the blue card reviews and the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. The bill seeks to make changes on how the blue card system works. I declare that I am a blue card holder. The Queensland Family and Child Commission's kinship care report found that blue card screening is not designed for kinship care and that the process creates additional barriers, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers. This issue is raised regularly, particularly by leaders in the Indigenous communities and our Indigenous councils. I am sure that they will continue to monitor the changes as this is an issue that they have consistently raised and have long held concerns about.

The bill removes exemptions for lawyers so that they have to hold a blue card on the basis that it brings the working with children legislation into line with other jurisdictions. Of interest to many in the community will be the changes to commercial services that impact who will now be required to get a blue card. That refers to places such as gyms and play facilities, which are captured under the existing sport and active recreation category. A new standalone category will capture entertainment and party services, beauty or talent competitions and photography services. The bill will remove the exemption for amusement parks so that those employed or engaged in providing services directed at children at an amusement park will be required to hold a blue card. There will not be a requirement to hold a blue card where employees are merely providing food and beverages or equipment and have no contact with children. However, that assumes that there are very distinct lines there. Often volunteer groups provide the amusement as well as cook the barbecue. We will be closely monitoring how that is rolled out.

A lot of people have come to my office to tell me about delays when applying for blue cards. When these changes come in, commercial services and their employees will have to work their way through the blue card system. When I applied for a blue card the interface was not easy to navigate. That process could be simplified, particularly around the IT section, when following the pathway to input all the information required. I do not want to see additional delays for people going through the process. I hope that the system is well resourced so that those who need to obtain a blue card due to the changes in the legislation can do so in a quick manner and can continue providing commercial services.

I will continue to monitor this legislation as it goes through. It is certainly much needed legislation because we have an obligation to do the best we can to care for and protect our children.

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (2.48 pm): I rise to speak to the cognate bills being debated, the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024. In its report No. 8 of the 57th Parliament, tabled in this Assembly on 2 August, the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee recommended to the Assembly that the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 be passed.


I also support the amendments that will be moved in consideration in detail by the Attorney-General, in accordance with recommendation 2, to remove the requirements for adult household members of kinship carers to hold a blue card. As stated in the explanatory notes, removing this requirement will avoid any unintended consequences of the broader reforms to establish a more nuanced scheme for the screening of kinship carers in a way that is culturally safe and responds to the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families caring for kin.

The Community Support and Services Committee in its report No. 47 of the 57th Parliament, tabled in this Assembly on 2 August, recommended to the Assembly that the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 be passed. I will focus on some of the areas dealing with kinship carers and the blue card. The Queensland Family and Child Commission kinship care report made two recommendations: remove the requirement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers, as defined in the Child Protection Act 1999, to hold a blue card if they are caring for children in their family; and retain the

existing departmental assessment and approval process in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers, removing the provisional status period in the absence of the blue card condition. The Queensland Family and Child Commission kinship care report found that blue card screening is not designed for kinship care and that its processes create additional barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers.

The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, in line with the recommendations of the Queensland Family and Child Commission kinship care report, proposes to: amend the working with children act so approved kinship carers are not considered to be in regulated employment; remove the requirement under the Child Protection Act for approved kinship carers to hold a blue card; and remove grounds for suspension and cancellation of kinship carer certificates which relate to Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill authorities. It is also important to note that the amendments to remove blue card requirements for kinship carers will have no financial impacts.

A number of changes are being made to the decision-making framework under the working with children act that may result in a rebalancing of the rights and liberties of individuals. These amendments include: establishing a new statutory threshold for blue card assessments which will require the chief executive to be satisfied an applicant presents a risk to the safety of children which must be real and appreciable to refuse an application; introducing a complementary 'reasonable person' test which will require the chief executive, in determining whether an applicant poses a risk to the safety of children, to consider whether a reasonable person would allow their child to have direct contact with the applicant without supervision while engaged in child related work; establishing new, clear and consistent risk assessment criteria for undertaking blue card assessments where the person returns information of concern; and removing the eligibility declaration process and term of imprisonment qualifier for what constitutes a disqualifying offence. Persons who commit a disqualifying offence as juveniles and adults who commit unlawful offences where a prison order is not imposed will retain a pathway to apply for a blue card. I commend the bills to the House.

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (2.53 pm): For my community, this bill is deeply personal. I am prevented from going into the details because the paedophile in question is currently before the courts. For my community, this state government's inaction over the last decade to fix the blue card system and neglect to implement the national child safe standards when it mattered—when it was recommended seven years ago—has meant that families in my community have paid the most horrific price.

A pile of recommendations to fix the child safety system and the blue card system has been sitting on Labor ministers' desks since 2017—recommendations that could have kept the children in my community safe. This state government failed to implement them. It has taken seven long years for this government to bring this bill before the House, and families in my community have paid the ultimate price for this state government's inaction—for its failure to implement the national child safe standards and for its failure to implement the 81 blue card recommendations from the Queensland Family and Child Commission, the QFCC.

In 2017, the Miles and Palaszczuk government received a damning report from the QFCC which made 81 recommendations to fix Queensland's blue card system. In August last year only 28 recommendations had been implemented and today 29 recommendations are yet to be fully implemented, with this bill actioning 12 of them. This government has had seven years to implement these recommendations.

Further, the Miles and Palaszczuk government received recommendations from the royal commission to legislate national child safety measures, which included establishing a reportable conduct scheme. That recommendation was given to the Miles and Palaszczuk Labor government seven years ago. Today, the government has come into this House and finally tabled a reportable conduct scheme which, if it were actioned seven years ago, as was recommended, could have kept our kids safe from predators. What is worse is that, despite waiting seven years for this government to take action on that recommendation, this scheme cannot be fully operational until July 2027.

**Ms Leahy:** Too late for some kids.

**Mrs GERBER:** I take the interjection from the member for Warrego. It is too late for some kids. It is too late for the kids in my community. Because of this state government's delay in the first place, we will have waited 10 years for a reportable conduct scheme—10 years for a scheme that could have kept kids safe. This government's failure to take action when it mattered, seven years ago, has left children vulnerable, and they have paid the most horrific price.

Desperate to look like they are getting the job done in the dying days of a government that has utterly failed to keep Queensland children safe, they have introduced this bill. In the meantime, this state Labor government have failed these kids. It was only once the media started to report on the disturbing child sexual abuse that this government decided they probably should at least look like they are doing something. For families in my community, it has come too late. The damage has been done.

Over the past few years, constituents have reached out to me, to police, to ministers and to the Attorney-General pleading for reform, pleading for action off the back of the recommendations that have been sitting with this government for seven long years. Currumbin parents want to know that their children will be safe when they drop them off at a childcare centre. The childcare centres and educators want to know that the system will do its job and catch predators.

This Labor government sat on their hands. They had the recommendations that could have protected our children. They had those recommendations for seven long years but it is only after the horrific case that is currently before the courts and reported on in the media that this government have decided to bring this bill before the House.

Good government is not about responding to a media cycle; it is about doing what matters when it matters. We hear this government talking about doing what matters, but they have had seven years to do what matters. They need to act when it matters. They need to act when the recommendations are made. That is why an LNP government will launch a full, independent inquiry into the horrific system failures that allowed the horrific paedophile case that is currently before the court. If elected in October, an LNP Crisafulli-led government will direct the Queensland Family and Child Commissioner to investigate the child protection system that should have kept Queensland children safe. Queenslanders deserve a government that will put them first and take real action when it matters to fix the child safety system. We will also keep our children safe by introducing Daniel's Law—a public child sex offender register to put the rights of children before the rights of paedophiles. The state Labor government had the opportunity to enact this meaningful legislation—they could have done it in this bill—but they failed to do it, yet again.

The LNP will create a publicly available website with the photographs and personal details of child sex offenders who have failed to comply with their reporting obligations or have provided false or misleading information to police. Queenslanders will be able to apply for a photograph of an offender so they know what they look like and they can be vigilant of the risks of high-risk offenders living in their communities. Parents and guardians will be able to inquire about a specific person who has regular unsupervised contact with their child so they can know if their child is potentially being exposed to a dangerous offender. Also importantly, new offences will be created to prevent the misuse of any information from the register to ensure any actions are handled by police, for the safety of everyone. An LNP government will protect the children and put the rights of children, victims and parents ahead of those of dangerous predators.

We have also announced our \$383 million Safer Children, Safer Communities plan to reform the broken residential care system and protect our state's most vulnerable children. Under Labor, in 2020-21 some 58 per cent of young people who were subject to youth justice supervision had contact with the child protection system in the five years leading up to their offence. These numbers make it clear that the current system under Labor is funnelling kids into a life of crime.

We will turn that around. Under the LNP, we will not allow residential care to serve as a halfway house for kids cycling through crime. Importantly, our plan will also boost child safety officer numbers by 20 per cent. Currently, the average case load for a child safety officer is over the recommended 15 case limit and in some areas we are receiving reports of case loads as high as 60. This is completely unacceptable and it explains why one-third of child safety officers leave within two years. They are being burnt out and as a result vulnerable kids are falling through the cracks and in some cases they are losing their lives. To end the skyrocketing case loads and ensure safety tip-offs about kids at risk are investigated on time, we are doing everything in our power to keep them safe.


Only an LNP government will do this. Labor have proven time and time again that they do not have a plan to reform child safety. They do not have a plan to fix the broken blue card system. It has been seven long years since the recommendations that could have kept our community safe were made and they have dragged their feet on them. They failed to implement all the recommendations. They failed to implement the national child safety recommendations made seven long years ago and our communities are paying the price for that.

The only way to fix the broken child safety system, the only way to fix the broken youth justice system, the only way to protect our Queensland kids is to elect a Crisafulli government on 26 October 2024. Show Labor the door in 2024.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Gerber, adjourned.

## SPEAKER'S RULING

### Amendment to Notice of Motion

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the member for Nanango's notice of motion for this evening's private member's motion debate has been challenged on the grounds of authentication. In accordance with standing order 70(2), I have amended the notice of motion to ensure it does not offend the rules related to the factual content of motions. In short, the motion will be debated but in a modified form. The amended notice of motion is now being circulated for the benefit of the House.


## CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS BILL

### WORKING WITH CHILDREN (RISK MANAGEMENT AND SCREENING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL


#### Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed, on motion of Ms Mullen—

That the bills be now read a second time.

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice) (3.04 pm): It is always interesting to speak after the member for Currumbin—the very shouty member for Currumbin. It does not matter what side of politics we are on; everyone in this House has the safety and wellbeing of our children at the heart of everything we do. I do not want to criticise the opposition for being concerned about our children, but it is no wonder they have not been given any details about their policies.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): Member for Bulimba, could you please resume your seat. Under the provisions of the business program agreed to by the House, the time limit for this stage of the bills has expired. I call the Minister for Child Safety to reply to the second reading debate.

 **Hon. C MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (3.05 pm), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I will respond to each bill in turn.

The Child Safe Organisations Bill takes an important step forward to support child safe organisations in Queensland. It responds to the thousands of people with lived experience who came forward to bravely share their experiences to prevent what happened to them happening to another child today. The members for Whitsunday and Clayfield have questioned why it has taken so long to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

We have taken special care when introducing this legislation that is likely to impact up to 40,000 Queensland organisations and up to one million children. We needed to make sure we had the regulatory balance right between keeping Queensland children safe and limiting compliance costs for organisations from small sporting clubs through to schools. This has taken time, but we are confident we have the balance right.

The model we have chosen is an integrated child safe organisation system. It consists of mandatory child safe standards and a reportable conduct scheme, which will be implemented by the Queensland Family and Child Commission. This has involved an enormous amount of work and consultation, including a detailed regulatory impact analysis to ensure the final model will achieve the right outcomes. I would also like to thank the QFCC for its work and acknowledge its important role in this process and ongoing.

The final model will protect children while also minimising any unnecessary regulatory burden on the thousands of organisations doing tremendous work to help children learn, grow and thrive. Our extensive work has included modelling, targeted and broad consultation and detailed policy analysis. It has included consultation on the *Growing child safe organisations in Queensland: consultation regulatory impact statement*, which included the integrated child safe organisations system provided for in the bill. It included releasing the *Growing child safe organisations in Queensland: decision impact analysis statement* detailing the results of consultation and Queensland's recommended final model for child safe organisations.

I will outline in detail the extensive consultation we have undertaken to get the right model for Queensland. Consultation of this magnitude takes time. It included working with children, peak bodies, Queensland government agencies, statutory agencies and the commission; hosting information sessions attended by more than 170 people to outline potential models for Queensland and to assist stakeholder feedback; consulting with Queensland government agencies and oversight bodies in other jurisdictions, including the New South Wales Office of the Children's Guardian and Victoria's Commission for Children and Young People; consulting the former Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce which was established by the Queensland government to provide advice on implementation of royal commission related reforms; receiving and analysing 63 written submissions on the *Growing child safe organisations in Queensland: consultation regulatory impact statement* and two online meetings with organisations and regulatory bodies across a range of sectors; targeting consultation with young people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations; and facilitating a cross-sectoral consultation forum in Cairns with over 20 key stakeholders in attendance. This work has culminated in a legislative framework for Queensland that will protect children from harm and promote their safety, wellbeing and best interests while also balancing the regulatory burden on organisations.

The member for Burnett queried the support for small organisations to meet those obligations under the child safe standards and reportable conduct scheme. The overarching intent of the bill is that the starting point of compliance by the commission is always education and capacity building to support organisations. Responses to noncompliance will be proportionate to the risk and characteristics of the organisation be they small or large, regional or metropolitan based.

The commission will be available to assist small organisations and volunteer-based groups to understand and comply with their obligations in a way that makes sense for them. Support to organisations is a key focus of the child safe organisations system. In the 2024-25 state budget, the Queensland government committed more than \$43.5 million over four years and ongoing funding to the commission to operate as the oversight body. This funding will also support the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services' and Department of Youth Justice's ongoing roles as collaborative regulators for the child safe organisations system. This includes more than \$36 million over four years and almost \$9.5 million ongoing for the commission as the oversight body. This investment will support organisations to implement the child safe standards and universal principle and reportable conduct scheme by providing adequate resourcing to the commission's capacity-building role.

I will now turn to matters raised in relation to the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The members for Whitsunday and Clayfield questioned why it has taken so long to implement the QFCC recommendations. I note that many opposition members have referred to the delays in implementing the 2017 QFCC recommendations in relation to the blue card system. The government has taken a methodical and considered approach to their implementation. Over the past two terms we have implemented 12 individual pieces of legislation to amend and improve the blue card system. I refer members to that legislation which has been amended and improved the blue card system in some ways over the years of this government. We have been progressive and methodical in our reform, and the blue card system in 2024 is very different from the system we inherited in 2015 as a result.

In addition, I note that a number of members, including the member for Whitsunday and the member for Clayfield, have referred to different status updates provided over the years as to the progress of implementing the QFCC implementations. These are not helpful contributions to this debate. The Attorney-General provided detailed responses on the status of the QFCC blue card recommendations as part of this year's portfolio estimates hearing held on 26 July 2024. This is the most up-to-date and relevant information. I refer members to that transcript for a clear overview.



I note that the member for Clayfield referenced LawRight's submission and the delays some applicants experienced in the blue card external review jurisdiction administered by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. As part of the 2024-25 budget, the government has provided additional funding of \$70.1 million over five years and \$20.1 million a year ongoing to QCAT to enable a sustainable response to address increasing service demands. This reflects our commitment to this critical jurisdiction.

The member for Burnett also raised issues in relation to conditional working with children checks. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended that there be no conditional or different types of clearances. It stated that the outcome of a working with children check be that either a clearance is issued or it is not. The royal commission states that a working with children check should be connected only to the individual seeking the clearance and not to their employer or the role or organisation in which they are seeking to work.

The new decision-making framework included in the bill establishes a more refined and focused threshold of 'risk to the safety of children'. Shifting to a risk-based statutory threshold will require a decision to issue a negative notice to demonstrate the nexus between a person's conduct, or alleged conduct, and the risk of harm to children. A reference to a risk to the safety of children is a reference to a real and appreciable risk to the safety of children.

The new decision-making framework has been developed to support consideration of a range of criteria including the nature and gravity of an offence committed by a person, the time since the offending and the conduct of the person since the offence. A decision-maker will consider all of these matters to determine whether a person presents a risk to the safety of children.

For First Nations people, the bill provides for consideration to also be given to other factors such as the effect of systemic disadvantage and intergenerational trauma and the historical context and limitations on access to justice.

The bill also provides for the establishment of advisory committees which can be drawn on by Blue Card Services to assist in the decision-making process. This provides the flexibility for Blue Card Services to pilot a committee in a particular location or for a particular cohort of applicants and take any learnings and implement them in the establishment of future committees.

The members for Whitsunday and Clayfield both noted the importance of having rigorous systems in place to ensure children's safety. I thank the opposition for their support of this element of the bill. It is critical that we get this new framework right.

Following passage of this bill, Child Safety will consult closely with stakeholders to develop a new framework for screening kinship carers which includes appropriate safeguards. Child Safety will also ensure the framework has access to necessary information to inform a nuanced assessment of kinship carers in the absence of the blue card requirement. This will ensure the new framework does not make children less safe.

The member for Whitsunday also raised the support provided to carers. The Queensland government is committed to supporting our carers. In 2024-25 the Queensland government will provide \$413.5 million to support carer families. This includes \$233.2 million per annum invested in allowances paid directly to foster and kinship carers as well as \$190.8 million over four years to ensure the care needs of children with high and complex needs will be met now and into the future.

This investment includes \$180.3 million for foster and kinship care services providing recruitment, training and direct support to foster and kinship carers. The reforms in this bill also form part of what we are doing to support children to be cared for by their kin and improve the experience of our kinship carers.

In conclusion, I want to extend further thanks to the Community Support and Services Committee and the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee for their examinations of the bills. I also wish to thank all of the dedicated, hardworking public servants who made both of these important bills possible. My thanks go again to all honourable members who contributed to the debate. Most importantly, I thank the many stakeholders who have contributed to the committee processes and those who participated in the development of the bills. These bills make important changes to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people across Queensland. I commend the bills to the House.

Question put—That the Child Safe Organisations Bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Question put—That the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

#### Child Safe Organisations Bill

Clauses 1 to 131, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 5, as read, agreed to.

#### Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—



**Mrs D'ATH** (3.17 pm): I move the following amendment—

**1 Clause 4 (Amendment of s 135 (Restrictions on granting application))**

Page 15, lines 3 to 7—

*omit, insert—*

Section 135(1)(b)(iv)—

*omit.*

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

*Tabled paper:* Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, explanatory notes to Hon. Yvette D'Ath's amendments [\[1810\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Yvette D'Ath's amendments [\[1811\]](#).

I will briefly speak to all of the amendments. The amendments to the bill are in response to recommendation 2 of the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee to remove the requirements for adult members of kinship carer households to hold a blue card.

As the committee rightly noted, caring for family and supporting family connection is not employment. The Queensland government is committed to removing barriers that prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being placed in appropriate kinship care arrangements, although these arrangements of course will apply to all kinship arrangements. The amendments I am moving today will make further changes to the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and the Child Protection Act 1999 to remove the requirement for adult members of kinship carer households to obtain a blue card. I note that the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services is continuing its work to establish a more nuanced framework for the screening of kinship carers and their adult household members in Queensland.

To support the department to properly engage with stakeholders about the development of the new culturally appropriate screening framework—like the amendments to remove kinship care from the scope of the blue card system, which were included in the bill as introduced—these further amendments will also commence by proclamation and not be subject to the requirements of section 15DA of the Acts Interpretation Act 1954.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



**Mrs D'ATH** (3.19 pm): I seek leave to move an amendment outside the long title of the bill.

Leave granted.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I move the following amendment—

**2 After clause 4**

Page 15, before line 8—

*insert—*

**4A Amendment of s 136 (Refusal of application)**

Section 136(2)(c), 'or (b)(iv)'—

*omit.*

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5—



**Mrs D'ATH (3.19 pm):** I move the following amendment—

**3 Clause 5 (Amendment of s 139 (Authority may be suspended or cancelled))**

Page 15, lines 12 to 18—

*omit, insert—*

- (b) if the authority is a certificate of approval, other than a kinship carer certificate—the holder of the certificate or an adult member of the holder's household.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 6—



**Mrs D'ATH (3.20 pm):** I move the following amendment—

**4 Clause 6 (Amendment of s 140AB (Definitions for sdiv 3))**

Page 16, lines 2 and 3, 'or approved kinship carer's'—

*omit.*

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7—



**Mrs D'ATH (3.20 pm):** I move the following amendments—

**5 Clause 7 (Amendment of s 140AC (Immediate suspension))**

Page 16, lines 5 to 11—

*omit, insert—*

- (1) Section 140AC(1)(a)—

*omit, insert—*

- (a) an approved foster carer, or a member of an approved foster carer's household;  
or

**6 Clause 7 (Amendment of s 140AC (Immediate suspension))**

Page 16, line 12, '(3)'—

*omit, insert—*

(2)

**7 Clause 7 (Amendment of s 140AC (Immediate suspension))**

Page 16, lines 14 and 15, 'or approved kinship carer's'—

*omit.*

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—



**Mrs D'ATH (3.21 pm):** I move the following amendment—

**8 Clause 9 (Amendment of s 140AG (Cancellation of certificate of approval))**

Page 17, lines 4 and 5, 'or approved kinship carer's'—

*omit.*

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



**Mrs D'ATH** (3.21 pm): I seek leave to move an amendment outside the long title of the bill.

Leave granted.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I move the following amendment—

**9 After clause 10**

Page 18, after line 8—

*insert—*

**10A Amendment of sch 2 (Reviewable decisions and aggrieved persons)**

Schedule 2, item 10, column 1, 'or (b)(iv)'—

*omit.*

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 130, as read, agreed to.

Clause 131—



**Mrs D'ATH** (3.22 pm): I move the following amendments—

**10 Clause 131 (Amendment of sch 1, s 14 (Care of children under Child Protection Act 1999))**

Page 124, line 27—

*omit, insert—*

(1) Schedule 1, section 14(1) and (2), after 'other than'—

**11 Clause 131 (Amendment of sch 1, s 14 (Care of children under Child Protection Act 1999))**

Page 124, after line 29—

*insert—*

(2) Schedule 1, section 14—

*insert—*

(4) In this section—

**approved kinship carer** see the *Child Protection Act 1999*, schedule 3.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 131, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 132 to 140, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading (Cognate Debate)



**Hon. C MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (3.23 pm): I move—

That the Child Safe Organisations Bill be now read a third time.

Question put—That the Child Safe Organisations Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.



**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (3.24 pm): I move—


That the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

Question put—That the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.


### Long Title (Cognate Debate)

 **Hon. C MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (3.24 pm): I move—

That the long title of the Child Safe Organisations Bill be agreed to.

Question put—That the long title of the Child Safe Organisations Bill be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (3.24 pm): I move—

That the long title of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill be agreed to.


Question put—That the long title of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS (VAPING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 12 June (see p. 2075).

### Second Reading

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (3.25 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

On 12 June 2024, I introduced the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The bill was referred to the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee for its consideration. The committee's report was tabled on 2 August 2024. The report makes one recommendation—that the bill be passed—and I appreciate the committee's support for the bill. I would also like to thank the organisations and individuals who made submissions to the committee and participated in the public hearing. I am grateful for the broad support the bill received throughout the committee process. As one stakeholder told the committee—

... the amendments in the bill represent a significant and necessary advancement in Queensland's public health policy

From 1 July 2024, Commonwealth laws have banned the domestic manufacture, supply and commercial possession of recreational vaping goods. Queensland is the first state to implement and enhance the Commonwealth's vaping laws. With the introduction of stringent state-level offence provisions, comprehensive enforcement powers and a robust tiered enforcement framework, Queensland is taking decisive action. Our response not only aligns with the national ban but strengthens it, setting a new benchmark for combating illegal vaping in this country.

Safeguarding the health and safety of Queenslanders has always been a key priority of this government. However, vaping represents a serious and growing public health epidemic. The Cancer Council and the University of New South Wales recently published an incredibly alarming study showing that 12- to 19-year-olds who vape are five times more likely to end up smokers. The younger a person starts using vapes, the higher the risk is that they will try smoking.

Data released today by Dr John Gerrard, our Chief Health Officer, has revealed that over 35 per cent of Queensland school students aged 12 to 17 have tried vaping. This is more than twice the rate recorded in 2017. This is deeply concerning, particularly when the Queensland Department of Education have recorded that between the start of 2023 and the end of the first semester this year over 600 vaping related suspensions or expulsions occurred in our primary schools and nearly 6,000 in high schools. This alarming rise in vaping amongst children has been driven by specific and targeted advertising. These campaigns are not just selling a product; they are hooking the next generation of Queenslanders on nicotine.

The health risks associated with vaping are serious. These devices are filled with toxic chemicals, and nicotine exposure can affect the brain development of children and young people. The Lung Foundation, which strongly support this legislation, told the committee—

... strong and decisive action is needed as a matter of urgency to address the high levels of e-cigarette use among children, young adults and non-smokers.

The Miles government is doing just that. The bill introduces serious offences and penalties for operators who profit from the unlawful supply of vapes at the expense of the health of our young people and communities. Under the new enforcement framework, it will be an offence to supply vaping goods as part of a business activity. The penalty for this offence is up to two years imprisonment and 2,000 penalty units, which is roughly \$320,000 for an individual or \$1.6 million for a corporation. This reflects the seriousness with which this government views this issue.

Additionally, it will be an offence to store or possess vaping goods as part of a business activity. The maximum penalty is 12 months imprisonment and 1,000 penalty units. These new offences target persons involved in the commercial supply and possession of vaping goods. They do not criminalise the personal possession of vapes; nor do they apply to the lawful supply of vaping products for therapeutic purposes such as smoking cessation.

Specific exceptions exist for certain health professionals, such as pharmacists, who are permitted under Commonwealth legislation to possess or supply therapeutic vapes. This means that adults who have a legitimate therapeutic need for vaping goods can access them from their healthcare provider. The bill also includes a defence for possessing vaping goods for personal use. During consideration in detail I will be moving amendments related to this defence to ensure alignment with Commonwealth legislation.

To ensure the ban on vapes is not circumvented by the introduction of new or novel nicotine products in the future, the amendments related to the supply and possession of vapes also capture other harmful products and substances that may be prescribed by regulation.

The sale of illicit tobacco also poses a significant and escalating threat to the health and safety of Queenslanders. Colloquially referred to as chop-chop, illicit tobacco is often sold alongside vapes. We know that these operations are often tied to organised crime and they are generating huge profits that not only fuel this trade but also fund a web of other illegal and harmful activities in our communities. The bill significantly increases the penalties for supplying or possessing illicit tobacco as part of a business activity. These penalties align with those applying to the supply and possession of vapes. By enacting these harsher penalties, we will create a strong deterrent against those engaged in the illicit tobacco trade.


The bill also introduces a robust, nation-leading enforcement framework which will allow us to target repeat offenders. In addition to facing serious criminal charges and fines, businesses that continue to unlawfully sell vapes will face the prospect of being ordered to immediately close their premises and cease trading altogether. If there is reasonable suspicion of illicit trade, the chief executive will have the power to order the closure of a premises for up to 72 hours. Additionally, magistrates will have the authority to impose closure orders for up to six months, sending a strong message that we will not tolerate this kind of behaviour. I will be moving amendments during consideration in detail to ensure that the longer term closure powers can operate effectively without unfairly impacting landlords who have not been complicit in the wrongdoing of their tenants. This responds to concerns raised by stakeholders during the committee process, and I thank those stakeholders for their engagement and valuable input.

To further alleviate these concerns, the government will review the closure powers six months after the bill commences to ensure they are achieving the intended purpose of safeguarding our communities. However, let me be absolutely clear: we will not shield landlords who turn a blind eye to their tenant's illegal conduct or actively participate in it. Such landlords should understand they risk facing serious consequences, including liability for their tenant's actions. The bill also enables the chief executive to seek an injunction from the District Court against those found to be supplying illicit tobacco or vaping goods. The terms of the injunction will be determined by the court but are ultimately aimed at stopping individuals from continuing illicit trade.

The use of vaping goods is heavily influenced by their advertising, promotion and display. We know that these products are being marketed across a range of media channels, including social media, which often use vibrant imagery and enticing flavours, like fairy floss and bubblegum, to create a false perception that it is harmless and trendy. This bill introduces strict offences prohibiting the advertising, promotion and display of vapes as part of a business activity. This will complement similar offences at the Commonwealth level and ensure our young people can no longer be deliberately targeted by unscrupulous manufacturers and suppliers of these harmful products.

Vapes are harmful not only to our health but also to our environment. The pods are made of plastic which takes hundreds of years to decompose and contain toxic chemicals and heavy metals that can leach into the environment. The bill amends the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 to provide that littering of vapes is a dangerous littering offence, attracting a penalty of 40 penalty units.

Vaping has become a serious public health issue in our schools and community, and its impacts are far-reaching. We have an opportunity to take real action. Our young people are our future. By taking a tough stance now, we will keep these harmful products out of the hands of young people and safeguard the health and future wellbeing of the next generation of Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.34 pm): I rise to speak to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I will start by saying that one does not need to look very far or hard to find a Queenslanders who is concerned about the sudden and concerning rise in vaping—or e-cigarette use—across our state, whether it is a parent of young teenagers, teachers in our schools or health professionals who are already dealing with the consequences of a generation of young Queenslanders who have taken to vaping. Like many in the greater Queensland public, the LNP is also worried about what toll vaping is taking on our society. In truth, that toll is something we might not know the full extent of for some years to come, which is really concerning. With that said, at the outset of this contribution I want to convey that the LNP will not oppose this bill.

Is the bill perfect? No, it is not. My colleagues and I will outline our concerns and the concerns of stakeholders throughout the course of debate. That is something that a constructive and reasonable opposition should and is entitled to do, and those concerns and issues will be placed on the record. With that said, we certainly will not stand in the way of this legislation because any progress in trying to turn the tide on vaping across Queensland is a good thing.

Let's be blunt: the tide does need to turn, particularly when you hear figures like those from the Chief Health Officer's report that nearly one in six Queensland children aged 12 to 17 has used e-cigarettes. For those aged 16 to 17, that number jumps to one in four. Those are frightening numbers in anyone's book. That paints a clear picture of the magnitude of the problem we are dealing with here. To be clear, those figures are from 2022. I would hazard a guess that the numbers are even greater today. I am sure the CHO has updated the media today on that.

As time goes on we are learning more about what is in e-cigarettes and vapes, and it does not paint a pretty picture. The anecdotal evidence about the level of nicotine in some of these vapes is particularly alarming. They are so potent; it is little wonder so many Queenslanders—so many young Queenslanders—are succumbing to an addiction to these products.

We all know the damage cigarette smoking can cause. The scale is immense. It runs into billions and billions of dollars every year to treat and manage the illness associated with the habit. We have made such significant progress in Queensland, and Australia more broadly, in reducing cigarette smoking and the associated harms over the past few decades, but what we are seeing now with the surge in vaping use threatens to undo much of that work, and that could come at great personal and societal cost. I think that context is important to remember as we debate these laws.

The objectives of the bill itself are to ensure Queensland can enforce the recent Commonwealth legislation, which passed subsequent to this bill being introduced, and give effect to the state government's response to recommendations made by the former Health and Environment Committee in its report *Vaping: an inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland*.

The bill will introduce a new definition of 'illicit nicotine product'. This definition will align with the recently passed Commonwealth legislation and will now include vaping goods, devices, substances and accessories.

The bill also introduces new offences relating to the supply and possession of illicit nicotine products and increases the current penalties for persons who supply and possess illicit tobacco as part of a business activity. Also included are changes that will allow for the interim closure of a premise from which illicit tobacco or illicit nicotine products are being supplied as part of a business activity or from which a business is being carried on without a licence. The Magistrates Court will also be enabled to order closure of a business like this for a longer period of up to six months. Those are some quite significant steps, and I do not imagine they will be handed out lightly.

It has been pointed out before in this place that it is often organised crime peddling illicit tobacco or illicit nicotine products like vapes across Queensland, so I have no issue with laws that come down hard on businesses or individuals with links to, or who are involved in, organised crime.

As the minister pointed out in her introductory speech, the bill contains limited exceptions for certain suppliers. Those include clinicians like medical practitioners, pharmacists and nurse practitioners. The bill as it was presented contained provisions to allow for the possession and supply of therapeutic vaping goods by these clinicians.

Given the bill is being introduced off the back of Commonwealth legislation, it is worth noting the eleventh-hour changes that the Labor Albanese government struck to pass this legislation with Labor's good friends, the Greens. The last-minute deal the Albanese government struck with the Greens was to allow vapes to be sold over the counter at pharmacies without the need for a prescription for people aged 18 years and over. Those amendments to the Commonwealth laws removed the requirement for adults to obtain a prescription for vaping products, as was originally set out in the bill. That decision was heavily criticised at the time by the Pharmacy Guild, with concerns also raised by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia which represents practising pharmacists.

It is important to remember the kerfuffle in Canberra that happened after this bill had been introduced in the Queensland parliament. Given that fact, it is unsurprising that today we see amendments circulated which deal with the issues around that—amendments which are untested through a parliamentary committee process. We will assess them as best we can in the very limited time provided. I appreciate the need to be adaptive in this policy area as these are new and emerging trends, but it must be said that, without being subject to the rigour of the usual process, the likelihood of unintended consequences increases.

When the minister introduced this bill in early June, she made a point of talking about the number of enforcement notices being issued, and seizing vapes with nicotine and other illegal tobacco products. To that I say, 'Wonderful, well done to those involved in undertaking that work,' but the part that worries me is the government's record on enforcement. I expect that there will be some passionate contributions from this side of the chamber—as there was last time we debated the tobacco laws in 2023—with members frustrated about the illegal tobacco trade happening in their own electorates. I have written to health ministers over the years asking Queensland Health to clamp down on the illegal trading that is happening in the electorate of Mudgeeraba that I represent. But the shop kept trading in plain view and now there are two—one in the same shopping complex as my office. The local legal tobacconist estimates that they have lost \$30,000 a week in lost revenue due to the illegal chop-chop shop selling vapes in my local area. Even Coles next door to my office complained that on a Friday night they would run out of cash for cash advances as the chop-chop shop would only take cash and not cards. To circumvent that issue, the chop-chop shop have now installed their own ATM. It is not new, it is blatant and it is bad for Queensland.

I would love to believe that these laws will be passed and that in the months ahead we will see the sale of illegal vapes dry up. In my heart of hearts, I truly hope that is the case and I hope that these laws work, but if the government's record is anything to go by that simply will not happen. Put vaping to one side for a moment. We have existing laws in Queensland that prevent the illegal sale of tobacco, which this bill also deals with, but even with the existing laws the government has not been able to enforce them. It is as simple as that. Those opposite have not been able to enforce their own laws on illegal tobacco. With these laws we are debating today, the sale of vapes or e-cigarettes will be clamped down on—fantastic. If the decision has been taken by the government to strengthen the laws, that is great—we will not stand in the way of that—but I say to the Labor government: it is one thing to have the laws in place; it is another to enforce them.

I will make the same points I made when we last debated tobacco laws in this place. Good intentions do not deliver a good outcome. Good intentions will not stop the illegal trade of vapes laden with nicotine to teenagers. Good intentions will not stop unscrupulous operators selling illegal tobacco, or chop-chop as it commonly called, but good governance and good enforcement can.

Recently, when asked about the current enforcement issues across Queensland, staff in the Townsville Hospital and Health Service unit that deal with tobacco enforcement made this quite startling observation—

My very small team obviously have multiple acts—public health, food, water, radiation and pesticides—to deal with. They are completely overwhelmed.

Let me repeat—'they are completely overwhelmed'. That is straight from the horse's mouth—straight from the frontline, and straight from the people who deal with the problem at the coalface. Those frontline staff went on to make this very prudent observation when talking about the previous changes to illegal tobacco laws, saying—

... this amendment bill is too little, too late, too weak, way too complicated and too slow, and the cost of trying to implement it is way beyond what we have resources for. I am not expecting an improvement ...



To those members on the benches opposite: you were warned. It is in black and white and it is written in the record as part of the former committee's proceedings and again when the opposition raised those same concerns in the House. Clearly, despite that bell ringer of a warning, the government did not listen. It was not an external stakeholder or a third party; it was more than that. They did not even listen to their own staff. Those warnings were coming from within, yet here we are.

I want to respond to something the minister said in her introductory speech. She made this observation—

Despite recent amendments and enforcement efforts, profit margins for retailers of illicit tobacco remain high, and the number of stores selling these products continues to grow. Our current penalties are not deterring this illegal trade.

Buttress that quote from the minister against the one I mentioned earlier from the staff member from Townsville Hospital in 2023 that said the government's recent amendments were 'too little, too late, too weak, way too complicated and too slow'. How can the minister or the government be shocked and surprised the laws have not worked when they were warned from within that they would not? That situation so beautifully encapsulates everything that is wrong with this third-term, tired, broken Labor government. They are a government that no longer listens. One does not need a more clear-cut example than what we have seen transpire with this bill and its previous iteration.

I point out that as part of the committee's inquiry this time around I could not find a hospital and health service submission or witness before the committee. I am happy to be corrected, but I could not find one. I wonder whether those staff might have been told not to provide evidence as part of the committee process on this occasion so as not to embarrass the government, because I do find it very odd that, while as part of the last committee process around tobacco laws they were only too happy to provide their passionate position, this time around there was nothing. I sincerely hope that was not the case, but with this government's track record one could reasonably draw that unfortunate conclusion.

I would genuinely have liked to have heard the fearless and frank feedback from those staff who contributed to the last changes to tobacco laws from the different HHSs from across the state to understand how effective the laws we are debating today are likely to be. As I said, we know that transparency, accountability and, most of all, scrutiny are things this government has walked away from.

As I foreshadowed earlier, we certainly will not be standing in the way of this bill. We will not oppose the changes that increase the current penalties for people who supply and possess illicit tobacco as part of a business activity and we will not oppose laws that create a power to order the interim closure of premises from which illicit tobacco or illicit nicotine products are being supplied as part of a business activity. I wish you would start with the first two in Mudgeeraba!

Creating new offences around displaying, advertising and promoting illicit nicotine products is also a positive step in trying to stop normalising these products to young people and children. I see that a new offence is to be created relating to adults who supply illicit nicotine products to children outside of a business activity. We have seen disturbing images and videos posted to social media in recent years of adults forcing vapes on children, or even babies. Those actions are totally grotesque. I hope these laws act as a deterrent to that disgusting behaviour and I hope that if there is evidence of that behaviour happening, then authorities throw the book at perpetrators.

I want to take a moment to highlight some concerns that stakeholders raised in relation to this bill. While it is fair to say that most stakeholders agreed with the intentions of the bill, many were concerned about the potential for unintended consequences. The AMAQ said that this proposal could 'inadvertently legitimatise vaping and other smoking products as proven cessation therapies when no such reliable evidence exists'. The AMAQ were also very critical of legislation which could allow children to be prescribed a vaping product. I think that is a legitimate concern, too. It stated—


Evidence is currently unclear as to whether it is ever clinically appropriate for therapeutic vaping devices to be prescribed to children. Further time is required to consider whether medical practitioners should be categorically prohibited from prescribing any therapeutic vaping products to children, or whether this matter is more appropriately dealt with in professional guidelines.

Like I said, those seem to be very legitimate concerns and I would appreciate it if the minister would take some time to address this matter in his summing-up.

I also acknowledge concerns from the Pharmacy Guild, who say they are worried about the absence of clinical guidance and protocols that pharmacists may use to establish a clinical need for a therapeutic vaping substance where it is an unapproved substance with no evidence of therapeutic benefit. Similarly, I understand the guild are concerned about the implications on both professional indemnity insurance and business insurance. Like other stakeholders, they highlighted there is minimal

evidence for the place of vaping in assisting with smoking cessation and nicotine dependence, and there is ever-increasing evidence of the health risks associated with vaping. Again, these concerns go to the practicality of the laws being proposed and whether they are workable for the people who are being tasked with monitoring the sale of these products.

To round out my contribution, I want to again emphasise that the opposition will not be opposing this bill because we recognise the very real public health threat that illegal tobacco and nicotine products pose to the Queensland community. We do not want to see a generation of young Queenslanders addicted and reliant on these products and we do not want to see these products in our schools. We do not want our state's children and young people subject to misleading and inappropriate advertising for products laden with nicotine. I do wish the government had come to the realisation sooner that the laws it introduced a year and a half ago were not going to work. If only they were warned! I hope this time things are different.

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (3.50 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to follow up on the comments of the member for Mudgeeraba regarding her observation about listening to public health workers. The member might remember that under the former Newman government health workers were gagged from speaking out on any policy, so I welcome the contribution from every single health worker on this bill.

Given this is probably the last bill I will talk on during this term, I want to acknowledge all members of the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee for their dedicated work and support throughout the term and for this bill. We did make one recommendation: that this bill be passed. I want to thank all those submitters who support the work we are doing in this state to stop the illegal sale and distribution of vapes from these pop-up shops that appear in our local communities, often near schools. I speak of submitters like Townsville local Pam Wright and other retailers. Pam is a tobacconist who came to me a few years ago to talk about the impact these stores were having on kids in our community. She had been to the local federal member, Phil Thompson, and she said he was not interested in acting on this at the national level under the Morrison-Morrison-Morrison government. It took an Albanese government to introduce strong work, as well as what we are doing in this state, to tackle the issue of vaping.

There is no doubt in my mind that strong criminal links exist in these illegal pop-up shops that are putting the lives of millions of our youth at risk by selling and supplying their nicotine-laden products. Those products will have a significant impact on our youth and our health system for generations to come, so we must act now. The situation of vaping is in stark contrast to those tobacconists, those retailers, who sell their products under regulation such as in plain packaging and not being able to display products. They also pay their taxes on the products they sell.

This bill represents a monumental step in our efforts to combat the rise of illicit tobacco and vaping products, enabling us to take coordinated action to address and reverse the public health threat posed by these illicit products. While vaping may initially have been cleverly marketed as a smoking cessation tool for adults, it quickly evolved into a dangerous habit, particularly for many of our youth. This is not just a passing fad; it is, indeed, a public health crisis that demands the government's urgent and immediate attention.

The science is clear: the developing brains of children and young people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of nicotine. Alarming, studies show that vape use among adolescents has quadrupled since 2017. Vaping can impair cognitive development and mental health and increase the risk of developing lifelong nicotine dependence, but the dangers do not stop there. Vaping has been linked to a host of physical health issues including respiratory problems, cardiovascular problems and, in some cases, severe lung injuries that require hospitalisation. What is perhaps most alarming is the potency of the nicotine in these products. Some vapes contain as much nicotine as several packets of cigarettes, leading to a rapid onset of addiction. We have heard of teenagers who are so nicotine dependent that they keep their vapes under their pillow at night because they wake up in the middle of the night to use them. Not only is this level of addiction dangerous but also it can be life altering, setting these young people on the path of a lifetime of health problems.

We know that aggressive advertising tactics have played a major role in the alarming rise of vaping amongst our youth. These strategies specifically target young people, misleading them into believing that vaping is a healthy alternative to smoking with its enticing packaging and confectionary-like flavours. We must support stronger regulations and enforcement measures to restrict the access and appeal of vaping products to young people. That is why this bill introduces new offences

for individuals or businesses that display, advertise or promote illicit nicotine products like vaping goods as part of their business activity. Each offence will carry a maximum penalty of 140 units. This offence will extend to a broad range of media platforms including social media.

The bill also addresses the alarming issue of adults supplying vapes to children outside of a commercial setting. Disturbingly, children as young as 12 and 13 are reaching out to smoking cessation helplines, and we know these children are not obtaining these vapes on their own. This change aims to protect our youth from the serious harms of vaping by limiting access, including by cracking down on adult family members or friends who supply these dangerous products to children they know. Who was alarmed when they saw some of that awful vision of vapes being given to infants, babies and young people? It was absolutely alarming footage that was shown on media outlets. We have to stop this rubbish happening in our communities. The offence will carry a maximum penalty of 140 units and is designed to reverse the rising uptake and use of recreational vapes by children.

The supply of illicit tobacco and vaping products has become a thriving business in Queensland. Our children and young people are battling nicotine dependence because these products are pervasive. That is why this bill will make the supply and commercial possession of illicit nicotine products like vapes a criminal offence, with significant penalties of up \$1.6 million for corporations and two years imprisonment and around \$320,000 for an individual. By taking strong enforcement action to cut the source of supply of illicit vapes and illicit tobacco, this bill will protect Queenslanders from the detrimental health risks associated with these products.


Until recently vapes were widely stocked by retailers that sell tobacco, including convenience stores, petrol stations and gift stores. Reports from the Queensland public health units indicate that often employees at these establishments are very aware of the illegal nature of their activities, but they continue to carry them out. This deliberate disregard for the law exacerbates the public health crisis associated with the supply of these harmful products. To protect our community, the bill makes it an offence for employees of retail or wholesale venues to supply illicit tobacco or illicit nicotine products such as vapes.

Vaping is not just a trend; it is a serious threat to the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders that requires a strong response, and that is what our Miles Labor government is doing. Through this legislation our government is protecting Queenslanders from the damaging harms of vaping and illicit tobacco by introducing stronger laws and enforcement frameworks. It is an opportunity to protect our children from the dangers of vaping and ensure they have an opportunity to grow up healthy and strong.

I did not think I would ever quote the *Courier-Mail*, but they absolutely nailed it last night when they published an article with former chief health officer Dr Jeannette Young, now the Governor of Queensland, titled 'Research shows vapers aged 12 are 29 times more likely to smoke'. It stated—

Australia is losing its world-leading status with a disturbing new trend among young people that has reversed years of good work.

The *Courier-Mail* nailed that. We need to do more. We are doing more through this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (3.59 pm): I rise today to address the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. At the outset, I want to thank the committee for its work during both the inquiry process that was conducted some 18 months to two years ago and more recently in its review of the bill. My LNP colleagues and I will not oppose this bill, but we must highlight the shortcomings of successive Labor governments for not enforcing their own laws when it comes to illicit tobacco and vaping products. Good intentions are one thing, but good governance and enforcement are what deliver good outcomes. The blatant disregard for the law that these chop-chop shops have demonstrated over the last four or five years is just breathtaking. In my electorate alone, I can count seven stores that are blatantly flouting current tobacco laws in Queensland and continue to flout them even in respect of the supply of illegal vapes, yet I am still waiting to see any strong action being taken with regard to these illegal retailers of illegal tobacco products and vaping products.

During the course of the inquiry we heard evidence from the Department of Health on the Gold Coast. Officers from the Department of Health presented us with a range of evidence around the number of investigations they had undertaken. They spoke about the number of vapes that had been seized and tested. During that inquiry process they spoke at length about the challenges of taking any action under the current laws. That, essentially, is why this legislation is so important in that the bill introduces several important measures, including creating new offences related to the supply and

possession of illicit nicotine products, increasing penalties for those engaged in the illicit tobacco trade and giving the chief executive the power to order the closure of premises selling illegal products. These are steps in the right direction, but they will mean little if the government does not enforce them.

It is important to note that the legislation does not just refer to vapes; it actually refers to 'illicit tobacco' products. There are many other products and forms of tobacco that can be consumed that are not necessarily all that popular yet in Australia, but the legislation has been specifically drafted to make sure that if other products enter the market in place of vapes or other illegal tobacco products then there is a scope of power within the existing legislation to deal with any other trends.


One of the most significant changes is the creation of a new offence related to adults who supply illicit nicotine products to children outside of a business activity. This is essential because vaping amongst children has become a serious issue and they are not aware often that they contain harmful substances and have health implications. The government must ensure it enforces this amendment in order to keep our children safe. In addition to these measures, the bill also addresses the issue of dangerous littering. The amendment to the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 introduces penalties for those who deposit vaping devices or accessories in public places, recognising the environmental impact of these products.

We must address the growing problem of illicit tobacco in Queensland. We owe it to our communities to ensure that these dangerous products are taken off the shelves and that those who distribute them are held accountable. The LNP will not oppose this bill, but we urge the government to take enforcement seriously and that when these laws are passed we ask that it ensure they are upheld. The health and safety of our communities depend on it.

During the course of the previous inquiry, we heard concerns raised about the illicit sale of e-cigarettes in Queensland. We heard evidence that suggested that millions of unchecked, unsafe and unregulated e-cigarettes are finding their way across our borders and into our homes and into our schools every month. We need to impress upon the federal government the need for tighter border control. There is no point banning vapes only to see them being imported and smuggled into the country in their thousands and tens of thousands with no control. The greater concern is that many of these illegal vapes contain nicotine levels that are far and above any recommended or reasonable strength and they pose serious health risks to our young people.

We also need through the Department of Education to ensure there are training programs and resources provided to our teachers, because many teachers are tearing their hair out at the frustration of having to deal with vaping at school, and this is a significant issue. While some schools are managing disciplinary issues and vaping restrictions quite effectively, many others are struggling. Management of detentions and suspensions impacts considerably on staff resources and teaching outcomes and teachers are fed up with having to manage disciplinary issues, vaping issues and all of the other issues that occur day to day at the expense of having meaningful face-to-face time to teach young people the things they are there to learn. We need to call on our educators in the Department of Education to look at how we can implement interactive educational courses and also how we can engage parents and the broader school community in addressing these challenges.


I have already touched on border control. The federal government already plays a significant role in compliance. While having seized significant quantities of illicit e-cigarette devices, I do not believe that Border Force nor the department have had adequate resources or the scope of powers to stem the flow. Just like the war on drugs and just like so many other social issues that we deal with in our society, this is another social issue that is not going to go away and, as a government, we need to empower our agencies to take strong, affirmative action, and that is why I support the bill before the House today.

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (4.06 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to debate on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to thank the committee chaired by my good friend the member for Thuringowa, the deputy chair and the other committee members. I will not go into the detail of the bill, as others have spelt that out quite well, but I see vaping and illegal tobacco as a moving target. This parliament and governments over the next couple of generations are going to be dealing with this issue over and over again as the illegal trade—and sometimes the legal trade—adapts its methods and movements to avoid or get around government intervention or loopholes.

A close family member of mine was a moderate smoker and decided to take up vaping to see if she could reduce the number of cigarettes she smokes, as some people say that it is a great way to stop smoking. She is certainly evidence that that is not the case. She reduced the number of cigarettes she smoked and started using vapes, but after about three or four weeks she started to experience

significant headaches, migraines and a range of other medical problems. She went to GPs, she went to physios and she went to chiropractors. She did what someone does thinking that it is something else, and in the end the culprit simply turned out to be all of the metals and all of the substances that were coming through in the vapes. It is unusual for a medical expert to say this, but a medical expert said to her, 'Perhaps you should stop using the vapes and go back onto the smokes,' and that is exactly what she did and all of her symptoms disappeared within days. She will never know what was in those vapes, but we have a strong suspicion that it would have been a number of nasty chemicals.


This is a completely unregulated industry. Kids and adults have absolutely no idea what is in these vapes. As I said before, this is a moving target for this parliament and other parliaments around the country and around the world. We need to ensure we continue to be nimble and adapt as we move forward. We need to take the politics out of this and address it as parliamentarians. I support the legislation that is before the House tonight. I thank the committee for their work.

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—KAP) (4.10 pm): I rise to speak on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill. The bill amends the Forestry Act 1959, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Recreation Areas Management Act 2006 and the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998. I thank the committee and the secretariat for all the work we have done. We certainly looked into how vaping is affecting people. Many young people are badly affected by vapes. My daughter's boyfriend is very affected by vapes. He coughs incessantly. He cannot walk up stairs properly. He has given up vaping and it is taking him a long time to come back from it. The way vapes are distributed is aimed at young children. Tobacco shops are popping up everywhere, some with SpongeBob on them. They appear to be kid friendly. They are now distributing little sacks of nicotine rather than the vape itself.

As fast as we can make legislation to change the vaping industry and the way it affects us, it morphs. Our policies and the way we set them, including the tax system, makes everything so expensive and drives the black market for vapes and illegal tobacco. We are losing out on billions of dollars of tax from the industry because tax is set so high. It is driving a black market. The state and federal government need to look at revising policies so that tobacco is affordable and tax revenue is gained. We are seeing it with alcohol and vapes and we will soon see it with the fishing industry, because we have closed that down as well.

The bill will enable the appointment of an authorised person under the act to monitor and enforce compliance with its provisions. Officers need to go in and shut down these sellers of illegal vapes and tobacco products. Pam from Townsville owns eight stores. She is a licensed seller and distributor of tobacco products. She rings me constantly saying, 'Stephen, the government do not seem to be shutting down these stores. They are not actively going in there and closing them down.' These stores are in Sarina and Mackay—even across from the hospital in Mackay. A tobacco store pops up in every little place that has not been rented for a long time. The government needs to get onto that and shut these places down. They need to go in there, take all their product and throw it in the bin so they cannot sell it. That is not happening. It is affecting businesses that are legitimate.

The bill further authorises the chief executive to share intelligence and data with other law enforcement jurisdictions, and police officers will be deemed authorised persons who may take compliance action under the act. The bill also significantly increases the maximum penalties for noncompliance. That is all good, but there is no point having all these penalties for noncompliance if we are not enforcing it and sending our officers in to shut the places down. The schools are having problems with it and parents are having problems with it. It is so easy to have a toke on a vape. You do not have to light up. You do not have to carry any paraphernalia. You can take it straight out of your pocket and put it into your mouth. It is an easy way to get a nicotine fix. The government needs to do more to shut down the illegal vape trade. It needs to work with licensed tobacco sellers to understand how it works so that we can infiltrate those other businesses.

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (4.15 pm): I rise to speak to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee tabled its report No. 10 of the 57th Parliament in this Assembly on 2 August. The bill responds to concerns about the public health effects of vaping and the supply of illicit tobacco in Queensland. The primary objectives of the bill are to ensure Queensland can enforce the Commonwealth ban on supply and possession of vaping goods, give effect to the government's response to recommendations made by the former Health and Environment Committee in its report *Vaping: an inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland* and remedy deficiencies in the

state's existing regulatory environment. To achieve these objectives the bill proposes a range of amendments to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998. It also proposes amendments to the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011.

The committee received 30 submissions to its inquiry and held a public briefing and public hearing in Brisbane. The evidence received indicates that many submitters are supportive of the bill's objectives and how it seeks to achieve them. Most strongly endorsed the regulatory approach that the Commonwealth and Queensland have taken to restrict access to illicit nicotine products. When introducing the bill on 12 June the minister said—

In 2024 the Commonwealth government took decisive action to address the issue of vaping by introducing a bill to ban the importation, manufacture, supply and commercial possession of all disposable single-use and recreational vapes. The Miles government is leading the charge as the first state to implement the Commonwealth ban through corresponding state legislation which will allow for effective and targeted enforcement. We are taking strong and coordinated action to protect the health of Queenslanders, and this bill demonstrates a significant step forward in delivering this government's commitment to address the rising availability of illicit tobacco and vaping products on the market.

The impacts of vaping, particularly for young people, are now well known. We recognise the importance of keeping Queenslanders safe and healthy, especially our children and young adults.

Vaping has emerged as a significant public health concern, particularly among children and young adults. Mounting evidence suggests that vaping poses serious health risks including respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular problems and addiction to nicotine. In 2023, results from the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey confirmed that there has been a rapid uptake of vaping among adolescents, with use in the 2022-23 survey quadrupling since data was last collected in 2017. Thirty per cent of people aged 12 to 17 have tried vaping. For the first time in 30 years, the survey shows that young people's susceptibility to smoking has increased. At the public briefing on 24 June Mr Mark West, Executive Director, Prevention Strategy Branch, Queensland Health, said—

It is beyond doubt that illicit nicotine products such as vapes are being promoted to children and young adults with the aim of creating a new generation of nicotine addicts.


Also at the public hearing Sheree Hughes, General Manager, Heart Foundation, said—

We commend the Queensland government for taking decisive steps to reduce the prevalence of smoking and vaping to protect community health. We are supportive of the new and comprehensive definition of illicit nicotine products, as has been talked about ...

At the public hearing Dr Nick Yim, President of the Australian Medical Association of Queensland, said—

... I am a GP and my practice is based in Hervey Bay. I too have witnessed the alarming rise in nicotine addiction due to the insidious marketing of vapes as non-harmful smoking alternatives. It has been particularly upsetting to see the uptake of these dangerous products amongst children and young people. That is one of the reasons why I started visiting schools in my local community to educate kids about the health risks by talking to students, teachers and parents. The situation has been getting worse, not better, and unfortunately quite quickly as well.

I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (4.19 pm): I rise to speak on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Over the past few years across Australia, vaping has surged with over one million people now estimated to use e-cigarettes regularly. While vaping may be considered a healthier alternative to smoking, vaping involves inhaling a large mix of chemicals including listed poisons, heavy metals such as nickel and chromium, and chemical by-products including formaldehyde and acetone. With side effects including poisoning, permanent lung damage and addiction, research released earlier this year by QIMR Berghofer researcher Professor Louisa Gordon warns that the increased prevalence of vaping could ultimately cost the Australian health system upwards of \$180 million each year.

The timing of this legislation has never been more pertinent. I draw the attention of the House to the front page of today's *Courier-Mail* and an article titled 'Research shows vapers aged 12 are 29 times more likely to smoke'. The article highlights new research showing that teens who vape are five times more inclined to end up as smokers. That is why amendments to this bill are so important for our youth in Queensland, including the creation of a new offence relating to adults who supply illicit nicotine products to children. As we have already heard, the opposition will not oppose this bill, which aims to ensure Queensland authorities can enforce the Commonwealth ban on the supply and possession of vaping goods. The Miles Labor government has consistently failed to enforce its own laws dealing with illicit tobacco. Despite having legislation in place to combat the illegal trade of tobacco, enforcement has been lacklustre, allowing the black market to flourish.

I refer to an article from news.com dated 13 August 2024, titled 'Thousands of vapes seized in major crackdown, with 4000 found in a single day in one state.' The article outlines a joint operation where 9,338 disposable vapes, 742,811 cigarettes, 76 kilograms of loose-leaf tobacco and 127 kilograms of shisha were found. The article states that more than 61,000 cigarette sticks were seized after four warrants were carried out on Gold Coast tobacconists with links to outlaw motorcycle gangs. Australian Border Force Commander Ken McKern is quoted as saying that organised crime groups are 'highly adaptive and resilient' and 'Criminal networks see the illicit tobacco market as a low risk, high return commodity'.


Those criminal groups are exploiting weaknesses in the government's enforcement capabilities to run smuggling operations, evade tax and increase their hold on vulnerable communities. The illicit tobacco market has become so lucrative that it has sparked violent turf wars between organised crime gangs. In Queensland alone, over the past 15 months 19 tobacconists have been targeted in ram raids, fire bombings and break-ins, leaving the community in fear of being caught in the crossfire of those gang related attacks. I note my speech of 24 May 2023 on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill 2023, when I said that the word on the street is that tobacconists and shops that are selling illegal tobacco and that have ATM machines are likely to be selling chop-chop. I mentioned that to bring it to the attention of authorities.

Noting that it has been 15 months since raising this matter in the House and being criticised by the minister at that time, I refer to an article from the Gold Coast Bulletin dated 29 July 2024, titled 'Black market cigarette shops rife on the Gold Coast selling Australian and imported brands'. The article highlights the easy access people have to black market cigarettes on the Gold Coast and how the illegal cigarette and vape market is burning \$12.5 billion from the federal budget, taking away from critical infrastructure projects such as roads, schools and hospitals.

Whilst the bill introduces amendments aimed at tackling illicit nicotine and tobacco products, it fails to address the root cause of the problem, which is the Labor government's lack of proper enforcement. The rise of chop-chop and organised crime is a direct consequence of that inaction and, without change, the government is simply providing criminals with more loopholes to exploit. It is time for this government to step up and deliver real solutions to address Queensland's crime crisis. We on this side of the House want to see those crime networks dismantled to make Queensland safe again.

I table a number of articles: an article by Jackie Sinnerton and Isabella Pesch; an article titled 'Australian-first research reveals the high cost of vaping'; an article titled 'Thousands of vapes seized in major crackdown, with 4000 found in a single day in one state'; and finally an article from Ann Wason Moore that was published in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 29 July 2024.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of media articles relating to the impacts of illegal tobacco sales and vaping in Queensland [\[1812\]](#).

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice) (4.25 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Of course, coming into this week we all knew that this bill was going to be debated. We are all very concerned about the effects of vaping on our young people and on society in general. However, this morning we read of the really troubling research which shows that many young people are addicted to vapes. The research shows that teenagers who vape are five times more likely to take up smoking. A number of speakers have already gone into detail about the damaging effects of vaping. I do not choose to repeat those facts, but I do wish to state, on behalf of my community and certainly the young people in my community, just how critical this action is.

At lunch time, I was very privileged to take part in a press conference with the health minister and the Chief Health Officer. We heard the minister and the Chief Health Officer talk about the action that we are taking now to really crack down on the illegal sale of vapes and tobacco products and how that is one of the single most powerful things that we can do as a government. We can never underestimate the importance of what we are talking about today.

I was very pleased to have with me the school captains from Lourdes Hill College who, in fact, took part in the press conference today. It is important to hear young people talk about what is happening not only to their peers but also to much younger people. Hannah Webb and Lily Grehan were here today. One of those young women said, 'You all have to do something about this.' That is what we are doing today. We know that unfortunately there is not one thing that will fix this. This legislation will be incredibly powerful but not one thing will solve the problems.

We have seen some promising signs in some of the work we are doing in education. Members will be aware of the really outstanding work that was done by the parliamentary committee last year, led by the member for Thuringowa, in their inquiry into the effects of vaping. Hannah, who was here

today, was part of my Bulimba Electorate Youth Advisory Panel that made a submission to the inquiry. They spoke about how concerned they are for young people and what they thought we as a government should say. The submission from that group was referenced in the committee's report. I thank the chair for bringing in the young people and talking to them about this issue. I know the committee was really delighted to hear from them. The findings of that committee were very important. The committee made three recommendations for education that are really about building awareness and education around vaping, and also about how we enable teachers and parents to do something with this really challenging trend that seems to have come up so quickly.

When we were talking about it last year, the young people said that what scared them the most was that young people felt it was somehow healthier than smoking. Of course, the branding and packaging are so clever—they look appealing and are called really cute names, giving the impression that you are really cool if you vape. The young people were saying to us, 'You must do something about that.' The education department took that very seriously. We made sure that that awareness campaign was spread right throughout all of our state schools in Queensland. I know that many of the non-state schools took it up as well. There has been a 60 per cent decrease in the number of suspensions due to vaping because it has been recognised that excluding students because they are vaping does not go to the heart of the problem at all. We are now rolling out the program called Blurred Minds, which will help students and teachers.

Debate, on motion of Ms Farmer, adjourned.

## MOTION

### COVID-19, Response Review



**Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (4.30 pm): I move—

That this House notes:

- (a) The Queensland COVID pandemic response had wideranging and significant impacts to Queenslanders both during and after the pandemic.
- (b) In order to make provisions for future pandemics, it is imperative that an independent analysis be undertaken to assess these impacts.

and calls on the Queensland government in 2025 to establish an independent review into the COVID pandemic and Queensland response, including the examination of the following:

1. The preparedness and capabilities of Queensland and government for a pandemic
2. Governance of the response to the COVID pandemic, within Queensland, and in interacting with national mechanisms
3. All health, social and economic response measures and their impacts
4. Decision-making underlying those measures, including consideration of the cost and benefits of restrictions
5. Communication and messaging to the public
6. Impacts on Queensland individuals, businesses and the community, throughout the pandemic and continuing to this day, as well forecasts into the future including the inflated costs of products and services
7. Ongoing impacts and changing demands on public sector service delivery
8. Interstate and global responses, reviews of their responses, and make recommendations to assist for future pandemics.

No-one wants to revisit the trauma of the COVID pandemic—a disaster event of massive proportions; however, we must to ensure we are prepared for the next pandemic. This is not a new or difficult concept. In Queensland we do this for other disasters—and we have many of those—through the Inspector-General Emergency Management, whose role is to consistently review the effectiveness of our disaster management responses after every disaster.

Countries across the world have already done, or are doing, COVID inquiries—for example, England, Scotland, Ireland, Canada, Sweden and New Zealand. Other Australian states have COVID inquiries—Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia and the ACT. The Commonwealth is conducting an inquiry, and the report is due in September, but its terms of reference exclude consideration of state actions, hence why states have been doing their own.

I have been advocating for a Queensland inquiry since 2022. In October that year *Fault lines*, produced by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, recommended improvements to the way governments across Australia operated during the pandemic. This does not lessen the need for an independent review in Queensland, despite the government's response that what we did was effective and had lower social, economic and health effects than elsewhere. How this conclusion was reached is difficult to ascertain, given there has been no review or analysis of what can be improved on.



The impacts of COVID and the responses to it were traumatic: people lost their jobs, businesses and homes; people could not farewell loved ones; mental health and fitness declined and suicidality increased; and the abuse of alcohol and drugs increased, as did domestic and family violence. I could continue talking about the impacts; however, every single one of us in this chamber, through our constituents who have come to us, knows what it has done and continues to do.

It did not end when the pandemic was declared over. The ongoing impacts are visible and invisible: strain on our health and policing systems; staff shortages; the inflated cost of everything, including building materials; and ongoing uncertainty. To realise this we just need to ask our vulnerable, our businesses, our service workers and our volunteers how they feel every time a new strain is announced on the news. The memories are still very fresh, the fears still palpable.


Academic papers have been addressing the impacts of COVID policies, with the journal *Economic Analysis and Policy* suggesting that more finely targeted COVID policies, such as quarantining our vulnerable, may have been more effective. An article in *Scientific Reports* states that school closures should have been avoided due to the harsh impacts on students and their futures and that it is imperative that we learn as much as we can about the optimal blend of policies for addressing a pandemic based on our experience, and our experience in Queensland is different from other states.

Whether those conclusions are appropriate for Queensland, or if Queensland could have made other choices, we do not know. We will not know without an independent inquiry. Our own Chief Health Officer acknowledged that we did not do everything right when he said—

The way we messaged was probably wrong.

He also pointed out issues around vaccine fatigue and whether mandates were worth it. This is what we need to understand to go forward. We do it for bushfires and cyclones; why are we not doing it for a disastrous event that impacted not only our own state but also Australia and the world?

I am asking both sides of this House to support this motion and commit to a Queensland independent review in 2025 so we can finally have some closure and move into the future knowing that we are prepared for the next one, with our communities knowing how it will be managed. This is called disaster preparedness and it gives confidence, security and reassurance to our communities and, finally, the closure they are seeking.

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (4.35 pm): I move the following amendment—

That all words after 'pandemic' in paragraph (a) be omitted and the following inserted:

- (b) that the Queensland response to the COVID pandemic was nation leading, including being the first jurisdiction to declare a public health emergency;
- (c) the strong economic recovery of the Labor government which assisted Queensland families and businesses through the pandemic;
- (d) the Australian government is conducting a COVID-19 Inquiry, with its report due on 30 September 2024, which Queensland has had input into; and
- (e) that agencies across government will review the findings along with their own internal reviews to ensure continued improvement.'

Millions of people around the world lost their lives to COVID-19 and it is fair to say Queensland's response was one of the best in the world. We listened to the expert advice throughout the pandemic, including taking the tough decisions to close Queensland borders when the expert advice indicated that that was the best way to keep Queenslanders safe.

Queensland's border policy has always been formulated pursuant to the expert health advice. Those opposite attacked the expert health advice by attacking our border policy. They implicitly attacked the then chief health officer—but sometimes they were not implicit and instead directly attacked the then chief health officer. These attacks included the member for Surfers Paradise and the member for Callide re-posting a cartoon critical of the former chief health officer and comparing the deadly pandemic to a mild flu. It included the member for Kawana, who initially called COVID a scare campaign, posting a tweet this weekend attacking the former chief health officer and dismissing her health advice. The member for Broadwater claimed the former chief health officer was part of a collection of punch-drunk bureaucrats and was power hungry.


Our health response was swift and coordinated, considering the seriousness and unprecedented nature of COVID-19. We were the first Australian jurisdiction to declare a public health emergency. Our top priority during the pandemic was keeping Queenslanders safe. To do this, our response broadly occurred in two phases: keeping the virus out for as long as possible until high levels of vaccination coverage were achieved; and focusing efforts on protecting those at highest risk. Our effective COVID-19 response meant shorter and fewer lockdowns than other jurisdictions.

It was an unprecedented event and it is crucial that we learn from it to ensure we are prepared for any future pandemic. That is why the federal government announced an independent inquiry into Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The inquiry will consider health and non-health responses to the pandemic including the responses of the Commonwealth and the states and territories. These include issues such as the provision of vaccinations, treatments and key medical supplies to Australians; aged care; disability care; mental health support for those impacted by COVID-19 and lockdowns; assistance to maintain cross-border road and shipping supply chains; financial support for individuals and businesses; and assistance for Australians abroad.

The review is due to the Commonwealth at the end of the month and Queensland, which has participated in the review, will consider all of its findings. However, Queensland has also looked at some of the innovative models of care and incorporated some into ongoing care. For instance, to support continuity of care closer to home, we leveraged opportunities to increase the uptake of virtual care and telehealth—something that regional Queenslanders in particular are incredibly happy about. The uptake of telehealth services has been significant right across the state. Queenslanders were a little hesitant to use telehealth before COVID, but as soon as COVID happened we were ready and those in regional Queensland were very pleased to use it.

Telehealth services delivered in April 2020 tripled from those delivered in the nine months prior to the COVID-19 response. This increase was reflected in many clinical areas. COVID-19 provided the impetus for widespread and sustainable change towards a more empowered, collaborative, transparent and agile health system. Queensland's health system now retains capacity and capability to respond to future pandemics.

We are also implementing the national plan to transition Australia's COVID-19 response and establish stores of PPE and health consumables to protect against significant supply chain disruption and rapid, large-scale vaccination networks. In the meantime, post the COVID-19 pandemic, to maintain readiness for another pandemic we have also revised the pandemic influenza plan. We have commenced the development of a generic public health pandemic response plan to guide the response to a pandemic threat from any emerging disease. I commend the amended motion to the House.

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—KAP) (4.40 pm): I start by thanking the member for Noosa for moving this incredibly important motion today. It is a motion I welcome and strongly support. The COVID-19 pandemic was a time of great upheaval and uncertainty that impacted every facet of Queenslanders' lives. The shadows cast by that time have carried through to the present day.

As an MP throughout the period of COVID, I witnessed firsthand the profound impacts the pandemic response had on members of my own community, and across Queensland more widely. Throughout this time, I witnessed the deep divisions that were created across the whole community and even within family households themselves. I saw good, hardworking Queenslanders in tears. Many of them lost everything as a result of the COVID response—their businesses, homes, livelihoods, friendships and much more—and the lockdowns and mandates. Most shocking of all was the way the elderly were treated in our aged-care homes at this time. Residents were often isolated for months at a time from visits and physical contact with their loved ones, causing a sharp decline in their physical and mental wellbeing.

Similar scenes were played out in our hospitals where, due to the border closures and restrictions, some patients were forced to die alone and without anyone by their side to hold their hand. Patients were isolated from loved ones in their final moments. Families were denied the opportunity to say goodbye and informed consent for procedures was ignored. Restrictions imposed on funerals and grieving processes added another layer of emotional distress for many families. Many people I spoke with at the time said that the trauma and distress this caused will remain with them for their lifetime.

It must never be allowed to happen again in this state or country. Since the pandemic ended, there has been no accounting for all of this. There has been no inquiry or examination into the decisions that were taken, the basis for those decisions and the fallout they caused individuals and communities across the state. Queensland does need closure. The only way to get it is for a full accounting of what happened back then. It was a dark chapter in the state's history, yet no-one wants to talk about it. Why is that? Many of the decisions made by the government in response to the pandemic lacked any clarity or supporting data. This caused enormous and ongoing mistrust of politicians, government officials, our institutions, the media and even doctors and the whole healthcare system in Queensland.


In addition to the terms of reference laid out in the member for Noosa's motion, a full COVID response inquiry must also examine the following specific areas: the use of faulty modelling, carried out on modelling software owned by Bill and Melinda Gates, which caused unnecessary fear and anxiety. I table a copy of the modelling program.

*Tabled paper:* Screenshot depicting graphs relating to COVID-19 research [\[1813\]](#).

The inquiry must also examine: judicial decisions regarding COVID-19 laws and policies that disregarded valid scientific evidence, placing in doubt the impartiality of the legal system; the silencing of scientists and doctors who questioned the government narrative, which also hindered legitimate public debate and scientific progress; and Ahpra's suspension of healthcare professionals who disagreed with the government's COVID policies, creating an incredibly chilling effect on the freedom of expression within the medical community. The significant rise in unexplained deaths following the COVID-19 vaccination rollout also demands urgent investigation, as does the government's failure to conduct a proper risk benefit analysis of lockdowns, mandates and vaccines.

In the years since the pandemic, we have witnessed a spiralling decrease in mental health, an increased demand on our hospital and health systems as well as ongoing long wait lists for critical appointments with medical specialists. The divisions within our community have not gone away. They have been papered over but remain there—festering, unresolved and impacting all areas of our lives.

Lockdowns, border closures, quarantine and mandates made up the most disruptive set of policies in the state's history—the ramifications of which have been life changing for many Queenslanders. All of it has led to a crisis of public trust and the underlying fear that it could happen again. We must acknowledge the pain and suffering inflicted before we can ever move forward. How else are we to learn from past mistakes or be able to work together to create a better model for future pandemics? We need a system that prioritises ethical practices, respects individual autonomy, upholds the highest standard of care and, most of all, displays compassion to our fellow people.

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.45 pm): I would argue that the healthcare system does that at all times—operates in an ethical way, prioritises individuals and treats people with compassion—and has done for the entire time I have been involved in health care, which is since the 1980s.

I certainly support the government's amendment to the motion and oppose the member for Noosa's motion. I understand the intent of the member's motion and would generally support it, but I would argue that this work has already been done and is ongoing. We have systems in health care of constantly reviewing and improving practice as we move forward.

The reality is that we have a very good understanding of how to respond to a pandemic and plans around what to do if we need to. We have been dealing with pandemics for a long time in health care—long before the invention of vaccinations—so we have a good understanding of them. To execute these plans we need well-trained staff working in population and preventive health roles. Dr Jeannette Young, as the then chief health officer, had long prepared for a pandemic, ensuring the plans and staffing were in place. She had been doing this since she became chief health officer in about 2006.

It is somewhat ironic that we are debating this motion on the 10th anniversary of the Newman government cuts to the Public Service, including many health workers. Sadly, in the period 2012 to 2014, the very sections of the Queensland Health workforce that Dr Jeannette Young put in place to respond to pandemics were absolutely decimated by the Newman government job cuts. I shudder to think what the outcome would have been if the LNP had been in power throughout the pandemic. The results would have been vastly different.

Members of the LNP called for the borders to be opened 62 times—in direct contravention of the health advice. This was done with supposedly a health professional on their side. We are shocked that those opposite did not want to follow the advice of the former chief health officer. We should not be shocked. The member for Kawana was initially calling COVID a hoax, and then hopped on Twitter to dismiss her health advice. The member for Broadwater said that our now Governor was a power hungry, punch-drunk bureaucrat. Not only that, he said that the government's response was tantamount to putting a doona over your head and sucking your thumb.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mr KELLY:** Yes, the member for Currumbin was helping people to break the law. Let us not forget the fake union that the member for Mudgeeraba is a member of that came out swinging against vaccines and supporting a number of anti-vaccination rallies.


Fortunately, Dr Young and the then health minister prioritised rebuilding capacity and, thankfully, they did just that. It certainly put us in a position to respond quickly and effectively: firstly, with measures to protect people in the absence of a vaccine; and, secondly, with rolling out the vaccines efficiently and safely. It will be one of my proudest achievements as a nurse to have played a small role in helping with the vaccine rollout.

Of course, we can always improve practice in any area of health care, but I would argue that this work is continuous and the lessons from COVID are being incorporated into practice. We know our government's strong, swift and coordinated health response protected the people of Queensland throughout the pandemic. We repeatedly led by example in demonstrating effective control of community transmission. While many of the public health measures were difficult—including the staff vaccination mandate—Queensland was rewarded with one of the lowest mortality rates in the world.

I want to finish with mortality rates. Sadly, this review, like many reviews, does not seem to focus on the need to keep health workers safe. Health workers kept showing up to work in the absence of a vaccine and they died. Let us take a moment to reflect on that and remember the hundreds of thousands of health workers who died as a result of caring for people with COVID-19—the majority of these before the introduction of an effective and safe vaccine.

Every time someone wants to have a discussion with me about vaccines and oppose them, I think about those 220,000 nurses around the world who died in 2020 and 2021 before the introduction of vaccines. I wonder what they would say to those people who refuse to have vaccines? I wonder what their families would say? These were mothers, grandmothers, uncles, brothers and 22-year-olds at the start of their nursing career. They are the people who died. Of course, there were doctors, allied health professionals, wardies, receptionists, security guards, cooks, pharmacists, pathology staff and lots of other workers who died.

I challenge anyone to name any other class of worker that has faced such an occupational death toll outside of warfare. I pay tribute to all of those health workers who continued to go to work in the absence of a vaccine. It was scary for those of us who had family in that situation. Sadly, it seems that this death toll has gone unnoticed. I have worked with the QNMU, the Australian Workers' Union, the United Workers Union and the Australian Medical Association. We have established an incorporated association that is working to establish memorials for those health workers who died as a result of trying to save other people's lives. I certainly support the government's amendment.

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (4.49 pm): In making my contribution to the debate on the member for Noosa's motion, I reflect on and agree with those comments from the member for Greenslopes just a moment ago. It is so important that when we reflect on the COVID-19 pandemic we remember those frontline workers who really pulled us through. It is easy enough for a lot of us to reflect on the pandemic. It is one of those weird phenomena that at some point it feels like it was forever ago and occasionally it feels like it was just yesterday, but for the folks working on the front line I am sure that those times are never going to go away. The tough times are going to stick with them forever.

In so many ways it was a surreal experience. I do not think that is too strong a word to use. We talked constantly throughout those couple of years about the unprecedented impacts. Again, everything about that whole period felt unprecedented. It has come back to mind recently. I am sure everyone in this place remembers vividly the experience of trying to campaign through 2020 in the lead-up to the 2020 election. Now that we are unshackled on the campaign trail it feels so completely different.


I was bracing myself for what I assumed would be the busiest year of my life. No doubt it was busy, but I spent a lot more time at home with my then not yet one-year-old daughter than I might have anticipated at the beginning of 2020. There were obviously some silver linings like that around such a dramatic shift to life as we know it, but I think those are absolutely eclipsed by all of the impacts that were felt across the community. There were obviously enormous economic impacts, health impacts and mental health impacts. There were impacts on businesses and workers. Every facet of life went through a tectonic shift.

Back in 2020 it seemed absolutely appropriate, as the government did at the time, to initiate some parliamentary inquiries. I remember thinking at the time it was a little arbitrary and perhaps unusual to separate those two inquiries into one considering the economic responses to the pandemic and the other considering the health responses to the pandemic. As a member of the Health, Communities, Disabilities Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee in the 56th Parliament, I looked at those health responses. I have no quarrel with paragraph (b) of the amendment that has been put forward by the assistant minister. The health response from the Queensland government was quite extraordinary, and that played out in the death toll here in

Queensland. We have a lot to be grateful for in that respect. I could not help but wonder, though, why it was that the Economics and Governance Committee, after conducting its own hearings, did not even produce an interim report. We at least got an interim report out of the health committee that term. The Economics and Governance Committee did not actually come up with anything, as far as I am aware. I will be corrected if I am wrong, I am sure.

By the end of that year after the election—obviously the pandemic was far from over—those two inquiries were dissolved. We had further lockdowns all the way throughout 2021 and 2022. It was in 2022 that my family was first touched by COVID-19. It was obviously a lot further down the track that the impacts were still being felt, which is why in December 2020, in September 2021 and in March 2022, on two out of those three occasions I and on one occasion the member for South Brisbane put forward proposals to do pretty much precisely what we are talking about here: establish a parliamentary committee, a statutory committee, that could look at the all-encompassing government response to the pandemic.

We have seen again—and it is in paragraph (d) of the assistant minister's amendment—that, yes, we have a federal inquiry on foot now, but that explicitly excludes state responses. I cannot understand, in the face of such a successful response, why we would not be interested in taking the time as a parliament to look at that response and to record in some kind of organised, centralised way what it was that worked and if there are ways we could improve. I think it is a perfectly sensible proposal from the member for Noosa and we will be supporting it.

 **Hon. LR McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (4.54 pm): I rise in support of the amendment. During one of the most challenging periods in living memory, it was Labor that protected the jobs, livelihoods and small businesses of Queensland. When the world, including the Sunshine Coast, was gripped by uncertainty, here in Queensland Labor led with clarity and purpose. There were others that dithered, but we acted swiftly to save lives, protect businesses and keep Queenslanders in work. Our world-leading health response did not just keep the virus at bay; it also kept our economy moving. It did what mattered—whether it was for the Sunshine Coast, for my community of Bundamba and the City of Ipswich, or for all of Queensland.

I believe that Queenslanders will never forget that it was the LNP who called for the borders to be thrown open, putting lives and livelihoods at risk. It was Labor's steady hand that kept our state safe. While others were forced to shut down for months, Queenslanders were able to stay at work, businesses were able to survive and keep their doors open—some thrived—and families were able to continue to put food on the table. When the pandemic hit, we moved quickly to protect jobs and the health of Queenslanders.

Our COVID-19 economic recovery plan invested \$15.2 billion in recovery initiatives. That was real money put into the pockets of workers, small businesses and the industries that were hardest hit. Our payroll tax deferrals, job support loans and targeted grants helped businesses keep staff on during the most difficult days. We worked directly with employers, industries, unions and small business owners to ensure that our response was what Queenslanders needed at the time. As a result, thousands of jobs were saved—jobs that could have been lost under the reckless calls of those like the LNP.

Since the pandemic we have created over 35,000 more jobs on the Sunshine Coast alone. ABS data clearly shows that Queensland is the economic and job creation powerhouse of the nation. We have created more jobs than any other state or territory since the pandemic. We have also funded 2,300 free TAFE places on the coast to get more locals into good jobs, with nursing and aged care topping the list. It was not just about protecting jobs. We laid the foundation for a strong recovery for our small business community.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, so we made sure they were supported every step of the way. Through our COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan Scheme and our business support package, Labor stood shoulder to shoulder with the tens of thousands of small businesses that were doing it tough. We delivered real outcomes, including grants, that allowed businesses to pivot, innovate and survive. I am sure that many in this place recall the incredible ability and resilience of our businesses to adapt during that time. We had craft brewers become manufacturers of hand sanitiser. There were similar examples of businesses being able to pivot thanks to the support of Labor at the time.

For the people of Noosa and its over 6,900 businesses, our Big Plans for Small Business Strategy delivered almost half a million dollars in direct grant support. We also provided \$210 million in payroll tax relief to more than 12,000 small- and medium-sized businesses to help them recover. The LNP and

others might not like it, but these measures were essential to keep our businesses afloat. Under new Premier Steven Miles, we are turning a page and looking to the future. Queenslanders know that they can trust Labor when times are tough. We did it during the pandemic and we will back Queenslanders to a bright future.

*(Time expired)*

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

**AYES, 49:**

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

**NOES, 41:**

**LNP, 35**—Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crandon, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Gerber, Hart, Head, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Watts, Weir, Zanow.

**Grn, 2**—Berkman, MacMahon.

**KAP, 3**—Andrew, Dametto, Knuth.

**Ind, 1**—Bolton.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

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

**AYES, 51:**

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

**Grn, 2**—Berkman, MacMahon.

**NOES, 39:**

**LNP, 35**—Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crandon, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Gerber, Hart, Head, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Watts, Weir, Zanow.

**KAP, 3**—Andrew, Dametto, Knuth.

**Ind, 1**—Bolton.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as agreed—

That this House notes:

- (a) The Queensland COVID pandemic response had wideranging and significant impacts to Queenslanders both during and after the pandemic;
- (b) that the Queensland response to the COVID pandemic was nation leading, including being the first jurisdiction to declare a public health emergency;
- (c) the strong economic recovery of the Labor government which assisted Queensland families and businesses through the pandemic;
- (d) the Australian government is conducting a COVID-19 Inquiry, with its report due on 30 September 2024, which Queensland has had input into; and
- (e) that agencies across government will review the findings along with their own internal reviews to ensure continued improvement.

## General Practitioners



**Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (5.07 pm): I move—

This House calls on the Labor government to revoke the Queensland Revenue Office rulings (PTAQ000.6.1 to PTAQ000.6.3) (which is currently under an amnesty due to end in July 2025) which will cost Queenslanders more to see a doctor in the middle of a health crisis and cost-of-living crisis.

I have not met a Queenslander who is not affected by the cost-of-living crisis in Queensland. I rarely meet a Queenslander who has not been impacted or had a family member or friend impacted by the health crisis here in Queensland. Why do we have Labor's health crisis and Labor's cost-of-living crisis here in Queensland? It is because we have an incompetent government which has been sitting on the government benches for a decade. I would ask, like the Leader of the Opposition always asks: are you better or worse off after a decade of Labor? I know the answer to that. We are worse off. We are much worse off.

All this motion is doing is calling for common sense, which is a bit of a stretch when it comes to the Treasurer, Cameron Dick. All we are asking is for the Premier, the Treasurer and their bunch of merry ministers to rule out the patients tax. That is all we want. This is a tax upon health care in Queensland, and nowhere is more impacted than rural and regional Queensland. Make no mistake: people are lining up in hospitals because there are GP clinics closing by the dozen each and every month, and the reason they are doing that is the uncertainty of this Miles government. They are completely hopeless when it comes to health. We know the health system is in crisis thanks to Labor. We know we have a cost-of-living crisis thanks to Labor.

This is the Treasurer of Queensland who at the last election actually said 26 times—not once, not twice; I cannot count to 26 because, seriously, we do not have enough time—that there will be no new taxes under the Palaszczuk government. How did that work out? He is the Treasurer who broke it not once, not twice, not three times, not four times, not five times, not six times but seven times. This is the Treasurer who broke that commitment seven times. How can the people of Queensland trust that mob over there? They certainly cannot.

Now we have a Premier who put this Treasurer in as his Deputy Premier. What a joke! Seriously! I feel like I want to quote the health minister: 'Who else would you put in?' I do not know, health minister, but maybe it was you who wanted the job. Maybe it was you; I am not sure. He said it 26 times. We are saying the government have broken the tax promises seven times. How about we just scrap the patient tax?

**Mr Dick** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The record will stand, Treasurer—26 times!

**Mr de BRENNI:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I understand that the Speaker of the House made a ruling earlier today in terms of the characterisation of this matter in respect of it being described as a revenue determination. The member for Nanango has—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order!

**Mr de BRENNI:** The member for Nanango seems to have failed to recognise the Speaker's determination, and I ask you to provide her guidance.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Resume your seat, member for Nanango. Members, if there is any more chatter or interjections while I am trying to hear a point of order, you will be warned. I will take some advice. I want clarity, Leader of the House: what is your actual point of order?

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr Crandon** interjected.

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

**Mr de BRENNI:** The member is referring to a particular characterisation of a measure which is not the subject of the motion that is before the House. I understand the motion has been amended to talk about a revenue determination. We are happy to hear—

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Chatsworth, you are warned under the standing orders. Does anybody else want a warning? I suggest you maintain your silence while I deal with this. Leader of the House?

**Mr de BRENNI:**—and simply to ensure her contributions are relevant to the motion.

**Mr POWELL:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The concerns raised by the Speaker in proposing and putting forward the amended motion were to do with the wording of the motion. There is a longstanding tradition in this House, emphasised by the current Speaker, that, when it comes to

the debate, the content of the debate can be quite wideranging as to interpretations of that. As to what the Leader of the House is alluding to, we know that the media—and we can provide reports—have referred to the matter that is in this motion as a patient tax.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. I will take some advice. The point of order is in relation to relevance. Member for Nanango, I would ask you to remain relevant to the motion. However, although I do not have the capacity to consult with the Speaker at this particular point, I do note that the Speaker has made some adjustments to the motion, specifically in relation to the wording, so I would urge some caution in relation to those matters. I do not know the background of that, but I would be concerned about the potential of misleading the House in relation to that, so I would ask you to continue your contribution with that in mind.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I wish to quote from a letter I received on or around 9 January, as it is dated, from Cornerstone Health. With some concern it reads—

Queensland's GP payroll tax will end bulk-billing.

That is the concern of these doctors because of the Miles government tax. They go on to say—

... a patient tax that will spell an end to bulk-billing and force Queenslanders, many already struggling with runaway cost-of-living pressures, to dig deep into their pockets to cover the increased cost of visiting their GP.

Make no mistake: we have a Treasurer of Queensland who has broken the commitment of no new taxes—he said it 26 times—seven times. His record will stand. If he winds back this broken promise, it still means he broke six promises. So just give us one and let's help out the people of Queensland. Let's help out the people of Queensland who are struggling. Ambulance ramping for Queensland sits at 43 per cent—the highest rate in the nation. Why? Because the Miles government are incompetent at their job. Seriously!

Let's look at Bundaberg, who are waiting for a new hospital. What did the member for Bundaberg say? He said that he wanted to build a level 5 hospital, but then he said, 'No, no, it is five storeys.' This government is a joke. If we want to fix up the cost-of-living crisis and the health crisis, we must change the government and show these guys the door in 2024.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order! I need to consult with the clerk at the table before I call the next speaker. The issues that have been raised in the points of order in terms of relevance relate to the wording of the original motion and the characterisation of that as a tax. We are seeking further clarity from the Clerk and the Speaker in relation to those matters. While I would urge members to stay away from that to the extent that they can, at this stage I have granted some latitude to the member for Nanango and I will grant similar latitude to the other speakers in this debate.

**Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (5.17 pm): I rise to oppose the motion because if it were implemented then more doctors would pay payroll tax. The LNP have completely messed this up, and it is the leader of the LNP who has led this mistake. The public ruling that the LNP seeks to revoke is the very ruling that allows medical centres to avoid paying payroll tax when the amnesty expires. I refer in particular to the public ruling referred to in the motion, PTAQ000.6.3, which I table.

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Government: Report titled 'Public Ruling PTAQ000.6.3—Payroll Tax Act 1971: Relevant Contracts—Medical Centres' [[1814](#)].

I refer honourable members to paragraphs 57 to 60. Those paragraphs set out clearly that where a medical benefit is assigned to a doctor and paid to the doctor then payroll tax does not apply. If this ruling was revoked, as the motion proposes, then all of the medical centres in this state would lose the beneficial effect of that ruling and they would have to pay payroll tax after the amnesty expires. Revoking the ruling, as the LNP would have us do, would return the legal state to what existed before, which is that the medical practices have to pay payroll tax. I cannot be clearer: if the LNP's motion were implemented then all medical centres would pay payroll tax from the moment the amnesty expires. On that basis, I and all members of the government oppose the motion.

This is a massive own goal by the leader of the LNP through the member for Nanango. The LNP leader should ring the AMA—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order, members!

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.



**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, you are warned. You have been constantly interjecting. Several members on this side of the House are constantly interjecting. I will start to warn you more frequently.

**Mr DICK:**—and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and apologise to them for attempting to revoke an arrangement that saves their members' money. Yesterday in the House I said that the Leader of the Opposition was incompetent—

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Everton, you are warned.

**Mr DICK:**—when it comes to budgetary, fiscal and economic matters. Well, we can add taxation to that, because you cannot trust the LNP leader with money. That has been demonstrated time and again.

The fact that the member for Nanango is the member making this mistake is very revealing. Here we have a motion that is ostensibly about revenue, but the LNP leader did not let the shadow Treasurer move the motion. I think the member for Toowoomba South is an earnest person. I have found him very polite and good to deal with. That is why I am so disappointed with the disrespect that is being shown to the shadow Treasurer by the Leader of the Opposition. He is treating his shadow Treasurer with complete contempt. However, it is no surprise because the Leader of the Opposition treats everybody with contempt, particularly the creditors of SET Solutions—the victims of his insolvent trading. Put simply: why isn't the member for Toowoomba South—


**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Yet again, the member has said something that is categorically untrue. I find it offensive and I ask the member to withdraw again.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member has found the statements personally offensive. I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr DICK:** I withdraw. Put simply: why isn't the member for Toowoomba South, the shadow Treasurer, allowed to move a motion in his portfolio area—why? I see the member for Toowoomba South is smiling tonight because this is a total mistake. The member for Nanango and the LNP leader have messed this up completely. I will tell you one thing, though, the member for Toowoomba South would not have let this mistake happen. He certainly would not have messed up like the member for Nanango did in the 2020 election when she said the forward estimates was three years—do you remember that? She missed it by 'that much'. It is important to get some facts and truth on the record when it comes to this matter. As the Commissioner of State Revenue said in 2023, the contractor provisions in the Payroll Tax Act have been in place in their current form since 2008. That is 16 years. In recent years, many medical practices realised they were not in full compliance with the law as it stood, so our Labor government stepped in.

**Mr Crisafulli** interjected.

**Mr DICK:** That is a 'glass jaw crack' from the Leader of the Opposition. We see him whingeing and moaning. We have provided a ruling that sets out a pathway about how they can become compliant without having to pay payroll tax. Then we provided an amnesty, to give them the time and space to do so. The LNP now seek to revoke those beneficial arrangements. This would potentially put every medical centre in default of their taxation arrangements at the expiry of the amnesty. Our government supports doctors. Our government supports general practice. Our government supports medical centres, which is why this mistaken LNP motion must be opposed tonight.

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (5.22 pm): Can you imagine asking Queenslanders to pay more to see their doctor in the middle of a health crisis? Can you imagine asking Queenslanders to pay more to see their doctor in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis? Can you imagine doing that? It is 'rocks in your head' type stuff, but it is where we are in Queensland under a Labor government that is so far beyond functional and so far out of touch it is no longer funny. It is no surprise that this patient tax by stealth is brought to you by the 'taxer in chief', the member for Woodridge—the Treasurer. He has serious form. Who could forget it was the Treasurer who introduced a renter's tax in the middle of a housing crisis? He stood by it, and he stood by it and he stood by it. The chorus of experts calling out the madness became a tsunami but, he still stood by it, and I think he still does. There is not a cent of taxpayers' money that the Treasurer does not think he is entitled to. That is exactly what he has done with Labor's GP tax by stealth.

What the Treasurer is doing, in effect, by pushing ahead with this tax ruling is asking Queenslanders to pay more. He is asking them to pay more every time they need to see their GP. If you need a new script from your GP for medication to manage your chronic disease, under Labor you


will pay more. If you need to take your toddler to the GP because they are suffering from croup, under Labor you will pay more. If you need to get a blood test result from your GP to check your cholesterol, under Labor you will pay more. Queenslanders cannot afford that—they simply cannot. The knock-on effects of this tax ruling are well known—maybe not to the Treasurer, so let's spell it out for him. If Queenslanders cannot afford to visit their GP, they might avoid getting medical help altogether. That is a disastrous outcome. They will become sicker. Their conditions will worsen. Guess where they will go? They will end up sick and unwell in our emergency departments. Valuable bed space will be taken up by patients who could have been treated in the community with timely access to primary care.

It is only those members on the opposite side who seem surprised that demand at our hospitals keeps increasing. We have a growing population, an aging population, a sicker population, yet they are somehow shocked that more people need to visit an ED, or need surgery, or will call an ambulance. Make no mistake: Labor's patient tax by stealth will make that worse. It will exacerbate the problems our public health system already faces.

You would think that the Minister for Health might have tried to intervene in all of this. Surely an attentive minister who is across her brief would have stepped in and said, 'Whoa, Treasurer, you can't do this,'—oh, no, not this minister. We all know what she has been up to. She is lurking. She is stalking. She has her eye on something but it is not the good functioning of Queensland hospitals. Her eye is on the prize—the Premier's job. The minister is not even hiding it anymore. It is all out in the open. 'Come talk to me at the end of October,' she said. I mean, seriously, talk about the wrong priorities.

Queensland has recorded the worst consecutive six months of ambulance ramping on record. Ramping sits at nearly 45 per cent. Queensland has just recorded the longest ever elective surgery waiting list on record—more than 61,000 patients. The waiting list to see a specialist is nearly 290,000 Queenslanders. All of that, and they still want to make an appointment with the GP more expensive. It flies in the face of good reason, it flies in the face of common sense and it flies in the face of good health outcomes. Those opposite are now too far gone to realise all of that.

After 10 years of Labor, Queensland is engulfed in a cost-of-living and health crisis. Labor is determined to make things even worse by driving up the cost of seeing the family doctor and forcing more Queenslanders into emergency departments. I say to the people of Queensland: the only way to change Labor's chaos and crisis is to change the government on 26 October. Show Labor the door in 2024.

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (5.27 pm): The member for Mudgeeraba says we have rocks in our head. The only explanation for this motion is that 'they' have rocks in their head. I say that for two reasons. First of all, this motion was brought to the House by the member for Nanango—not the shadow Treasurer, whose portfolio it would fall in—and, second of all, if it were implemented doctors would pay payroll tax. They would be paying more tax. It is based on a tax that does not exist, and if it were implemented all of our hardworking GPs would pay more tax.

What we hear in this House from those members opposite is that the LNP want to lower tax. They want to lower debt and they want to lower taxes. Is their elusive tax policy, which we keep hearing about but we have never seen, that people will be paying more tax? Is that their elusive policy? On 13 September 2022, the Leader of the Opposition told the *Courier-Mail*—

I've been very, very clear headed into the next election. We are going to have a detailed tax plan ...

This was in 2022. He said—

That is fair and reasonable for us as an opposition. ... four years is a pretty reasonable and upfront thing for an opposition to do ... Ahead of the next election, people will know our tax plan.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Ms HOWARD:** I do not know. It is about 45 days until the election and we still have not heard anything about it. That is why we cannot trust the LNP. They will say one thing but they will do another. I am wondering if the member for Nanango has consulted with those elusive bodies the AMA Queensland and the RACGP, because they have a very different view to her on this. I found a quote from the President of the RACGP, Dr Nicole Higgins. She was reported as saying—

As a Queensland GP and practice owner, I know this is a win for GPs across Queensland and our patients. It is a clear signal that our state government recognises the value of general practice care in keeping Queenslanders healthy and out of hospital ...

She ended by saying—


I strongly urge other jurisdictions to follow Queensland and ensure GP services are not subject to extra payroll tax to provide certainty ...

Since then South Australia and the ACT have followed suit with us.

We have provided this amnesty at a cost in our budget of \$100 million per year. That means that medical practices are subject to the same payroll tax interpretations today as they were through the entirety of the Newman government, in which the Leader of the Opposition served. Back to our amnesty commitment, the Miles Labor government was the first state to make a ruling on the payroll tax for medical centres, as I have said. The public ruling provides clarity that, under normal business arrangements, patient fees, including the Medicare benefit and any out-of-pocket expenses, when they are paid directly via patient to a GP for that GP's services, will not be subject to payroll tax.

The Miles Labor government backs our hardworking GPs. We are working to grow the GP front line. In June we announced that Queensland doctors are going to receive \$40,000 boosts to train in general practice under a new \$20 million Queensland government workforce attraction incentive scheme. We know that the health minister, Shannon Fentiman, travelled across the state talking to hospital and health services about our workforce attraction incentive. I went along to the one she held in the West Moreton Hospital and Health Service area. It was brilliant. She knew exactly what the needs were and she listened to our local health professionals. That is what is happening; our government is reflecting that we are listening and we are understanding what the issues are. The only patient focused revenue measure our government has implemented is the mental health levy, and that is making a huge difference across the state. It is a making a huge difference in every single electorate.

I oppose this motion. It is a foolish motion. If it was implemented, it would mean that GPs would be paying more tax. It is not what Queenslanders expect from their government. I am proud to be a part of a government that has implemented something groundbreaking and that will stand by our stance when it comes to this amnesty.

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (5.32 pm): During question time in November 2022 we first asked about the impact of Labor's patients tax on bulk-billing and emergency department presentations and what it would ultimately cost to see the doctor. At the time the Treasurer said—

I will not be acting because it is not proper for me to do so.

Since that statement there have been two complicated rulings. The first ruling was dropped on the eve of Christmas 2022, without any consultation or modelling, when the Queensland Revenue Office unveiled its first public ruling. It reinterpreted the law so that general practice and other health practitioners would now be subject to payroll tax. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners labelled the change an 'illogical tax grab' and warned that general practices would have no option but to pass on the costs to patients.


The AMAQ described it as 'a crippling patient tax that will mean the end of bulk-billing in Queensland'. The AMAQ went on to say that the targets for this tax are 'small suburban and regional clinics owned by mums and dads' and will 'impose an unprecedented extra cost on patients at a time when cost-of-living pressures are hitting communities hard'. Doctors also warned that after-hours practices would be particularly vulnerable to the tax and could wind back their hours as a result and that more Queenslanders would be forced to go to already overstretched, overcrowded and under-resourced hospital emergency departments.

Last year at estimates, under my questioning the government conceded that, among other things: Treasury had not worked with Queensland Health to determine the impact of this new tax on ambulance call-outs at a time of record ramping; no modelling had been undertaken to determine the impact of this new tax on bulk-billing rates in Queensland; and no modelling had been undertaken to determine the impact of this new tax on the access of aged-care facility residents to their visiting GP given a large proportion of those visits are currently not charged a gap. The Treasurer admitted that there was no idea how many doctors or medical centres would be impacted by this new tax; there was no idea how much additional payroll tax would be raised from a range of other health services; and there was no explanation as to why existing medical practices had been granted an amnesty until 2025 while new medical practices had not.

When Labor finally released the second attempt at the framework for its patients tax in September last year, after 78 clauses over 29 pages across two complex rulings, we knew that the devil would be in the detail. Rather than fix the problem he created, Treasurer Dick only made it more complicated and more expensive for Queensland patients. During this saga the one question I have asked the entire time is, 'Will Queenslanders end up paying more to see the doctor?' The framework is in, doctors are trying to get themselves organised and the answer is yes. Either medical practices will be forced to pay Labor's patients tax or they must restructure their business models which will result in long-term higher administrative costs that will be passed on to patients.

A health system in crisis needs certainty and stability, not a confused framework from a government in chaos and crisis desperately trying to solve the problems it created itself. Today doctors remain concerned about how Labor's tax plan will be practically applied, the cost they will face in complying with their obligations and whether it will need to be passed on to patients. In order for doctors providing life-saving care to families, the elderly and the vulnerable to operate their practice with confidence, they need clarity on how they should structure their arrangements.

The Miles government can no longer be trusted to develop sound public policy for the public good. Good governments consult model scenarios and carefully consider the real-world impacts of the policies they seek to implement. Good governments do not drive up the cost of seeing a doctor in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. Good governments do not increase the rate of presentations to emergency departments and drive down bulk-billing rates in the middle of a health crisis. Good governments certainly do not force doctors to be bookkeepers when they should be healing Queenslanders.

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (5.37 pm): Following the member for Toowoomba South, I will say one thing: good governments do not sack 4,400 health workers when they come to office. They do not sack 1,800 nurses. He should bear that in mind. That is not what good governments do.

The Treasurer asked why the member for Toowoomba South did not move this motion, and I think we have the answer. All he can deliver here is story time, a Dr Seuss lecture on what he believes is happening. I will say that I was hoping to follow an actual doctor in this debate, the member for Moggill; that would have been good. My question is: why is he not talking on this? He is a former president of the AMA. I am wondering why they might be hiding him in this debate. I will let them decide what they will do after this.

It is very clear that the LNP are very confused about what they want with this motion. As we have heard, if it was implemented doctors would pay payroll tax and the public ruling that the member for Nanango seeks to revoke is the ruling that allows medical practitioners to avoid paying payroll tax. This motion is based on a tax that does not exist. If the LNP motion were implemented, our hardworking GPs would end up paying more tax. It is ludicrous. The LNP are clearly confused with this motion. They are struggling to nominate what they actually mean or think is a tax, and it had to be pointed out to them that what they are talking about is a Revenue Office ruling.


If we did accept the confused arguments of those opposite, does a cut equal a tax? Are taxes as defined by the LNP equivalent to a cut, because the LNP knows all about cuts to health services? Let me remind those opposite. The member for Maryborough reminded me that those opposite cut pathology services at the Maryborough Hospital and we had to restore them when we got back into government. It was the only accident and emergency department on the east coast of Australia without a pathology unit and had to be downgraded, and that was in the region of Wide Bay where they sacked 345 healthcare workers, including 120 nurses. Some of the nurses that they sacked at that time were living in tents because of the floods that had happened in Bundaberg. Imagine delivering a sacking notice to a nurse who is living in a tent. This is the record of the LNP on health—cuts.

If we accept the confused definitions of those opposite, it would probably be equivalent to a tax. Who knows what they are getting at? Let me also remind those opposite that they closed the Barrett Adolescent Centre. Not only that, they cut the annual funding for 153 healthcare projects run by NGOs including \$760,000 to the Flying Doctor. That is absolutely disgraceful. While talking about LNP cuts, let us not forget about the Morrison government as well. I do believe it delivered a 30 per cent cut to the National Partnership Agreement on Public Dental Services.

As I said, the LNP is clearly confused with this motion because these revenue arrangements have not changed. The Queensland Revenue Office advises that the contractor provisions in the Payroll Tax Act have been in place in their current form since 2008, and we heard the Treasurer talk about that as well. The Queensland Revenue Office advises that there has been no change—no change—on how it administers the provisions in relation to businesses that run medical practices.

In September 2023, we announced the decision to support GPs to come into compliance with payroll tax through the payroll tax amnesty and we have provided this amnesty at a cost to the budget of \$100 million a year. This means that medical practices are subject to the same payroll tax interpretations today as they were during the entirety of the Newman government. The LNP is very confused with this motion, and I cannot blame it. It is probably a bit much for those opposite to try to get their heads around revenue measures and around taxation policy. They have promised to bring in one, but they do not have one.

*(Time expired)*

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (5.42 pm): Bulk-billing rates are declining across Queensland and have been for a number of years but no more so than in regional Queensland and across the electorate that I represent. There are no fully bulk-billed medical practices in the greater Mackay region anymore and this tax by stealth that is going to impact general practice is another example of this Treasurer's arrogance—no consultation, not listening to industry, little regard for Queenslanders and especially Queenslanders who live in rural and regional Queensland.

I heard the member for Ipswich outline comments made by RACGP President, Dr Nicole Higgins. I am proud to say that Dr Nicole Higgins is my local constituent. Her practice is in the Whitsunday region and I get to speak to Dr Nicole Higgins quite regularly and at times quite informally down at our local Bucasia beachfront cafe. I will quote Dr Nicole Higgins, who said—

It is another nail in the coffin for struggling general practices in Queensland.

Practices with two or more full time equivalent GPs will be affected. So, it's particularly bad news for rural and remote communities, which are often served by small practices with only a few ... hard-working GPs.

No-one knows this more than the member for Burdekin given that there are parts of his community that have only had one or two GPs who have been crippled under this state Labor government and there are communities that do not even have access to a GP anymore because of the failures of this Labor government. The Vice-President and Queensland Chair, Dr Bruce Willett, went on to say that this tax 'will have a devastating impact on communities across Queensland and will result in worsening health conditions, and more strain on our already overburdened hospital system and emergency departments'.


As outlined by our shadow health minister, we know that EDs are at capacity. Ambulance ramping at 44.7 per cent is the worst in the country and in Mackay since 2015 when this government came to power and the local member's time began in this House the elective surgery waitlist has soared by 885 to 1,702. That is a 108 per cent increase, yet this government wants to inflict more pain and hardship on general practice which is going to be a deterrent for people accessing that primary health care that we know they desperately need.

I have had the pleasure to meet with many practice managers across my community of Mackay and the Whitsundays. I have hosted the shadow Treasurer to meet with general practice managers across the community, and many general practice managers are not doctors. In fact, I represent an electorate where they are single businesswomen running GP practices. I refer to Kath, who I reached out to through my office this morning. She is a practice manager who held a staff meeting this very day advising that patients are not going to be happy and that it is going to cause enormous frustration.

Just in the last 12 months the rising cost impost on business when you add up electricity, goods and services, freight and transport under this current government equate to an increase of over 20 per cent. They are already under enormous pressure in terms of the need to increase fees and charges that they do not want to pass on to their patients. Under this government and under this Treasurer, further taxation and further costs are going to put these small businesses at risk.

We know that our hardworking staff across our frontline services in our hospitals and in particular my local hospital at the Mackay Base Hospital are already under strain from the lack of support and the lack of resources by this government and this government failing to listen to those on the front line. Have we ever heard advocacy by those opposite? No! All we have heard is crickets. I would like to know if the Treasurer and how many government members have met with GPs and practice managers since the introduction and how many of them are applauding this government. If we want to end the chaos and crisis of this Labor government, then I urge anyone who sees a GP and wants to make sure they can afford to see a GP to change the government and show Labor the door in '24.

*(Time expired)*

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (5.47 pm): I just want to remind the House what we are voting on in this debate—that is, the member for Nanango's amended motion which says that the Labor government should revoke revenue rulings PTAQ000.6.1 to PTAQ000.6.3. That is the action that this House is being called on to do in this motion. I hope those opposite understand that. When these rulings were introduced, they were to provide relief so that GPs could restructure their arrangements so they would not be affected by payroll tax. That is the intent of what was put forward and the negotiations that took place in order to do that.

Let us have a look at what happened. In September—and I note that all of the quotes were from other rulings in January of that year—when this was introduced, the very thing that those opposite want to get rid of, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners released a press release titled

'RACGP applauds Queensland government for acting to help keep essential GP care affordable'. It said that. It went on to say that it applauds the Queensland government's decision on this ruling—the ruling that those opposite want to eradicate. The press release states—

RACGP Queensland Chair Dr Bruce Willett thanked the Queensland Government for listening to GPs.

That was in September. He continued—

I want to thank our government for listening to the RACGP, our member GPs and practice owners ...

This is what the RACGP said about this tax ruling in September 2023. Dr Willett further stated—

.... and I am so pleased that the Queensland Government sat down with us, listened, and worked with us to find a permanent solution.

I heard an interjection that this is an amnesty to allow them to restructure their affairs. What was the RACGP's opinion on this in July 2024? I take members to the statement of the RACGP on 24 July 2024 which states—

In light of recent changes to state and territory payroll tax interpretations—

they make clear that these are interpretations, not any new tax, and to say otherwise is misleading this House—

the RACGP is seeking:

...

... cross-jurisdictional alignment and harmonisation with the Queensland Government Public Ruling PTAQ000.6.3 ...


The very thing that this motion calls to eradicate, the RACGP has called to be harmonised. I am willing to give a copy to any member who seeks to mislead the House.

It is embarrassing that the LNP is calling for the revocation of a tax that the RACGP supports. They support it so much that they want to see it introduced in every state in the country. They want to see it harmonised across the nation. The LNP has scored the worst own goal. It is like looking at footballers on YouTube performing own goals. They never live it down. It is an embarrassment that the LNP is calling for a ruling that would actually hurt GPs by creating more taxation for GPs. You have no credibility on tax, no credibility on health.

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

**Mr POWER:** You should be ashamed of this. If you vote for it, it will hang around your heads.

*(Time expired)*

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (5.53 pm): We now know whose side the ALP is on in this debate. It is not the side of patients and it is not the side of doctors; it is the side of the lawyers, the accountants, the tax advisers and everybody else who will be paid fees by GPs to restructure their practices to avoid a tax. This tax will come about because of the two rulings in this motion: the first that imposed a tax on GPs and then another one which provides them a way out with an exemption, but only if they restructure their business. It costs money to restructure businesses. It costs a lot of money sometimes. That is money that GPs do not have because some of them are operating on the thinnest of margins when it comes to profitability, especially in rural and regional Queensland. We know the side that the ALP is on and it is not the side of patients and it is not the side of GPs, especially not in rural and regional Queensland.

Sometimes we refer to the laggard of Australia's economy—sometimes it might be Queensland, sometimes Tasmania and other times South Australia—as the sick man of Australia. I think some members opposite might be needing to see a GP soon, because they are suffering in a very perverse way from Munchausen syndrome by proxy. They are trying to claim the credit for putting in place a fix for a problem they allowed to be created in the first place.


They need to not talk about the exemption; they need to get rid of the GP tax. Cameron Dick, the Treasurer of Queensland, should walk into this chamber and categorically rule out the exemption finishing in July 2025 and change the rules. The Labor Party likes to talk about changing the rules. A few years ago that was a union campaign. Let's change the rules and get rid of the patient tax. It is not just me who calls it a patient tax; I have a letter from Cornerstone Health in which they talk about the patient tax that will ensure people are \$20 out of pocket for every GP visit. That is \$20 that many people simply cannot afford. I remember the hoo-ha a few years ago when the Abbott government talked about introducing a co-payment of \$7 to visit a GP for certain people. It was not even for everyone; it was only for people who did not have a healthcare card. The ALP all over the country cried bloody murder they would be charged \$7 to visit a GP.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. I ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I withdraw and apologise—blue murder! A few years ago the ALP said that \$7 was too much. Cornerstone Health says that \$20 could be the out-of-pocket cost if this GP tax goes ahead. Instead of allowing a problem to be created and then claiming credit for creating an exemption to it, just get rid of the problem.

There are many GPs in the Scenic Rim electorate who will be seriously affected by this. There are a couple of bulk-billing practices around, and the GPs tell me that if this is implemented they will not be able to bulk-bill anymore. Perhaps even worse, it will threaten the overall viability of their practices from Beaudesert to Tamborine Mountain, from Boonah to Kalbar and into Ipswich as well.

We have a public health system under stress. There is record ramping across the state—over 50 per cent at Ipswich Hospital and it is very high at Logan and Gold Coast hospitals. What will patients do if they cannot see a GP because they are not bulk billing or they have gone broke? They will go to our public hospitals. The problem created by Labor's patient tax will make our ramping worse. It will make our emergency department wait times worse. There is a simple solution: not tax our GPs. Change the rules when it comes to payroll tax: exempt GPs. Get rid of the patient tax and take the burden off Queenslanders who are already suffering enough in the cost-of-living crisis created by members opposite and the Albanese federal Labor government. The best way to do that is to show Labor the door in October 2024.

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (5.58 pm): I rise tonight to speak in favour of our fantastic community GPs who have done a great job advocating for clarification on this provision. I was so proud to advocate as a government member to the Treasurer on clarifying the provisions of the payroll tax for GPs after meeting with my own fantastic local GP, Aaron Chambers, who is now my husband's GP and owns my local community medical practice, Growlife Medical. He is a GP who also owns his own practice. He now has a number of practices within my community which I think is fantastic because, as we all know, GPs who own their own practices really strive for wonderful patient centred care.

As I was saying, I met with Aaron a few years ago so that he could explain to me how the changes in enforcement could impact on general practice and general practitioners. It is important to be clear that the rules on this issue have been in place in their current form since 2008. Aaron explained to me that many GP practices do not operate like normal small businesses. In many cases, the money paid for appointments with a GP often go to that GP directly and then the GP has a contractual arrangement with their practice whereby there is an agreed percentage that they then pay back to the practice to cover the costs of rent, incidental bandages, admin staff who take the phone calls and book appointments and, of course, the medical software that so many practices now use.

I took this information forward in my role as a community advocate and local member. I explained why I felt we need to give GPs an opportunity to not be subject to the payroll tax that these changes in enforcement have brought up as an issue but instead continue to focus on caring for our community. The RACGP and the AMA welcomed our government's decision and they support our government's amnesty to give GPs and medical practices the opportunity to come into compliance with the payroll tax amnesty—an amnesty that has led the nation.

Many members will have met Aaron when he came in here yesterday as part of the GPs @ Parliament program. He thanked me for my advocacy on this issue because it was certainly something that was concerning to him. Aaron is really appreciative of the amnesty and the fact that it gives GPs an opportunity to comply with the legislation and the revenue measures. As the Treasurer said, this tax is not going to apply to compliant practices and every medical practice has until 2025 to change their structure should they need to if they are not currently compliant. If the opposition motion gets up as written, it will wind back the clock and force GPs and GP practices such as Aaron's to pay that payroll tax. This motion is scaremongering at best. At worst, I am genuinely concerned that those opposite do not understand how this revenue measure works. That is a scary thought considering that they hope to be in government in just over a month.

Our government's commitment to affordable primary and emergency health care does not end there. Under the Miles government, we have opened satellite hospitals to ensure people who need to be seen urgently, but cannot get to a GP and do not need emergency care, can be seen urgently. Those facilities work in conjunction with our amazing community GPs and, of course, the federally funded urgent care clinics. All of those services are proudly supported by our government. I cannot tell members the number of families who have told me how grateful they are that they could go to one of our satellite hospitals to receive quality after-hours health care for issues such as suspected broken

bones, especially for children, on weekends or late at night when their GP practice is not open. That is just one of the ways that our government is supporting affordable health care, unlike those opposite who called our satellite hospitals 'fake' hospitals. I would say that the thousands of Queenslanders who have received help and treatment at our fantastic hospital facilities respectfully disagree.

To be crystal clear, no GP practice that complies with their obligations will ever have to pay this so-called tax. I believe that the members of the opposition know that.

**Mr Hart:** You called it a tax. You said it was a revenue measure.

**Ms PUGH:** Oh my goodness me, member for Burleigh: get on the speaking list. Those opposite do not like it because they know that this is a sham motion—


**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order, members! Direct your comments through the chair, please, member for Mount Ommaney.

**Ms PUGH:** Those opposite do not like it. This motion is a sham.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I call the member for Kawana.

**Mr Bailey:** Speaking of a sham.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.02 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I take personal offence at what the member for Miller said and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I apologise that I did not hear it but, member for Miller, the member has taken personal offence and I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr BAILEY:** I withdraw.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** If it looks like a tax, walks like a tax, quacks like a tax and smells like a tax then it is a tax. For all the Labor Party ministers and backbenchers to try to make out that this is a revenue measure and not a taxation measure is an absolute joke. The Treasurer's first question was, 'Why on earth is the member for Nanango moving this motion?' I will tell him why. It is because we are in a cost-of-living crisis and the Liberal National Party have a shadow minister for cost of living. That is why the member for Nanango moved the motion. The LNP's priority is Queenslanders' priority and that is the cost of living. Whether it is the cost-of-living crisis, the health crisis, the youth crime crisis or all the other crises, they are our priorities because they are Queenslanders' priorities. The member for Nanango moved the motion because it is important for Queenslanders.

The member for Ipswich said that it is a tax that does not exist. She said it is an elusive tax that we have not heard about before but at the same time called it a groundbreaking tax. At the start of her speech she said it was an elusive tax that did not exist but by the end of her speech—

**Ms HOWARD:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence, mainly because it is untrue, and I ask that the member withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I will take some advice. When members rise on a point of order to take personal offence, I ask that members alert the House only to the fact that they have taken personal offence. It is not an opportunity to give commentary or make a speech. The member has taken personal offence. I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I withdraw. The member for Ipswich said it is a tax that does not exist. I pose a question to the Labor members: why would you then need the amnesty? What is the amnesty for? If it is a tax that does not exist, why is the amnesty in place? What payment is the government stopping until July 2025 if it is a tax that does not exist? That does not make sense.

The member for Ipswich also quoted Nicole Higgins, President of the RACGP and a practice owner in Mackay. I will also quote Dr Higgins. She said she felt 'sick in the guts' when she read the new ruling on payroll tax. She said—

It is imperative that the Queensland government exempt general practice from payroll tax and failure to do this will result in further closures of general practices.

Why didn't the member for Ipswich read all of the quote from Dr Higgins?

Let us look at some of the headlines about the patient tax that we have seen over the past 18 months: 'GP tax crisis: Spiralling costs sound death knell for Qld clinics'; 'Patient tax will cripple general practice'; 'Treasurer must act on GP fees'; "Nothing is off the table": GP tax stoush to go to National Cabinet'; and 'Doctors label extra hit amid crisis "immoral" as Treasurer refuses to budge on GP tax'. As I said at the start, if it looks like a tax, it smells like a tax and it comes from the Labor Party and is



Labor Party policy then it is definitely a tax. This is a patient tax in a cost-of-living and health crisis. Members should make no mistake: if the Labor Party is re-elected on 26 October then going to see your doctor in Queensland will cost more, which is the last thing Queenslanders need in a cost-of-living crisis.

The member for Bancroft said that it is a tax that does not exist. As I have said, why do you need an amnesty if the tax does not exist in the first place? He asked why doctors are not speaking to the motion. I can understand why Dr Miles would not speak on the motion. I do not think we need any union encouragement or input into this particular motion. I am not sure that by speaking on the motion he would offer anything particularly insightful for honourable members this evening.

A few general practitioners have reached out to us. Today I spoke to Lee-Anne at Lake Kawana General Practice. We received an email from Vivianne at Caloundra Health Hub who talked about the difficulty in implementing this tax change and the cost of general practice in Queensland. The Leader of the Opposition and I met with Dr Nicola and Jen onsite at Saltwater Medical, in the electorate of the member for Caloundra. They spoke about the pain that they feel for their staff and their nurses. They said they do not want to pass on Labor's patient tax but they are going to have to from July 2025 if the Labor Party is re-elected.

Everybody knows that this is Labor's patient tax. As the editor of the *Courier-Mail* said a little while ago—


TREASURER Cameron Dick returns to work this week with general practitioners having found themselves on the growing list of professions hit with new or increased state taxes.

That is happening under the Labor government.

**An opposition member:** Shame!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection; it is shameful. We are only a few short weeks away from the state election and Queenslanders know the only way to end the chaos and crisis of the Labor government and to solve the crises facing us is to change the government and show Labor the door in '24. That is the only way we will get a reprieve from these big taxes.

*(Time expired)*

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (6.08 pm): I rise to speak against the motion before the House because I know that if there is one group of people Queenslanders do not trust when it comes to their health and managing their health system it is those opposite. Health workers do not trust those on the opposite side because they know exactly how many of them were sacked from our health system in Queensland.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mrs McMAHON:** I take that interjection. Closing the Moreton Bay unit and closing the Barrett centre—that is the legacy of those opposite when it comes to health.

Do members know whom I trust when it comes to talking about the health of Queenslanders? I actually trust the GPs. I will take advice from the GPs about what it takes to improve the health of Queenslanders. I advise those many people watching at home that yesterday at Parliament House we were visited by the RACGP. They came along and gave MPs the opportunity to have a check-up. Many members on both sides of the chamber took advantage of that opportunity and had some really good conversations with the GPs who were here.

For those who are not familiar with it, it is quite a common practice for groups to come to parliament and speak to members, particularly in the lead-up to an election, because they have the opportunity to talk to us about their priorities for the upcoming election. They had even, so conveniently, prepared a document about the Queensland election in 2024. These are the priorities for Queensland GPs for the upcoming election. Do you know what? They are putting patients first, and that is what we intend to do. They are important priorities for Queensland in this upcoming election, and I am more than happy to take a lot of this information on board.

I had some very good conversations with Dr Bayliss. The RACGP want to grow and sustain the GP workforce. That is something that we want to do. We absolutely support our GPs. Do you know what else is important to them? Cutting red tape to fast-track access to essential treatments.

**Mr Bleijie:** Rob van Manen. That's what's important to Macalister.

**Mrs McMAHON:** Those opposite are not interested in hearing about the health of Queensland, only whatever slogan they can fit in to this debate. Let's talk about the health priorities of Queensland and what the GPs want from both sides of politics. This is what they want from both sides of politics in 2024—

**Mr Bleijie:** And Rob van Manen will deliver for them.

**Mrs McMAHON:**—and it is probably just not talking over the top of other people. They actually listened, and I did too.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr Smith** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Member for Bundaberg and member for Kawana, cease your quarrelling across the chamber.

**Mrs McMAHON:** They want politicians to listen to GPs to create a smarter healthcare system, so that is what I will do. I will listen to my GP. I am a huge fan of my family GP. I have been going there for 10 years. When speaking to these GPs yesterday, not once did they talk about payroll tax.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order! Pause the clock. Resume your seat, please, member. I have good news, members: the warnings reset at 6 pm so those people who were on a warning are off a warning but, member for Kawana, you are on a warning.

**Mrs McMAHON:** Let's look at the priorities of GPs in this upcoming election. The priorities are about the health of Queenslanders and not about grandstanding, misrepresenting and running scare campaigns. I am proud of our commitment to the health system here in Queensland. I am proud to be the lucky recipient of a satellite hospital in my electorate. After speaking to the GPs, I know that that will be a godsend for our local constituents and those who would otherwise go to Logan Hospital because it is hard to see a GP. Our GPs are caring for our community and they are putting the health of Queenslanders first. Their priority is the health of Queenslanders and their patients, not sloganeering or running fear campaigns. Let's put the health of Queensland first—let's put the patients first and the LNP last.

*(Time expired)*

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

**AYES, 36:**

**LNP, 35**—Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crandon, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Gerber, Hart, Head, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Watts, Weir, Zanow.


**KAP, 1**—Andrew.

**NOES, 48:**

**ALP, 48**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, A. King, S. King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Martin, McCallum, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Nightingale, O'Rourke, Pease, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Skelton, Smith, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Whiting.

Resolved in the negative.

## ORDER OF BUSINESS


 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (Leader of the House) (6.19 pm): I advise the House that the automatic adjournment this evening will commence at 9 pm, with the House rising at 9.30 pm.

## TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS (VAPING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL


### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 3026, on motion of Ms Fentiman—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice) (6.19 pm), continuing: I want to finish what I was saying about the work the education department has done to raise awareness of the dangers of vaping. We know that we have to enable teachers and parents to deal with this. I referred earlier to the fact that our suspensions related to vaping have decreased by 60 per cent because we know it does not work to simply punish young people; we have to address the problem at its roots.

We are rolling out the Blurred Minds program, which has been developed in consultation with Griffith University. It has already been run by 136 schools and is recognised as being a really valuable resource. We are currently working with students to help them address directly the reasons for their addiction, how to not start vaping in the first place or how to manage it if they are already addicted. I think we will see some great results coming out of that program. I want to return to what the young women, the school co-captains from Lourdes Hill, said today. They basically said to us, 'You adults need to fix this. You need to help us.' That is what we are here to do, and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (6.20 pm): I rise to address the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. As has been noted by previous speakers, the LNP will not be opposing this bill. We will not be opposing this because vaping is a scourge on society and, hopefully, that is something we can all agree on.

I have four young kids and it concerns me how prevalent vaping has become amongst young people and how easily accessible vapes seem to be, even with the laws that are in place. When I visit high schools around my community, I am often told by staff that one of the main challenges they deal with is the use of vapes on school grounds—students gathering in bathrooms or hidden areas in the school to share a vape or an e-cigarette.

Last week I held a mobile office outside one of my local schools. I was not on the school grounds but in the park nearby. After school finished, some young lads in year 8 came over. One of them was quite the vape aficionado. After we spoke about the merits or otherwise of vaping, I asked him what he found useful about it. He said he enjoyed the taste. I said, 'Do you realise what it is doing to your health, mate?' From that conversation, it became very clear that he had no idea what it was doing to his health. He had no idea what the consequences of his actions may be. We need to ensure that we protect people who may not be in a position to be as informed on some of these things as they should be.

Being under the legal age to purchase smoking products—whether that is e-cigarettes or vapes—has not stopped young teens. What is especially worrying is hearing that those kids are connecting with adult strangers online, getting them to buy their vapes for them and then meeting them in person to exchange them. I am sure that is concerning to all parents and to all adults in our community. Nothing good can come from that course of action.

The reason I brought that up is that it has been happening for many years now. It is feedback that I regularly receive. There has been very little policing or enforcement of this. I acknowledge that the authorities have limited resources to enforce some of these issues. That is a problem for our society. It is a problem for business. It is a problem from a public health perspective.

It is all well and good for us to voice our disgust with respect to illegal tobacco or vapes, but we need to ensure we resource departments appropriately so that they can take real action to crack down on those who do the wrong thing. I have been contacted by residents and business owners in my electorate on several occasions about chop-chop shops that are operating across the Sunshine Coast. There is one in the main street probably 200 metres from my office. I think all members of the House would acknowledge that some of these chop-chop shops blatantly break the law and there is little consequence for that.

I know that you, Deputy Speaker, as the member for Southern Downs, have raised this in the parliament in the past. This is true in many electorates across the state. In my role as the shadow minister for small and family businesses, businesses that are legitimately selling tobacco frequently raise the issue of illegal businesses selling chop-chop and illegal tobacco and the impact this has had not just on their trade but also on their customers. They are buying something and they have idea no what the product is.

We have seen the associated links between organised crime and these chop-chop shops in many communities across the state, including in my own. Admittedly, it is just across my boundary in the electorate of Ninderry. There have been ramraids on legitimate tobacconists and tobacco stolen to, I would contend, drive them out of business because chop-chop shops are seeking to take their market.

What is very clear is that this behaviour has been happening for years but there has been no serious penalty. We have seen no marked increase in penalties. The question has to be asked: what is going to change with this legislation? If the authorities do not have the resources to enforce the legislation, what is the point of passing legislation in first place?

Most small and family businesses are trying to do the right thing. They are following the direction to stop the sale of vapes containing nicotine, but not all shops are doing that. It is very clear that there are a number of businesses openly flouting the existing legislation and regulations. The dodgy shops out there continuing to sell vapes and e-cigarettes containing nicotine do that with little fear of consequences. They know there is not going to be a consequence. We need to ensure that there is a consequence. We need to ensure that we protect those who are doing the right thing.


Personally, I would rather see a society where there is no smoking, but I acknowledge that it is a reality in our society that people can choose to smoke. I think we need to protect the community to ensure the incidence of smoking is reduced. While it is legal, we need to ensure that those who choose to do the right thing are protected and those who do the wrong thing are held to account. That is not happening right now.

The reality is that tobacconists or shops like newsagents that choose to sell cigarettes and are doing the right thing are losing trade to those who are selling under-the-counter illicit products. I would hate to see legitimate businesses doing the right thing close, particularly small and family businesses. I have spent most of my time in parliament, as have many on this side of the chamber, fighting for small and family businesses. A shop that is selling illegal tobacco products or vapes, especially if they are ending up in the hands of young people, needs to be held to account and close their doors, in my opinion.

That would take a state government that is genuinely committed to addressing this problem. My view is that, unfortunately, this is lip-service. The dodgy shops flouting the law right now will not be impacted and will not see any meaningful crackdown on their actions unless there are appropriate resources allocated. They know there will not be a penalty applied to them. Queensland Health has previously criticised the state government's enforcement of illegal tobacco products, but even that did not prompt a response from the state government. I think that tells us the gravity of the issue for this state government.

We need to see real action if we are going to address the scourge of illegal vapes and e-cigarettes. There needs to be an additional allocation of resources to departments to ensure they can enforce compliance. Queenslanders want a government that will not just introduce legislation but will implement measures which will address the concerns and issues that are countenanced by this bill. Good intentions are fine, but without action we are not going to see any improvement on the many issues facing Queensland.

It is my view that the only way that we are going to address these concerns is by changing the government on 26 October. What has become very clear is that this government does not have the intention to take the action that is necessary. It is happy to pay lip-service to some of these issues, but words without action are meaningless. It is time to show Labor the door in '24.

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (6.27 pm): I rise in support of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill should not be underestimated in terms of its impact on improving the health of many Queenslanders. The alarming dangers that vaping poses to our community and especially our children are serious and are of growing concern to our community across the length and breadth of Queensland. It is our duty to protect the wellbeing and future of our younger generations. Therefore, it is important that we tackle these issues head-on and understand the consequences they have on our society.

This bill we are debating achieves its policy objectives by amending the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 to ensure that Queensland can effectively enforce the implementation of the Commonwealth ban on the importation, manufacture, supply and commercial possession of all disposable, single-use and recreational vapes and take strong and decisive action to address vaping in Queensland.

There can be no dispute that scientific evidence has proven that tobacco, whilst a legal product, has long been recognised as a major public health concern worldwide. Its devastating impact on individuals, families and communities cannot be overstated.

We must confront the emerging threat of vaping, which has gained popularity among young people in recent years. Vaping, or the use of electronic cigarettes, has been marketed as a safer alternative to traditional smoking. However, mounting evidence suggests that vaping carries its own set of dangers, particularly when it comes to our children.

One of the major concerns is the aggressive marketing and appealing flavours that are specifically targeted at young people. Just type 'vape flavours' into an internet search—the most popular vape juice flavours in Australia include fruity flavours like strawberry, blueberry and mango; dessert flavours like cookie dough and sticky buns; minty menthols; and even savoury liquid flavours such as bacon or cheese. There is no doubt that these flavours are made to entice children and adolescents, creating a new generation of nicotine users—yes, 'nicotine users' because the evidence is clear that the addictive nature of nicotine poses a grave risk as it can lead to long-term dependence and pave the way for future tobacco use.

Preliminary evidence is showing that many vape products currently on the market do not indicate the chemical makeup of the vape consumers are ingesting. To be frank, this is quite alarming. We cannot afford to gamble with the health of our children and adolescents. The precautionary principle must guide our actions, urging us to take preventive measures before it is too late. This legislation is required to stop the accessibility of vaping products. To protect our youth from the dangers of vaping we must take a strict approach, so one of the measures this bill clarifies is that an adult must not supply an illicit nicotine product to a child. The bill creates new offences relating to illicit nicotine products. This term is defined to mean vaping goods, as defined in the Commonwealth bill, and other products prescribed by regulation. The ability to prescribe products by regulation ensures that novel products, such as nicotine pouches, can be captured within the prohibition as they are developed or as their use becomes commonplace in Queensland.


It is important that we invest in educational campaigns that educate our children, parents and teachers about the dangers of vaping, equipping them with accurate information that debunks the misconceptions surrounding e-cigarettes and empowering them to make informed decisions. I congratulate Queensland Health for introducing a 'There's Nothing Sweet About Vapes' campaign to specifically target young people on social media platforms to highlight the harmful chemicals and health effects. I also know that Queensland Health and Education Queensland have implemented a new Pathway to Cessation program to promote working collaboratively to develop and implement a pilot vaping-tobacco smoking cessation support program for secondary school students aged 12 to 18 and to support vaping cessation in Queensland secondary schools.

When it comes to the electorate of Hervey Bay, I am reliably informed that vaping is taking place in schools, as it is across all of our electorates, as well as at home and in the community, with children as young as six or seven years of age vaping. This is a shocking fact. This is alarming, given there is currently no real long-term evidence to show what vaping—ingesting smoke into young lungs—will do to the development of internal organs over time. We can draw a comparison on the research done on tobacco smoke ingestion. Medical science is saying that it looks as though there will be little difference with vaping.

I am really concerned at the level of medical conditions that vaping is going to be presenting to the community in the next 10 to 20 years, let alone the impact on a child's health during their development. I say to our kids: smoking or vaping is not cool, or however you want to express it these days. It just is not.

I cannot commend this bill strongly enough and I ask all members in this House to support this bill. This legislation will create a healthier state. It will further strengthen the protection of our children from the dangers of a potential lifelong addiction to substances that damage their health and bring premature death.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work done by the former and current ministers for health, the committee and the committee secretariat in reviewing this legislation. I support this very timely bill before the House.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (6.33 pm): I rise to address the debate on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, introduced by the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women on 12 June 2024. The primary objective of this legislation is to enable Queensland to enforce the Commonwealth of Australia's ban on the supply and possession of vaping products and to give effect to the Queensland state government's response to the former Queensland parliament's Health and Environment Committee's recommendations arising from its report, tabled on 31 August 2023, titled *Vaping: an inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland*.

Accordingly, this legislation will make a number of amendments to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 including, but not limited to, inserting a definition of 'illicit nicotine products' to capture within that term vaping goods, including vaping devices, substances and accessories, as

well as products containing nicotine or another substance detrimental to health that have been prescribed by regulation. This legislation will also remove the definition of 'personal vaporiser' and incorporate relevant aspects of it within the definition of 'vaping device' as well as insert new offences relating to the supply and possession of illicit nicotine products.

There is a specific amendment that a person must not, as part of a business activity, supply or possess illicit tobacco so as to align it with the new provision regulating the supply and possession of illicit nicotine products. There are also amendments to increase the current penalties for persons who supply and possess illicit tobacco as part of a business activity.

Amendments will also clarify that the prohibition on commercial possession extends to offsite premises, such as a storage shed or vehicle, if the premises is used for the purpose of storing or possessing illicit tobacco or illicit nicotine products. There will also be the creation of a new power to order the interim closure of a premises from which illicit tobacco or illicit nicotine products are being supplied as part of a business activity, or from which a business is being carried on without a licence, and for the Magistrates Court to order closure for a longer stated period of up to six months. There are also ancillary offences relating to violating closure orders. This legislation will also create new offences relating to displaying, advertising and promoting illicit nicotine products.

Vaping, e-cigarettes and traditional tobacco products have become a widespread public health concern, especially amongst young people. Specifically in relation to tobacco, we know that it is the leading preventable cause of morbidity and mortality in Australia. The former chief health officer here in Queensland and now Governor, Dr Jeannette Young, did a lot with respect to reducing tobacco consumption rates here in Queensland, and that certainly has to be acknowledged.

In relation to vaping and e-cigarettes, it has been widely recorded that, although initially marketed as a safer alternative to traditional smoking, vaping has quickly revealed its own set of dangers, with e-cigarettes having the capability to deliver nicotine through vapour rather than smoke, thus exposing users to toxic substances like formaldehyde, heavy metals and carcinogens.

As a part of this debate, it is important to also look specifically at the Queensland context. To that end, I want to acknowledge the work of the former Health and Environment Committee and its findings reported through its inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland. As the committee stated in its report No. 38—

From the data available, the committee found that e-cigarette use is increasing at an alarming rate in Queensland, particularly among young adults. The data indicates that e-cigarette use is increasing among school-aged children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and is more likely among people experiencing mental illness ... The committee heard that e-cigarettes are already having a negative impact on the community and the health system.

The committee found that the increase in vaping by young people has become a challenging situation in schools. The committee noted that approaches taken in Queensland schools have varied and have been limited by a variety of factors and circumstances. Schools, students and parents highlighted the need for an organised, whole of community approach to increasing awareness about e-cigarettes, as well as more vaping specific teaching resources, and specific approaches for students in schools to manage addiction and support quitting.

As the Liberal National Party shadow minister for education, I particularly want to address that last observation of the committee in relation to the increase in vaping amongst young people and the challenging situation we are seeing in Queensland schools.

Over successive years it has become obvious that the state Labor government has failed on drug use, and misuse, in Queensland schools. On the state government's own data, since 2020 total student suspensions and exclusions for substance misconduct involving illegal drugs, tobacco or substances have skyrocketed by over 163 per cent. Even more concerning, suspensions and exclusions for substance misconduct, including illegal tobacco and other drugs, specifically of primary school students, have seen an alarming increase of over 450 per cent.

These are the figures that every Queensland parent has the right to be concerned about. Parents are concerned that the risk of their children being exposed to drugs and other substances in our schools is rising exponentially each and every year. Above all else, it must be noted that these significant increases have occurred under successive terms of the Labor state government and various Labor ministers for education, and it has occurred despite repeated warnings and evidence that substance use, particularly vaping, in our schools has been growing.

The Labor state government has failed to do what matters when it comes to combating smoking and vaping in Queensland schools. The state Labor government has been slow to act on this vital student safety and serious public health issue. It cannot be forgotten that, as the Liberal National Party and media continued to raise the alarm on the growing scourge of vaping in Queensland schools, it

was the former Labor minister for education who sensationally claimed that vaping was no worse a problem than smoking cigarettes was when she was at school. These were comments that the former Labor minister for education had to walk back, later conceding that the issue of vaping 'seems to be taking off' in schools. Incredibly, as reported in January 2022 when asked why the Queensland government could not take the lead, rather than waiting for a national approach, on combating this scourge, the same former Labor minister for education claimed that tobacco, vaping and alcohol education programs that were being delivered in schools were already sufficient.

The former minister for education could not have been more wrong. In the report tabled by the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, the committee highlighted previous findings on the status of vaping in Queensland, including the need for 'more vaping specific teaching resources'. The report stated that—

... vaping by young people has become a challenging situation in schools, and schools, students and parents highlighted the need for an organised approach to increasing awareness about e-cigarettes, as well as more vaping specific teaching resources, and specific approaches for students in schools to manage addiction and support quitting


Despite this, and given the fact that the Labor state government is now able to specifically track and identify the level of vaping in Queensland primary schools, it was confirmed in the education portfolio budget estimates hearings this year, after repeated questioning by the Liberal National Party, that the state government and Department of Education do not have a single dollar invested in specific programs and resources to explicitly combat vaping in primary schools. Remember again that student disciplinary absences for substance misconduct by primary students has risen by 450 per cent in just the last three years under the Labor government.

After years of sustained pressure by the Liberal National Party, the Labor government were forced into finally tracking and recording the level of vaping amongst primary school students. The Labor government have the data, yet they have done nothing with it. The Labor state government are not focused on what matters. There must be a zero tolerance to drugs, vaping, smoking and substance use in our schools.

The Liberal National Party will not be opposing this legislation. The health and wellbeing of Queenslanders in our communities must be paramount. Similarly, Queenslanders, especially parents, are rightly demanding action on vaping and illicit tobacco. However, as is often the case, the Labor state government has simply failed to deliver anything comprehensive to date. Queensland students, parents, teachers and staff deserve a government that is focused on the right priorities, and that includes acting to protect the safety of Queensland students and meaningfully addressing this serious public health issue.

In concluding my contribution, I wish to thank all members of both the former Health and Environment Committee and the current Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee for their careful consideration, examination and inquiries into the prevalence of vaping and tobacco use in Queensland and associated findings in consultation with all submitters and stakeholders. I certainly want to acknowledge the contribution of the parliamentary committee secretariat for all of their hard work. They put in a significant amount of time when it comes to preparing these reports that we bring to the Queensland parliament.

Finally, as a doctor, as a specialist physician, I say to Queenslanders that smoking or vaping does significant harms not only to the individual. A range of cardiovascular problems can emerge, as well as cancers, significant risks of neurological disorders, other health problems and associated public health concerns. The last thing that we need here in Queensland is another generation of young people who can develop serious physical, mental and other harms associated with this. It is very important that people in Queensland understand the serious harms and associated risks of not only tobacco consumption but also vaping.

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (6.43 pm): It gives me great delight to follow the shadow minister for education. Whilst the opposition spokesperson has tremendous qualifications undoubtedly in medicine, he certainly does not have the qualifications on how we publicly administer education here in this state. I will make a couple of comments in relation to—

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find that personally offensive and I ask the member to withdraw.

**Ms McMILLAN:** I withdraw. I want to make a couple of comments around vaping in schools. Whilst the member alludes to statistics that have demonstrated significant incidents of vaping in our schools, the statistics that he has mentioned do not reflect the increasing number of students in that time. There

would certainly be an aspect of those statistics that are directly related to the increased number of students in our schools. We know that from 2020 to 2024 there has been an increase of 700,000 electors in Queensland. If we imagine that many of those electors have children, we are talking in excess of one million more students in our schools across Queensland. That is the first thing.

The second thing relates to administrators of public education in schools. I was acknowledging the member's accolades and qualifications in medicine, not necessarily being derogatory about his lack of ability to administer public education. As a public administrator of education in Queensland over 13 years, I would never, ever want to rely on the LNP government to support me or assist me to administer public education in this state.

Many of us have been through and lived through the impacts of smoking and the tobacco industry on us and our lives as we grew up. We certainly lived through how persuasive the tobacco industry was when we were growing up. The government and the Department of Education have never made excuses for suspending students in relation to illicit drug use. Tobacco use, marijuana use, drinking at school and vaping at school constitute illicit drug use in Queensland, particularly in light of how old our children are. We know that vaping, like tobacco use, requires significant intervention at all levels—local councils, state government and federal government. It requires schools to work closely with parents and it requires schools to be engaged in an educative process as well as a disciplinary process around students vaping, which is very similar to how we have managed smoking in schools over many years.

Vaping is not new for public administrators to manage. I want to congratulate our schools because often our schools and the administrators of our schools have to deal with these societal issues and manage the impact of these broader societal issues. I want to congratulate our teachers and our administrators for how they have managed vaping in our schools. The administrators who I speak to tell me that vaping in our schools is coming down and we are gradually getting on top of the issue, as we did with smoking.

The impacts of vaping, particularly for young people, are well known. Our government is focused on keeping Queenslanders safe and healthy, especially our youngest Queenslanders. Queensland will be the first state to implement the Commonwealth ban through corresponding state legislation. We are taking strong action to protect the health of Queenslanders, and this bill demonstrates a significant step forward in delivering our commitment to addressing the rising availability of these illicit products. In every electorate in Queensland, there are shops popping up everywhere. I have them in my electorate and we know they exist in every electorate. They are impacting on our young people and on our ability to manage this issue, including for our school administrators.

The bill creates new offences relating to illicit nicotine products. This includes vaping goods, devices, substances and accessories defined in the Commonwealth definition as well as any nicotine or harmful substances prescribed by regulation. This definition ensures all vapes are covered regardless of nicotine content or therapeutic claims.

New offences will be inserted into section 161A to prohibit supply and possession of illicit nicotine products. This is intended to capture all commercial operations, including retail and wholesale businesses, which are involved in the supply of nicotine products in some capacity. It is important that the federal government intervene as well to ensure we stop the supply of these substances in this country. Importantly, these offences extend beyond traditional retailers supplying products to encompass any business activity involving the sale of illicit nicotine products. This means that vape stores, convenience stores, online retailers and social media stores are captured, too.

To provide a stronger deterrent for businesses continuing to trade in illegal tobacco products, the bill also increases penalties for supplying and commercially possessing illicit tobacco to align with the higher penalties proposed for illicit nicotine products. Illicit tobacco remains a significant problem for us nationally, with estimates that the illicit tobacco trade could be as high as 25 per cent of the tobacco market. Profit margins for retailers of illicit tobacco and vaping goods are high, and the rate of growth in stores selling these products has sustained since the recent amendments and enforcement. This indicates that the current penalties have limited deterrent effect. This tells us that stronger deterrents are required.


The penalty for commercial supply and possession of illicit tobacco will be aligned with the proposed penalties for the commercial supply and possession of illicit nicotine products—that is, a maximum of two years imprisonment, 2,000 penalty units, or both, for supply, and a maximum of 12 months imprisonment, 1,000 penalty units, or both, for commercial possession.



The emergence of illicit nicotine products in recent years has increased efforts by retailers and manufacturers to find avenues to advertise and promote these products. This promotion is primarily targeted at our children and young adults—it is cunning—through websites, on social media, in print and in retail stores. This is not unlike what many of us grew up with—the influence of tobacco on our lives. They are promoted as less harmful, contained in attractive packaging and supplied in an array of interesting flavours. This bill recognises this very serious issue and acts upon it. It is important to our government that the harmful promotion is carefully monitored and deterred.

This bill provides a new offence, restraining persons who are part of business activity from displaying, advertising and promoting illicit nicotine products. Each offence carries a maximum penalty of 140 penalty units. To further protect our children from the damaging effects of illicit nicotine products, the bill creates another new offence, prohibiting adults from supplying these products to a child. This offence is intended to apply to the supply of illicit nicotine products outside of a commercial or therapeutic setting. It does not apply to a person who is acting as an employee of, or otherwise on behalf of, another person, or to a person who supplies the illicit nicotine product as part of the business activity.

The bill will ensure that Queensland can appropriately enforce the Commonwealth ban. Our government is taking strong and decisive action to regulate this issue. We need to make sure we are working within a national government framework, and we also need our local councils to step up and make some legislation. We are protecting the safety and wellbeing of our young Queenslanders who have 'fallen suit' to the high levels of vaping uptake. These amendments will assist to keep these products away from our children's hands and to reduce addiction. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (6.53 pm): Vaping, particularly in our schools, is incredibly concerning. I have spoken with many parents concerned about vaping in our schools, I have spoken with many teachers who are really trying to help young people and teach them how to practise healthy habits, and I have spoken to many doctors who are trying to highlight the magnitude of the problem.

In 2019, this was the situation: according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 9.6 per cent of people aged 14 to 17 in Australia were using e-cigarettes. Queensland was ranked the second highest Australian jurisdiction for its vaping use. That was in 2019. By 2022, the number of young people aged between 14 and 17 who were using e-cigarettes or vaping nearly tripled, to 28 per cent, and 49 per cent of people aged 18 to 24 in Australia reported having used an e-cigarette or a vape at least once in their lifetime. This was the highest of all age groups. Now, new data released just hours ago shows that 35.6 per cent of Queensland young people aged 12 to 17 have tried a vape. Needless to say, it is definitely an issue our community is acutely aware of and concerned about, not only with the rapid uptake of vaping by our kids but also with the adverse health effects and the harms that we do not yet fully appreciate.

In her second reading speech the minister spoke about the number of suspensions our schools have given for kids who are vaping. I note that recommendation 6 of the committee report recommends the Department of Education and Queensland Health prepare guidelines for all Queensland schools on interventions such as interactive online courses that can be used as alternative education for students found vaping or with vaping products rather than using punitive outcomes such as suspensions.

I wish to draw members' attention to the wonderful work that my local state high school, Elanora State High School, is doing in the electorate of Currumbin to combat vaping, work that it has been doing for over two years now. Elanora State High School is ahead of the game with its anti-vaping program, which involves an intensive vaping education program that has seen highly effective results. Principal Rochelle Lewis developed the program in 2022 because, like many other schools, Elanora State High School had a zero-tolerance approach to vaping and students caught vaping were immediately suspended. In Elanora State High School, this resulted in 52 students being suspended and a huge plumbing bill due to students flushing their vapes down the toilet to avoid being caught. Ms Lewis told me that in her 23 years of being an educator she had never encountered a problem like vaping.

She took action. Principal Lewis, parents and teachers came together concerned that suspension was not working to deter kids from vaping, and the sheer number of suspensions was not something the school could sustain or wanted to be doing. An educational approach was preferable to ensure young people were informed of the dangers of vaping—a preventive approach rather than a reactive approach like suspending.

I have heard other members in this chamber during this debate talk about how the education minister needs to help schools develop programs to prevent the scourge of vaping. Listen up. Elanora State High School has been doing it for two years with amazing results. This is their program. Firstly,

all students are involved in the first stage of the process, which is a 70-minute education session on how harmful vaping is, the different forms of peer pressure and how students can self-regulate. Next, if a student is caught vaping they have to complete a two-week anti-vaping program, which they must complete during their lunchbreaks. Then if a student is again caught vaping, the third tier in the school's anti-vaping program is that the student must complete individual education sessions for a month with a youth drugs and alcohol service and the school nurse.

Elanora State High School's targeted anti-vaping program has resulted in not only greater awareness amongst students about the health impacts of vaping but also a significant reduction in suspensions for vaping and, since its implementation—and this is probably the most important part—a significant reduction in kids vaping at the school. In 2023, following the implementation of the program, there were no suspensions recorded for vaping and 16 students were involved in the third tier of the school's intensive educational program. So far this year there has been only one recorded suspension for vaping and no students have been required to attend the third tier of the school's intensive anti-vaping program.

The lowered prevalence of vaping and the school's measured approach have also resulted in a reduction in damage to the toilet facilities. The lower maintenance costs have allowed the school to use its funding for more important means like educating our children for their futures. It is clearly evident that my wonderful Elanora State High School program is working, and I am so proud of principal Rochelle Lewis and the work she is doing in that high school, putting in place this successful preventive program well before this government decided to take action.


Let's talk about primary schools. The shadow education minister highlighted that, in primary schools, suspension for substance misconduct, which includes vaping, has skyrocketed by over 450 per cent. As a parent of primary school kids—and I talk to other parents at my primary school who feel the same way—this is extremely concerning. Every parent has a right to be extremely concerned about that alarming, skyrocketing rate of vaping in our primary schools.

The LNP recognises that vaping and illicit drug use is a huge problem in our primary schools and that it includes the younger generation of Queenslanders. What did the former Labor education minister say a few years ago about vaping? She sensationally claimed that vaping was 'no worse than smoking cigarettes when she was at school'—comments she had to walk back from. She has now conceded that vaping is an epidemic in our schools. From the estimates hearing, we know that this government has not invested any money in programs for our primary schools to specifically address vaping in our primary schools. Is it any wonder that they have not invested that money when the former Labor education minister initially talked down the vaping problem in our schools? Now years later, when vaping is an epidemic, we are debating a bill which Queensland could have taken the lead on years ago if they had listened to our schools, our teachers and the LNP.

I now turn to the part of this bill that deals with illegal tobacco supply. The bill increases the current penalties for people who supply and possess illegal tobacco as part of a business activity known in our community as chop-chop. Queenslanders have had laws to prohibit the illegal sale of tobacco for a while but, even with these existing laws, the sale of tobacco is flourishing. Why? Because it is not enough to pass laws. Surprise, surprise—you need to have a government that enforces those laws. It is this enforcement action that is lacking. A network of shops on the Gold Coast is selling black market tobacco, or chop-chop, as part of a nationwide racket which we know is largely organised by crime syndicates. Illegal tobacco is often used to test smuggling routes. This denies the community legitimate tax revenue and it undercuts small businesses that are doing the right thing. Further, the government was previously warned that its laws were not strong enough by health professionals, by the former Health and Environment Committee and by the opposition. They were warned that their illicit tobacco laws were not sufficient.

Back in 2021, the Australian Association of Convenience Stores said 'existing legislation was not fit for purpose when it comes to deterring operators from selling illegal tobacco'. It has taken this government three years to act. Once again, we are debating this bill and talking to its enforcement and new offence provisions. We urge the government that they are only as good as the enforcement action they are prepared to take. We can only urge the government to address the critical enforcement issues in relation to chop-chop and the illegal supply of tobacco because they are run by organised crime and they are rife in our communities. The lack of enforcement action by this government has allowed chop-chop and illegal tobacco to thrive in our communities. The time it has taken for this government to act is just another example of why we need to change the government. The only way to end Labor's chaos and crisis is to change the government on 26 October and show Labor the door in 2024.


*(Time expired)*

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (7.03 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The primary objective of the bill is to ensure Queensland can enforce a Commonwealth ban on the supply and possession of vaping goods. It also gives effect to the state government's response to the recommendations made by the former Health and Environment Committee in its report *Vaping: an inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland*. Vaping is a huge challenge for our society. It is a huge challenge for our young people, many of whom are unfortunately addicted to some of the vapes that they have been exposed to and involved with. It is also a challenge for their parents. As the member for Currumbin outlined, it is a huge challenge for our schools as well. The disposal of vapes is also a challenge for our local governments because many of these vapes contain a battery. Often vapes are simply discarded in waste bins with batteries in them which is particularly difficult when it is going into general rubbish and refuse.

One thing is certain: the sale of illegal and illicit e-cigarette sales in Queensland and Australia is well and truly out of control. Another illicit tobacco shop opened in my electorate in Dalby in July this year, bringing the total to four shops in Dalby. I have no idea why we need that many illicit tobacco shops and vape shops. If you step 100 metres outside either of my electorate offices in Roma or Dalby, you will find yourself outside one of these vape shops. It is disappointing that these stores continue to operate unchecked, openly flouting the supposed laws of both state and federal governments. Whilst many legitimate businesses in my electorate are subject to compliance checks, they see that little is being done about these illicit stores and this aggravates them. Even when the illicit stores are raided, they seem to be back up and open the next day. Obviously there is some sort of network feeding these illicit vape shops and chop-chop tobacco shops. I am concerned that this Labor government's lack of action has allowed organised crime to obtain a foothold in these illegal tobacco and vape shops.

The food stores across my electorate are also impacted by the illicit trade of tobacco. Wayne Mason, the manager of the Australian United Retailers—whom I was delighted to see at the opening of the Thargomindah FoodWorks—has advised that many food store businesses across regional Queensland and my electorate are heavily impacted by the illicit tobacco trade. Those convenience stores can lose up to half of their business trade. Not only does the government lose out on taxation revenue, but family and small businesses also lose out on add-on sales. When people are coming in to stores to buy their cigarettes, they will buy something else as well. Those stores—legitimate family and small businesses that are trying to keep costs down during a cost-of-living crisis—are being squeezed because of the illicit trade in tobacco.

The Labor government were previously warned about their illicit tobacco laws not being sufficient. Those warnings have come to fruition, given the laws we are debating in this place tonight. The Labor government have been so consumed by their own chaos and crisis that we now find ourselves again debating these laws. The only way to change the chaos and crisis and to get tough on the illicit tobacco trade is to change the government on 26 October and show Labor the door in 2024. We know that this Labor government have given up. The minister even acknowledged in her introductory speech that the number of stores that were selling illicit tobacco products continues to grow. I see that in the communities across my electorate. It is one thing to have these laws; it is another thing entirely to enforce them properly. Queenslanders are rightly demanding action on vaping and illicit tobacco. Sadly, this Labor government has not delivered to date. It is time to show Labor the door in 2024.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (7.08 pm): I wanted to briefly rise to support this bill. I think it is a very positive step to have greater enforcement and control over these dangerous products. Members on this side have passionately spoken about how dangerous vaping is. We originally had laws under the previous federal government that were supposed to ban nicotine-based vapes at the border but the evidence since that point has become stronger that any type of vaporising product is dangerous for health. The evidence about it reducing smoking is not nearly as clear as it once was, so this is a very important step.

We have to remember where this problem came from. We were supposed to stop all nicotine-based vapes at the border. However, Peter Dutton, the minister responsible for that, grossly failed and we saw coming across the border nicotine-based vaporisers that were bubblegum flavoured and had comic book characters on them. Peter Dutton was either completely oblivious to it or ignoring the problem of vapes coming across the border. That is why the federal Labor government had to take action: to try to play catch-up after Peter Dutton's failure.

We saw that when the federal government put forward a draft bill, again the federal Liberal Party went missing in action and we had to look around to try to pass it through the Senate. At that point the only people willing to actually engage with this were the Greens, which is a deal with the devil that we

would never want to make; they are the reason vapes are now in pharmacies. Just as the pharmacists have said, I would like to see vapes taken out of pharmacies and completely eradicated because they are not good for Australians, especially young Australians.

When the Greens forced these amendments in order for the bill to be passed because the LNP was not present, Simon Chapman, the Emeritus Professor in Public Health at the University of Sydney, was quoted as saying it was 'hugely disappointing bad news' that 'the Greens have flushed the prescription-only access component of the reforms down the public health toilet'. This is particularly condemning of the Greens. He is quoted as saying—

"If your child is vaping after these reforms, thank the Greens who feel they knew better than every significant health and medical body in the country," he said in a compilation of statements ...

I would add to that: never forget that they were aided and abetted by the LNP in Queensland.

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order, members. Order, Minister. You are going to have your chance in a minute.


**Mr Purdie** interjected.

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

**Mr POWER:** The article continued—

The Greens insisted on amendments to the Bill despite an open letter signed by dozens of ... organisations ...

We could have done better. We know that this will be reviewed in three years. I think we will see that banning this dangerous product is going to be better for Australians and better for people's health, especially that of young Australians. Remember, if you see a child in the future with a vape on the street, you can thank the Greens and the LNP.


 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (7.11 pm): I rise to speak on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. E-cigarettes, or vapes as they are commonly known, are battery operated devices that deliver aerosol by heating a liquid that is inhaled by users. I want to talk about the impact of vaping on different groups in our communities, especially young people in our communities and also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

I am very concerned about how vaping is making its way into discrete communities in my electorate. Like sly grogging, vapes are being bought for less and taken into discrete communities and sold for anywhere between \$70 and \$150. The impact of vaping on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will see their health status only worsen over time. Without the proposed amendments in this bill, vaping may well set us back in terms of improving health outcomes for First Nations people into the future. I know it is very complex to work to address health outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities right throughout my electorate for the obvious reason around remoteness; it is very challenging. I know that the impacts of vaping upon an already vulnerable group of people in our communities is only going to make health outcomes that little bit harder to achieve.

I am particularly grateful for this bill because I know it is going to achieve many things. The primary objectives of this bill are to: ensure Queensland can enforce the Commonwealth ban on the supply and possession of vaping goods; give effect to the government's response to recommendations made by the former Health and Environment Committee in its report titled *Vaping: an inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland*; and remedy deficiencies in the state's existing regulatory environment. Some of the objectives to achieve this will include increasing the current penalties for persons who supply and possess illicit tobacco as part of a business activity, creating a new offence relating to adults who supply illicit nicotine products to children outside of a business activity and creating new offences relating to displaying, advertising or promoting illicit nicotine products.

*(Time expired)*

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Under the provisions of the business program agreed to by the House and the time allocated for this stage of the bill having expired, I call the minister to reply to the second reading debate.

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (7.15 pm), in reply: I thank all members for their contribution to the debate on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill

2024. Many have shared personal stories from their communities, highlighting conversations with parents, teachers and students who are deeply worried about the rise in vaping among young people. These firsthand accounts, alongside concerning evidence presented today by Dr John Gerrard, the Chief Health Officer, and the Cancer Council, underscore just how urgent and widespread these concerns are, particularly regarding the potential long-term health risks. I again want to thank the stakeholders who provided their valuable feedback on the bill. I would also like to thank the Legislative Policy Unit in the Strategy, Policy and Reform Division in Queensland Health.

Several members raised concerns expressed by stakeholders regarding the Commonwealth government's reforms. Whilst I acknowledge those reforms, the Commonwealth legislation represents some of the most aggressive vaping reforms in the world and it is a crucial step forward in regulating the supply of vapes across Australia. In Queensland we are going further and faster. I make no apologies for the Miles government's strong and decisive action to swiftly implement the ban on recreational vapes, to increase penalties and to significantly improve enforcement. With the Commonwealth's reforms and Queensland's leadership on enforcement, we are in a powerful position to stamp out the illicit vape trade. Our focus is clear: protecting the health of Queenslanders, especially our young people, from the dangers of recreational vaping.

A number of members highlighted the significant number of stores that continue to sell vapes and illicit tobacco. Members have raised very valid concerns about enforcement and I want to be clear: this is the bill that delivers nation-leading enforcement powers that will fundamentally change how we tackle the illicit trade in nicotine and tobacco products. For the first time in this country, Queensland will have the power—the first jurisdiction to do so—to shut down businesses that are caught supplying illicit nicotine and tobacco products. This is not just about fines; it is about putting rogue operators out of business. Under this bill there is the ability to issue immediate closure orders for up to 72 hours for those selling illicit products, and for repeat offenders there is the ability to seek court ordered closures of up to six months. This new power is a game changer. It stops businesses from treating fines as a minor cost of doing business and cuts off their operations completely. We are not just seizing products; we are also closing the door.

Make no mistake: the penalties in this bill are severe. Individuals found supplying these harmful products can face fines of over \$300,000, or two years imprisonment, and for companies the fines could reach \$1.6 million. These are not the kinds of fines that businesses can shrug off and they are designed to hit where it hurts. These reflect the seriousness of the government's commitment to tackling the health risk posed by illicit nicotine and tobacco products. This bill sends a clear message: if you engage in illegal trade, you will face severe penalties and you will be shut down.

These new powers put Queensland at the forefront of public health protection, ensuring our laws are not just words on paper but enforced with real consequences. One retail organisation submitted that the reforms are welcome—

... timely and positive initiatives, and we appreciate the continued focused work of the Queensland Government to combat the scourge of illicit smoking products ...

...

The package of initiatives introduced in this reform are meaningful and targeted.

These reforms send a clear message that the supply of vaping goods and illicit tobacco is not tolerated in Queensland.

Several members raised the issue of ensuring Queensland Health can effectively enforce the new offence provisions. We know that stronger laws require stronger enforcement capabilities. The Miles government is not just talking tough; we are backing it up with action. We have allocated \$28.4 million for enforcement, including \$5 million annually to increase the number of officers dedicated to cracking down on illicit sales. This additional funding has significantly bolstered the number of officers authorised to enforce laws related to licensing, illicit tobacco and vaping, and I want to give my thanks to all of the hardworking enforcement officers throughout the state. These dedicated Queensland Health officers are working closely with the Queensland Police Service and federal agencies to enhance enforcement, ensuring all efforts are coordinated and resources are used efficiently. Since commencement of the last reforms, the government has listened to our frontline enforcement teams and has also considered the significant changes in supply tactics. By boosting funding, resourcing and collaborating across jurisdictions, Queensland is well placed to enforce these new offences.

The member for Mirani raised concern over novel nicotine products entering the Australian market. For example, nicotine pouches—small packets of synthetic nicotine and flavourings that are placed under the lip—are becoming alarmingly common, including in schools. However, the problem

does not just stop there. There is a rise in innovative and dangerous products like flavoured nicotine toothpicks, nicotine infused cotton and nicotine pearls and these pose serious new risks to public health. This is why this bill is so critical. It introduces a clear definition of illicit nicotine products, ensuring our laws remain adaptable to future challenges and importantly it allows the government to prescribe other harmful nicotine products by regulation as well as substances other than nicotine that are harmful to health. With this legislation the government will be able to quickly respond to any new products that emerge, staying ahead of evolving risks. This means we can rapidly respond to protect public health from dangerous novel products as they hit the market. As the committee heard in one stakeholder's submission—

We commend the Queensland government for its timely and decisive action in developing the bill, and for its ongoing commitment to tackling the vaping crisis.

The Miles government is delivering on its commitment through this bill. 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

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—



**Ms FENTIMAN** (7.21 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 **Clause 2 (Commencement)**

Page 6, lines 7 and 8—

*omit.*

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

*Tabled paper:* Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, explanatory notes to Hon. Shannon Fentiman's amendments [1815].

*Tabled paper:* Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Shannon Fentiman's amendments [1816].

2. **Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I note that the minister's amendment proposes to omit clause

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2 omitted.

Insertion of new clauses—



**Ms FENTIMAN** (7.22 pm): I seek leave to move an amendment outside the long title of the bill.

Leave granted.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I move the following amendment—

2 **After clause 2**

Page 6, after line 8—

*insert—*

**Part 1A          Amendment of Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011**

**2A          Act amended**

This part amends the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011*.

**2B          Amendment of s 85A (Disclosure to prevent serious risk of harm)**

(1) Section 85A(4)(a), 'a prescribed Service'—

*omit, insert—*

a Service

(2) Section 85A(4)(a)(ii) and (b)(ii), after 'making'—

*insert—*

, or enabling another person to make,

- (3) Section 85A(5), definition *chief executive*, paragraphs (a) to (c)—  
*omit, insert—*
- (a) if the health professional is appointed as a health service employee or public service officer in the department and is working for a Service—the chief executive of the Service; or
  - (b) if the health professional is appointed as a health service employee in a Service—the chief executive of the Service; or
  - (c) if the health professional provides services for a Service under a contract for services—the chief executive of the Service; or
  - (d) if the health professional is employed in, or provides services under a contract for services for, a private health facility—the licensee of the facility; or
  - (e) otherwise—the chief executive of the department.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 14, as read, agreed to.

Clause 15—



**Ms FENTIMAN** (7.22 pm): I move the following amendment—

3

**Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 4A)**

Page 13, line 4, after '*Therapeutic Goods Act 1989* (Cwth)'—  
*insert—*

, chapter 5, part 5-1A

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 15, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—



**Ms FENTIMAN** (7.23 pm): I move the following amendment—

4

**Clause 17 (Replacement of s 161 (Supply or possession of illicit tobacco))**

Page 15, line 22 to page 16, line 6—  
*omit, insert—*

- (4) Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to the supply of an illicit nicotine product if—
  - (a) the illicit nicotine product is vaping goods; and
  - (b) were the person to be charged with an offence under the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989* (Cwth), section 41QB in relation to the supply of the illicit nicotine product, the person would be entitled to claim an exception in relation to the supply under that section.
- (5) Subsection (2) does not apply in relation to the possession of an illicit nicotine product if—
  - (a) the illicit nicotine product is vaping goods; and
  - (b) were the person to be charged with an offence under the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989* (Cwth), section 41QC or 41QD in relation to the possession of the illicit nicotine product, the person would be entitled to claim an exception in relation to the possession under—
    - (i) section 41QC(12), (13) and (14); or
    - (ii) section 41QD(6), (7) and (8).
- (6) It is a defence to a charge under subsection (2) for the person to prove that the illicit nicotine product is stored or possessed for personal use by the person or an employee of the person.
- (7) However, if the illicit nicotine product is vaping goods, subsection (6) does not apply if the quantity of vaping goods is more than the permitted quantity.
- (8) In this section—  
**permitted quantity**, for vaping goods, means the quantity prescribed by regulation for this definition.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 17, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 26, as read, agreed to.

Clause 27—



**Ms FENTIMAN** (7.23 pm): I move the following amendments—

5

**Clause 27 (Insertion of new pt 11, divs 4A and 4B)**

Page 22, line 23, after 'owner'—  
*insert—*

, and the person apparently in charge,

**6 Clause 27 (Insertion of new pt 11, divs 4A and 4B)**

Page 22, line 26, after 'owner'—

*insert—*

, and the person apparently in charge,

**7 Clause 27 (Insertion of new pt 11, divs 4A and 4B)**

Page 23, after line 4—

*insert—*

- (4A) If a lease of premises subject to an order under this section ends, including, for example, because the lease is terminated, the order ends when the lease ends.

*Note—*

An order under this section may be evidence of a breach of a term of a lease.

- (4B) However, if the premises are leased to the same lessee within the period stated in the order, the order is reinstated and ends on the last day of the period stated in the order.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 27, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 28 to 35, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clauses—

**Ms FENTIMAN** (7.24 pm): I seek leave to move an amendment outside the long title of the bill.

Leave granted.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I move the following amendment—**8 After clause 35**

Page 31, after line 12—

*insert—***Part 2A Amendment of Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Regulation 2021****35A Regulation amended**This part amends the *Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Regulation 2021*.**35B Insertion of new s 15AA**

After section 15A—

*insert—***15AA Permitted quantity for illicit nicotine product—Act, s 161A**For section 161A(8) of the Act, definition *permitted quantity*, the quantity prescribed is—

- (a) if the vaping goods are a vaping substance—60mL; and  
 (b) if the vaping goods are a vaping accessory—4 vaping accessories; and  
 (c) if the vaping goods are a vaping device—2 vaping devices.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 36 and 37, as read, agreed to.

**Third Reading****Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (7.25 pm): I move—

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**Long Title****Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (7.25 pm): I move the following amendments—**9 Long title**

Long title, after 'to amend'—

*insert—***the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011,**



**10 Long title**

Long title, after '*Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998*'—  
*insert—*

*, the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Regulation 2021*

Amendments agreed to.


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

Motion agreed to.

## **PROGRESSIVE COAL ROYALTIES PROTECTION (KEEP THEM IN THE BANK) BILL**

Resumed from 23 May (see p. 1846).

### **Second Reading**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (7.25 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The reason for this bill is simple: the LNP leader cannot be trusted with money. Opposition leader Crisafulli is proving it more and more every day. There is a fundamental test of financial competence that the people of Queensland should not even have to ask leaders about, particularly those leaders who are seeking the highest office in Queensland, but there is a real risk in the conduct of the leader of the LNP in not only this place but also his conduct running an insolvent business. Then there is the LNP leader's botched costings of child protection—do not forget, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, the LNP leader Crisafulli's botched costings of child protection; the LNP leader's ham-fisted proposal to redirect capital funding to recurrent spending—complete and utter budget incompetence; and opposition leader Crisafulli's complete error this afternoon seeking to revoke a payroll tax ruling that actually benefits doctors. All of these errors—these misdirections, these cover-ups—show that the LNP leader simply cannot be trusted with money.

Progressive coal royalties are too important to be left to the incompetence and secretive approach of LNP leader Crisafulli. It is absolutely vital that we ensure Queensland's progressive coal royalty regime continues to deliver—to deliver to Queenslanders their fair share of the resource that belongs to them. We will defend against the threat and the risk of the opposition leader. We will defend against the risk and threat of the LNP. We will defend against the risk and threat of opposition leader Crisafulli through our Progressive Coal Royalties Protection (Keep Them in the Bank) Bill 2024.

This bill amends the Mineral Resources Act 1989 to introduce a coal royalty rate floor by providing that a regulation may not prescribe coal royalty rates that are lower than those that apply. The bill does not change coal royalty rates or make any change to current processes for increasing coal royalty rates through a regulation or for coal royalty rates to otherwise be changed through a bill passed by the Legislative Assembly. I have been very clear with Queenslanders and the coal lobby that our progressive coal royalties are here to stay permanently without change forever.

These progressive coal royalties should be a permanent part of Queensland's revenue base because they are delivering what Queenslanders deserve as global and national cost-of-living pressures bear down on them. We are using progressive coal royalties to take \$1,000 off the electricity bills of 2.2 million Queensland households, \$650,000 off thousands of electricity bills of small business and 20 per cent off the registration cost of vehicles; for new hospitals, like the Moranbah Hospital; and to make investment in roads and investment in renewable energy. All of those things have come from progressive coal royalties.

On 24 March 2024 at the Queensland Resources Council Resources Roundup the Leader of the Opposition promised the coal lobby and its members in relation to tax policy, 'What we take to the election at the end of the year, you will be able to take to the bank.' The very next day in the House I put that question to all members of this House and directly to the opposition leader: how much money, when that tax policy is released, will the coal lobby be able to take to the bank? Will it be \$5 billion? Will it be \$7 billion? Will it be \$10 billion? Those words are exactly why our government has in the title of this bill exercised and explained our plan to keep those royalties in the bank—in the bank of Queensland, in the bank of Queenslanders. We need to keep that money in the people's bank. We need to keep that money in the Consolidated Fund to use it for their benefit.

We cannot risk a future LNP government handing back money that belongs to Queenslanders to multinational mining companies. Through this bill we are ensuring that no government can change or reduce those royalties without a decision of this parliament and without a legislative measure being approved by this House. I admit it is not foolproof. If the LNP leader secures a majority he could revoke the law. However, this bill makes it much harder and ensures that the LNP leader cannot engage in his signature secrecy. As is now apparent to all Queenslanders, you cannot trust the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition promised nearly two years ago that he would release a tax policy and today it remains secret.

**Mr McCallum:** Where is it?

**Mr DICK:** I take the interjection from the Acting Leader of the House: where is it? We are in the shadows of a state election. There is a little over 40 days to go to the next state election, and two years after the Leader of the Opposition promised to release his tax policy it remains a secret. What is it with this Leader of the Opposition and secrets? The LNP leader's policies are as secret as his murky business dealings with SET Solutions. They remain a secret as well because he will not answer a simple direct question about the integrity inferno that surrounds him about SET Solutions and his management of that company—just as the city he lives in remains a secret, something he never revealed to the people who put their trust in him when they elected him as the member for Broadwater.

**Mr JANETZKI:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I call for your guidance on relevance to the debate. The Treasurer has not gone anywhere near the bill for some time now. I am just wondering if you could bring a ruling down on relevance to the bill.

**Mr POWER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The point the Treasurer was clearly making was about why we have to lock in these revenue measures and what dangers are facing it so I think it is relevant.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly):** I will take some advice. Thank you, member for Toowoomba South, for the initial point of order and, member for Logan, for your subsequent point of order. In my opinion the member is being relevant to the reasoning for the bill. I will grant some latitude, but I will ask the member to come back to the substance of the bill.

**Mr DICK:** History shows that the Leader of the Opposition's position on progressive coal royalties is even murkier. It has been over two years since our Labor government introduced progressive coal royalty tiers through the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. These new tiers could have been introduced through regulation, but we made a deliberate choice to enshrine them through a parliamentary vote. While the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP did not cast a vote against them, in the time since in public they have sought to denigrate, undermine and attack this vitally important revenue measure for Queensland.

For example, on 26 May 2024, when asked by a journalist on Sky News Australia what he could promise the people of Queensland if he became the state's next premier, in his answer the Leader of the Opposition said—

I want the mining industry to be free from the government that's constantly looking to find new ways to tax and regulate them.

On 11 December 2023 on 4BC the Leader of the Opposition said on mining—

The mining industry will not be victims anymore.

That is what he said about the mining industry and the actions of our government: they are victims. He went on to say—

They will be treated with respect and there will be opportunities for people to work in those industries.

On 13 September 2023 the Leader of the Opposition was quoted in a *Courier-Mail* article about progressive coal royalties that we are seeking to enshrine in the law of Queensland in this bill. Opposition leader Crisafulli said—

It was a bad plan.

He went further. He said—

It was a dishonest plan. It broke the trust of the industry—but it's been tied to the four-year forwards.

After two years, the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP still refuse to put on record whether they support progressive coal royalties permanently without change for the forward estimates and beyond. From March to July this year alone, those opposite have had 33 meetings with coal industry interests. They complain about revealing their diary meetings. I will tell members what they were not

talking about: they were not talking about the weather. The conduct of the LNP leader shows that he cannot be trusted on so many issues, and that is becoming clearer to Queensland each and every day. In my opinion, that applies to progressive coal royalties.

Of course, as I said in my introductory speech, in the end I expect that those opposite will grit their teeth and will not cast a vote against this bill. They will be complaining, moaning and whingeing—we will hear that all through the debate—but they will grit their teeth and they will not cast a vote against the bill. That is because the LNP do not want the people of Queensland to know that in their heart of hearts, in my view, the LNP hate progressive coal royalties. That is the truth. As everyone in this parliament knows, a vote by the LNP in the Legislative Assembly of Queensland is entirely meaningless.

**Mr Fumer:** It means nothing!

**Mr DICK:** I will take the interjection from the minister for agriculture: it means nothing.

**Mr McCallum:** It is worthless.

**Mr DICK:** I will take the interjection from the minister for employment and training: it is worthless. One only has to ask any First Nations person in this state about the LNP. Every First Nations person in this state has the lived experience that the vote and the word of Leader of the Opposition Crisafulli are worth absolutely nothing. The LNP demonstrated this conclusively on the Path to Treaty Act. The LNP cannot be trusted on any matter of public policy, including progressive coal royalty tiers.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I note that the Treasurer is again straying from the bill and entering into personal attacks rather than the legislation.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will take some advice. I have been listening to the Treasurer's contribution—even though I am trying to check standing orders on something else—and I have found that he is referencing back to the bill constantly. There is no point of order.

**Mr DICK:** I listened very carefully to the shadow minister for integrity. Never has there been a shadow minister in this House more inappropriately named than the member for Maroochydoore.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at that very personal and nasty attack. I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am going to remind all members of the House of the guidance that I gave the House earlier: if you are taking personal offence then that is all you do. This is not an opportunity to make speeches or add to that. Minister, the member has taken personal offence and I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr DICK:** I withdraw. I turn to the Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee's report on the bill, which was tabled on 2 August 2024. I thank members of the committee, particularly government members, and the secretariat for their hard work in considering this bill. I also thank those individuals and organisations that made submissions to the committee about the bill and those who appeared as witnesses as part of the committee's inquiry. Transcripts of the public hearings are worth looking at. Transcripts of the public hearings show that the LNP members of the committee spent more time arguing with the chair of the committee than asking questions of witnesses. I refer members of the House to how that process was abused by members of the LNP. Nevertheless, I note and welcome the one recommendation from the committee that the bill be passed.

Before moving further on in this debate, I will address some areas raised by submitters during the committee process. The Queensland Resources Council raised concerns that there was no consultation with the industry prior to the introduction of the bill. I have outlined on many occasions, including most recently at the estimates committee hearing, how there was engagement with the QRC. Before the government could even introduce any legislation into the parliament on this very issue and following consultation with the then CEO of the Resources Council, the Resources Council started a political campaign against the government. Therefore, there is no way in the world that the QRC can claim there was no consultation. I will remind members of the House that, when it comes to legislating or changing progressive coal royalties, 12 years ago today the LNP dropped a massive change in coal royalties in this House without consultation. Enough of this nonsense from the QRC and the LNP about there being no consultation.

As outlined by the Under Treasurer, progressive coal royalties have been in place since 2022. This legislation does not propose changes to the tiers and, therefore, will not change any royalty payment of any royalty payer. Instead, this bill brings Queensland in line with other states where coal royalty rates are legislated, that is, New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria and the other great mining

and resources state of the Commonwealth, Western Australia. Importantly, we are ensuring no government can reduce these royalties without a decision of a parliament and without a legislative measure being approved by the Legislative Assembly.

The Australian Institute for Progress, which is run by a former vice-president of the LNP and the QRC, raised concerns that progressive coal royalties have harmed or will harm the confidence of investors. Again, that is simply untrue. I am pleased to inform the House that since progressive coal royalty rates were introduced there has been ongoing interest from investors in Queensland's coal and resources industries. There have been significant transactions and announcements from the likes of Whitehaven Coal, Peabody Energy, Stanmore, Coronado, Thungela Resources, Bowen Coking Coal, Sumitomo and Pembroke Resources. Recently, BHP made multiple attempts to acquire Anglo American's Bowen Basin coalmines. For the second year in a row, Queensland remains 13th in overall mining investment attractiveness globally and is the most attractive metallurgical coal investment destination according to go the latest independent Fraser Institute survey of mining companies.

ABS data shows capital expenditure in Queensland's mining sector has increased to \$9.7 billion for the year ending March 2024, which is an increase of 12.4 per cent. Latest ABS mineral and petroleum exploration data shows the value of coal exploration expenditure in Queensland rose 25.7 per cent to \$252 million in 2023-24. Latest data from the Queensland Mines Inspectorate shows the number of workers in Queensland coalmines increased 1.3 per cent in the June quarter to 2024 to 45,416 persons, to be 3.3 per cent higher over the year. The number of workers in Queensland coalmines is now 19.6 per cent or almost 20 per cent above the level in June 2022, prior to the introduction of the new progressive coal royalties. It is clear that Queensland's coal is in demand.

In their submission and during the public hearing, QRC representatives stated that the QRC and industry want a royalty regime that strikes the right balance. I could not agree more and the Miles Labor government could not agree more. That is why we have progressive coal royalty tiers that ensure Queenslanders get their fair share of royalties when coal prices are high and companies are making super profits. Conversely, companies pay low royalty rates when prices are low, helping with their long-term sustainability.

Queensland's progressive coal royalties also strike the right balance for workers in the mining industry who risk their lives daily to extract the resources the world wants. I want to pay tribute to the coalminers of this state and their families, many of whom are generational coalminers. Their fathers and their grandfathers worked in mines. I want to recognise those workers who extract the wealth—

**Mr Purdie** interjected.

**Mr DICK:** As if the member for Ninderry would interject on anything in this House after his shameless behaviour chasing victims of crime for seats in parliament. I want to recognise the coal workers. Imagine interjecting when someone is trying to recognise the strength, determination and sheer hard work of the coalminers of this state who extract the wealth that benefits all Queenslanders.

**Mr Purdie** interjected.

**Mr DICK:** There he goes again, making disrespectful interjections over some positive comments on why coalmining matters for Queensland and why this government respects coalminers and, more importantly, respects the trade unions that represent them. The Mining & Energy Union Queensland District and the Australian Workers' Union, which represent workers in the industry, support progressive coal royalties and this bill. I refer to the evidence of those organisations. The Australian Workers' Union said—

Progressive royalties ensure that a greater share of the profits from this resource extraction stays in Queensland, benefiting workers through better wages and working conditions.

The submission goes on—

This system ensures a fair return for Queenslanders on our valuable, finite coal resource, especially during periods of high global prices.

The Mining & Energy Union said—


The MEU is a strong believer in the social and economic good that mining brings to workers and their communities, particularly in regional Queensland. Progressive royalties regimes maximise these benefits.

I could not agree more with those submissions made by the Mining & Energy Union and the Australian Workers' Union. When I do so, I speak on behalf of the Labor government.

ABS data shows the value of Queensland coal exports totalled \$188 billion between July 2021 and March 2024. That is \$88 billion more than the previous corresponding period. It is an incredible increase in just a three-year period. Progressive coal royalties have delivered an additional \$9.4 billion in revenue over 2022-23 and 2023-24. That puts into context what these progressive coal royalties do. The value of coal exports went up \$88 billion over three years and the people of Queensland have received an additional \$9.4 billion. At a time of high prices, coal companies are doing well, coalminers and their families are doing well, coal communities are doing well and the people of Queensland are doing well through the additional coal royalties that we have generated.

This additional fiscal capacity has allowed the Miles Labor government to deliver \$2.9 billion in cost-of-living relief this financial year alone including, as I have said, electricity rebates and a 20 per cent discount on rego. These royalties have also enabled more than \$16 billion—let me repeat that for all members of the House: these royalties have also enabled more than \$16 billion—to be spent on infrastructure and essential services that are benefiting all regions of Queensland.

Progressive coal royalties are delivering the fair share that Queenslanders deserve. That is why the Miles Labor government supports progressive coal royalties taxation permanently—forever—in the state of Queensland. This is why we are determined to make this bill law, and all members of this House can take that to the bank. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (7.50 pm): On 23 May 2024, the Treasurer introduced the Progressive Coal Royalties Protection (Keep Them in the Bank) Bill 2024 into the Queensland parliament. The bill was referred to the Cost of Living and Economics Committee for detailed consideration. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Mineral Resources Act 1989 to introduce a coal royalty rate floor, ensuring regulations cannot prescribe coal royalty rates lower than those periodically prescribed. Parliamentary consideration will be required for any decrease in coal royalty rates, ensuring coal royalty rates cannot be changed without the parliament's endorsement.

Proposed new section 321AA of the Mineral Resources Act 1989 provides that a coal rate cannot be prescribed that is lower than the coal rate in effect immediately before the commencement of the regulation. There is no legislative provision for what the coal rate should be, only a restriction on a relative scale that will necessarily change if and when the coal rate changes. The requirement for legislative amendment is only triggered by a rate decrease, not a rate increase. This is a bill brought by a Treasurer who always thinks he is the smartest guy in the room—always.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Any member wishing to participate in this debate should return to their own seat. That goes for you too, member for Mount Ommaney.

**Mr JANETZKI**: We know that he has his eye on the top job. This performance tonight and the introduction of this bill are part of his constant audition for a different job.

**An opposition member**: Blocker's already made up his mind.

**Mr JANETZKI**: I will take the interjection. Blocker knows he will be the next leader of the Labor Party. I am not sure if the Treasurer can do anything about it. I swear that the Leader of the Opposition lives rent free in the Treasurer's head. I am certain of it. The Treasurer spends an inordinate amount of time obsessing about the Leader of the Opposition. It is bizarre. I can draw no conclusion other than that the Leader of the Opposition absolutely lives rent free in the Treasurer's head.

**Dr Rowan**: It's pathological.

**Mr JANETZKI**: It is a pathological obsession—I will take the interjection from the member for Moggill. It is an extraordinary thing. The constant barrage of personal abuse is, frankly, beneath the office the Treasurer holds.

I hate to disappoint the Treasurer, but we will be supporting this bill. It is a political stunt, pure and simple—just like many of the other stunts the Treasurer has cooked up in the past. As with all the others, this one will fall flat too. This is a Treasurer who is more interested in fake scare campaigns and cheap political stunts than dealing with the pressures and the challenges facing Queensland today, whether they be cost-of-living or any other pressures.

For years the Treasurer has been trying to run this fake scare campaign, trying hard to get anyone interested in what he has to say. Let's go back through the history. In 2022 we were asked the question in this House and we supported it. We were asked the question again in the 2023 budget and we supported it. We were asked this question again in the 2024 budget and we supported it. We even supported it in a motion before the House last year as well.

**Mr Saunders** interjected.

**Mr Lister** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Maryborough and member for Southern Downs, cease your quarrelling across the chamber.

**Mr JANETZKI:** It is time to end this facile political stunt and fake scare campaign from this desperate Treasurer. From the very beginning, we have called the government out for what this was. It was a deceitful plan but it was the only plan the government had.

I want to spend a couple of moments reflecting on the Treasurer's damaging approach to the Queensland economy generally. I have long argued that his approach to the key industries that are central to Queensland's prosperity—resources and property—is unhinged and irrational. This bill, again, proves it tonight. It is more than unhinged and irrational; it is unsettling, it is damaging and it is contemptuous.

It is unsettling for Queenslanders that we have a Treasurer who cares so little for the key industries that built and sustain our prosperity—namely, resources and property. It is damaging for Queensland that he holds the companies and our key international trading partners in such contempt. It is contemptuous of the thousands of hardworking Queenslanders whom he fails to recognise for their ingenuity in delivering a productive resources sector and creating the technology in our state that makes us the best mining jurisdiction in the world. It really is the best, but you would never know it from a single thing the Treasurer ever says.

Then I think about the regional communities that rely on our resources sector. The Treasurer is on the record, quoted on 7News in Mackay on 15 March 2023, as saying, 'Every cent of these new royalties is being invested into regional Queensland right now.' Really? Is that truthfully the case?

**Mr Molhoek:** It's a lie.

**Mr JANETZKI:** It is an untruth. We know it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Southport, I will get you to withdraw that unparliamentary language in your interjection.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** I withdraw.

**Mr JANETZKI:** If it were true, I am sure the Treasurer could table an itemised list of where every single one of these royalty dollars has been spent in regional Queensland. I am sure the Treasurer could deliver for this House such an itemised list. For the Treasurer and this decade-old government, the resources and property sectors are just leverage for cheap, short-term politics, with no regard for Queensland's past.

I heard the Treasurer try to make a number of comments, but they ring hollow after everything he has said about, and the damage he has done to, the resources sector for so long. To understand the promise of the future of the resources sector is to fully understand, recognise and appreciate the industry's history. By a stroke of coincidence, not long after the royalties changed back in 2022, I went to Gemfest in my electorate. Gemfest is run by the Toowoomba Lapidary Club—and I am sure many of us in the House have those clubs. Of course, there were priceless gems and stones on display but there were also a couple of books. One of the books caught my eye: a Queensland mining guide from 1949. It detailed the proud history of mining in our state, whether it be tin, copper, quartz or coal.

Like so many in the House, I could not resist the book so I purchased it. It tells an extraordinary story of early minerals development in Queensland. It was a fascinating read. It did remind me again that coal was one of the first minerals in Queensland to be commercially mined. Coal was first discovered in 1827 by Captain Logan at Ipswich. This would obviously explain the proud coal industry in the Ipswich region. Commercial operations first began by the Brisbane River at Redbank. Further coal discoveries followed on the Mackenzie River by Leichhardt in 1845 and shortly after on the Comet, Bowen and Dawson rivers at Blair Athol and Burrum in 1864 and on the Darling Downs, in communities where I grew up, around 1876. I see the member for Condamine nodding because he grew up in the same proud communities where mining and agriculture existed harmoniously for so long.

Early progress was slow and until the 1950s coal was produced to predominantly supply steam ships and steam locomotives in the 1800s. As Queensland rail lines expanded—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly):** Pause the clock. As much as I am enjoying the waltz through the history of Queensland mining, I am wanting to find the link to relevance. I am giving you some latitude.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I know the House gets very exciting when we start getting into the history of mining. It is natural. I would like you to establish the link sooner rather than later.

**Mr JANETZKI:** Those on the opposite side need to hear a little more about the importance of mining and the resources sector to Queensland's prosperity, and I am very happy to give it to them.

**Mr Head** interjected.

**Mr JANETZKI:** And my geologist mate from Callide up there.

As Queensland rail lines expanded, the coal industry expanded too. It has underpinned jobs in regional communities and supported our state revenue and our prosperity ever since. The Treasurer simply does not understand what underpins the Queensland economy—the resources sector—let alone any other industry that he has sought to denigrate over his period as the Treasurer of Queensland. He simply cannot be trusted.

The Treasurer's introductory speech and his second reading speech were unhinged and irrational. I think we have become so accustomed to it in this House that it is nearly like white noise, particularly for those of us on this side of the House.

**Mr Mickelberg:** It's about as believable as him cleaning his gutters.

**Mr JANETZKI:** I have to take that interjection from the member for Buderim. His sophistry is as believable as him cleaning his gutters.

I will take the House through a couple of examples in relation to the Treasurer's contribution and over the last two years since the changes in coal royalties to point out some of the contradictions and untruths. At the estimates in 2022 the Treasurer said, 'The truth is: industry was consulted.' The Treasurer doubled down on that assertion tonight.

However, at the *Courier-Mail* Future Resources event the Premier, the member for Murrumba, revealed that Treasury did not consult with the coal industry due to the need to control the timing. Treasurer, what is the truth? Who is right—is it the Premier or is it the Treasurer? I go on. It appears that Treasury failed to undertake any modelling in relation to the changes. What revenue will be lost due to horizontal fiscal equalisation? What impact has the change had on long-term coal demand and coal jobs in regional Queensland? It appears that no modelling was done in 2022 or ever since.

Again, at the *Courier-Mail* Future Resources event the Premier revealed that cabinet had taken advice from Treasury on all of the implications of the royalty changes. What was that advice? What was the advice that Treasury gave to the Treasurer? What were the implications that the Treasurer has never revealed? Treasurer, what is the truth?

Time and time again, his fake scare campaign falls apart. To understand that listen to what the Treasurer said at estimates in July 2022. I will quote the Treasurer's entire remarks. He stated—

I begin my opening remarks today on a note of bipartisanship. In that regard, I wanted to thank the LNP members of this committee for ensuring that Queensland's new progressive royalty regime was passed without opposition in the Queensland parliament. As committee members will recall, unlike the royalty changes of 2019, not one vote was cast against progressive coal royalties nor any of the revenue measures that were passed by the Legislative Assembly in June. I want to acknowledge and thank the LNP for their support. I also understand that the recent LNP state conference voted in support of retaining the new bipartisan progressive coal royalty tiers. It is a good thing for Queensland that all parties can come together on good policy, particularly on revenue measures.

Treasurer, what is the truth? You cannot have it both ways. Time and time again, the Treasurer has proven to be false in his method of argument, personal in his lines of attack and incompetent in the delivery of a more prosperous Queensland.

I have to briefly pass comment on the ruling by the Speaker yesterday. The member for Glass House had written to the Speaker in relation to allegations made in the House. The Speaker stated—

The government members have failed to provide evidence that the opposition both opposed progressive coal royalties and do not support this them into the future.

What is the truth? The Speaker has made a determination in relation to these matters and the allegations that have been consistently and wrongly made by those opposite.

Given that the Treasurer cannot be trusted—26 times broken tax promises; we know them all and we went through them all during the 5 o'clock motion—the question is: what happens if this decade old government is re-elected next month? What mineral is next? What taxes will Labor increase? What regulatory changes will Labor introduce? What renewable technology will Labor target for more regulation—more taxes? What will it be from that side of the House? We know they cannot be trusted.

We know the Japanese were concerned about the coal royalties and the lack of consultation and the investment uncertainty that that brought. They are also concerned about what happens next with hydrogen. What happens to our international partners that are seeking to invest tens of billions of dollars into hydrogen in this state? The government of the day can, with the flick of a pen, change the regulatory environment and change the taxation environment without any consultation or courtesy to our international trading partners that are seeking to invest here. They are all worried about what will happen.

Companies are worried about what will happen with critical mineral royalties and what that could mean for investment in decarbonisation related technologies. Companies seeking to invest in the North West Minerals Province are concerned about what this will mean for investment certainty and stability. What new taxation change will Labor drop without any consultation or modelling? What regulatory burden will Labor introduce? What nation will Labor insult next, putting decades of good trade relationships at risk? Importantly for Queensland, what regional community will Labor hurt next? What is the Treasurer's secret tax plan for Queensland? We know he promised 26 times before the last election not to introduce nor increase tax and has repeatedly and brazenly broken it ever since. His bizarre sophistry knows no bounds and it demeans the office that he holds.

We know that Labor's Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project has jumped from \$7 billion to \$12 billion to \$18 billion, and we heard at estimates that it is now \$24 billion. Who knows what it will be next? As Snowy Hydro 2.0 highlights, it is likely to be more than \$24 billion. It is going to be more than \$24 billion. It is the Treasurer's black hole. It is unfunded and uncosted. No-one knows how much it will cost. What is the Treasurer's secret tax plan to pay for it?

All of this is despite the revenue rivers of gold that this Treasurer has received. We look back and see that the Treasurer has now collected \$70 billion more than what he forecast in his first budget less than four years ago, yet the Pioneer-Burdekin hydro project is not funded. There is nothing for that. There is a billion dollars in capital, but where are the other tens of billions of dollars coming from?

Where is the Energy and Jobs Plan funding? Thus far there have been slick announcements and glossy brochures, but where is that funding? Where is the funding for the 'cornerstone', 'foundational' big battery of the north? The Treasurer's legacy will be his failure to ensure these revenue rivers of gold delivered meaningful infrastructure or any service delivery improvements in Queensland. That will be the Treasurer's legacy.

The Treasurer has damaged our international standing with his contempt of our trading partners. Who can forget in the immediate aftermath of the announcement that then premier Palaszczuk had to fly to meet with Japanese investors and she met with the Japanese ambassador to Australia? Let's not forget the extraordinary intervention of Shingo Yamagami. That was an extraordinary intervention for a Japanese ambassador to Australia. He noted his 'great concern'. He said that the Japanese were not consulted on such a significant change and that they were taken by surprise. He used words like 'huge shock' and said that some Japanese companies were already questioning their investment in this state. That investment is significant: \$12.5 billion of our export value goes to Japan every year.

While the Treasurer may not care for the promises he makes, we do care about the commitments we make and we have invested a significant amount of time and effort repairing the relationships with our key trading partners that the Treasurer has broken. International investors are seriously questioning whether or not Queensland is a safe place to invest. Those investors who have poured decades of investment and job creation into this state are still considering if they have done something wrong.

Edgar Basto, the BHP chief at the time, said that 'the Queensland government's decision to impose a new tax ... without consultation is the antithesis of considered policy in Queensland's interest or the national interest'. We know that BHP CEO Mike Henry contrasted Queensland's approach with these matters unfavourably with Chile. All the while, Queensland tumbled down the Fraser Institute's Annual Survey of Mining Companies. Trade and Investment Queensland never knew the change was coming. The Queensland resources minister admitted he knew nothing about the coal royalty hikes until the budget was announced.


It is time to move on from this facile political stunt—a fake scare campaign that diminishes our great state. Let me state the opposition's position. The royalty change was a deceitful plan but it was the only plan Labor had to fix the services they have destroyed over the last decade. We were never going to stand in the way of funding the things Labor have attached the revenue to as that is the responsible approach. Labor promised 26 times before the last election there would be no new or increased taxes and they have repeatedly broken it.



When we say something, we will mean it. We will bring regulatory and taxation stability to Queensland if elected. If elected, we will treat our international and national investors and trading partners with respect, not contempt. If the government changes next month, we will repair our standing and rebuild our reputation in the international investment community as an investment safe harbour. There will be no regulatory and taxation surprises under a Liberal National Party government if elected. Instead, there will be sober and methodical decision-making. After a decade of chaos and crisis from those opposite, that is what the business community and the households of Queensland are searching for and longing for.

We will always talk positively about the resources sector in Queensland as being key to our economic prosperity. The mining and energy sector is the No. 1 contributor to the state economy, the No. 1 regional employer and the No. 1 export industry. It supports the jobs for the best part of 500,000 Queenslanders and pays for the services that Queenslanders deserve.

If Queenslanders want change, they will have to vote for it next month—for a Crisafulli Liberal National Party government. We will provide regulatory and taxation stability. We will treat taxpayer funds with respect and deliver projects on time and on budget. The Cabinet Budget Review Committee will mean something, and ministers will be held to account to deliver service delivery outcomes for the appropriations they receive. We will treat regional communities, the resources and property sectors, and our international trading partners with respect. We will re-establish the Productivity Commission, because we must get the best bang for buck to deliver the infrastructure our state needs and the world-class services Queenslanders deserve. For us to deliver the right plan for Queensland's future, we need to change the government in Queensland. Next month, thankfully, Queenslanders will get the chance to do just that.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (8.16 pm): I rise as the chair of the Cost of Living and Economics Committee that examined the Progressive Coal Royalties Protection (Keep Them in the Bank) Bill 2024. The objectives of this bill are to prescribe in legislation a minimum coal royalty rate and to ensure our coal royalty rates cannot be decreased without endorsement of the Legislative Assembly. Many Queenslanders were thinking, 'Why is this necessary?' We know why it is necessary. We have seen the Leader of the Opposition stand in front of the QRC and go to mining conferences and tell them, 'I'll make promises you can take to the bank.' I am sure he delivered it with that little wink. We have a choice. Can we believe the Leader of the Opposition in this place or can we believe him when he says with a wink to all of those big international companies that he is going to give them money to take to the bank? In this legislation we have to make it clear to Queenslanders that if they elect a Miles Labor government we will keep this in our bank for Queenslanders.

We heard from the shadow Treasurer, the member for Toowoomba South, that there had been a series of secret meetings with large international companies. We know that his boss led the way and said, 'The promises I make you can take to the bank.' For those listening on radio, I winked when I said that because that is what the Leader of the Opposition did. What we want to know is what secret promises were made by the member for Toowoomba South at those secret meetings with the big companies. We do not know the answer because the opposition leader made a promise to the people of Queensland—

**Mr Stevens:** The member for Broadwater.

**Mr POWER:** The member for Broadwater made a promise to the people of Queensland that he would release his tax plan. He has already broken that promise before the election. He made that promise and he has broken it.

**Mr Zanow:** You promised no new taxes!

**Mr POWER:** I hear that support from the back. We know that he has made promises to the Queensland Resources Council because he said it right in front of us. He said, 'You can take it to the bank.' That means that Queenslanders will be worse off. The Queensland Resources Council is doing a massive campaign to undermine Queenslanders.

**Mr Stevens:** \$140 million.

**Mr POWER:** It is \$140 million, I am told. That is to undermine Queenslanders and to help their international members. Why would they be doing that if they believed the opposition were going to continue these taxes? They have probably had secret conversations. They have been told with a wink, 'Your members can take it to the bank.' This is why no Queenslanders trust the LNP on this issue. This is why no Queenslanders think we are going to get a fair return on our assets.

We had some supporters of this. Two of the most important supporters were the Australian Workers' Union and the Mining & Energy Union. These are the people who are at the grassroots representing people like my father-in-law, Ray, who is a miner himself. He knows that with his union the resources that Queenslanders own under the ground are owned by all Queenslanders. He does not want to see secret promises being made in secret meetings to big peak organisations, to international companies, to conferences, where you say with a wink, 'You can take my promises to the bank.'

We know better. I want to respect the workers who do this hard work because they definitely believe in the social compact of what they are involved in. The workers believe that we own those resources collectively and they should be for the benefit of Queenslanders collectively. They are proud of their regions and they are proud of their work. They work hard for all Queenslanders and they work hard to deliver those resources. I want to back the submissions from the Australian Workers' Union and the Mining & Energy Union, and I urge members to read them. I notice the Treasurer did a great job of that.

However, the Australian Institute for Progress, the LNP's favourite think tank, actually belled the cat. They rang out. They said that increasing royalty rates could be changed by legislation. They were putting down the—

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Mr POWER:** Graham Young, is it? Is he your friend? He was actually laying out the path for the LNP. I notice that they know his name and they know what this is all about. They know that they were laying out the path.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mr POWER:** I know that the member for Clayfield knows how to do this. He wants to actually give this money back to these big international companies.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Martin): Order, members! Member for Logan, you have the call.

**Mr POWER:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I really appreciate that. I have had many conversations in Logan about what progressive coal royalties are about. When companies are making extraordinarily high profits—huge profits—from very high coal prices, we get a fairer share. When they make lower but still very significant profits, we get a decent share. When they are not making as big a profit as they could, we put the share at the lowest to ensure that workers from the Australian Workers' Union and the Mining & Energy Union still keep their jobs because we have got lower taxes.

**Mr Brown** interjected.

**Mr POWER:** This is a progressive tax. Exactly. I explained to them that this also gives us the fairest return. When we dig our resources out of our ground, they are not coming back. We only get to dig them up once. That is why I am passionate that we get our fair return as Queenslanders for these resources—that we do not sell out to companies, that we do not go and wink it to them. We do not say, 'If you spend \$140 million, we'll give you a secret promise at the other end.' No, we are doing it for Queenslanders.


I want to talk about what it means for Logan if we have a stronger fiscal position. We know that it means investment in the Mount Lindesay Highway, because \$160 million was cut from the Mount Lindesay Highway. We know what it means for schools like Corymbia State School that was spoken about this morning and that is going to open in January. It has a fantastic thing called the KindyLinQ which gives great resources to younger families in the area. I want to talk about the Yarrabilba satellite hospital. I ran a petition and I have been talking to every person in the Yarrabilba community and I have been saying to them that we can afford this because we have made tough decisions. We are committed to better health for the people of Yarrabilba.

**Mr Brown** interjected.

**Mr POWER:** No, I have not heard them commit at all. In fact I want to tell the people of Yarrabilba that I have heard the opposition laugh at satellite hospitals, attack them and undermine them. This investment comes from a strong fiscal position.

The other thing we can do is have stronger public transport. We have put in 50-cent fares to help the cost of living and we also have new services. We are going to extend the Yarrabilba bus; we are going to extend the 541 on Andrew Road and Harvest Rise. We want to do more to get people better

connected. I am talking to them about getting a new bus route for Logan Reserve and Park Ridge. Those are things we can do because we have made tough decisions. Those are things we can do because the Treasurer backs Logan and the Premier backs Logan. They are doing what matters for Logan.

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (8.25 pm): I have been here for pretty well 17-odd years—a long time. The keep them in the bank bill would be the dumbest, most puerile, most infantile and most childish political bill I have seen introduced in this House for debate. It is a pathetic attempt by the Treasurer to try to jam up a new government after 26 October into coming forward to this House with any changes to the coal royalties regime. It is called the ‘Keep Them in the Bank Bill’. It just sounds like Donald Trump. It should be called ‘I’m going to lose the next election and I need something in the next parliament to go forward with as the opposition leader’. That is why it is a terribly political, nonsense bill.

Of course coal royalties are important for Queensland. Of course we support coal royalties. Of course coal royalties fund hospitals, schools and all those things. Does the government not think that if there is any change to that regime the media will be interested; that it will be a fact of discussion in any new government, particularly if it is an LNP government? Of course it would be. This stupid bill is before the House for one reason only. It is political rubbish, if you like, to try to elevate the issue up to an election issue 47-odd days before the election.

The bill is all about the coal royalty regime; it is not about whether it is going to happen or not, whether it goes down or whether we actually put it up. That might be the point of a lot of discussion. Of course it will be discussed in whatever happens in the next government should we be the next government, but this bill is basically saying, ‘You will be the next government and I want you to come to parliament.’ I am good with that. I am good with transparency. The mob over there might not be good with transparency. They might just put in a new regime without consulting—which I think is exactly what happened—but we are good with consultation. We are good with telling people what we are going to do. We will be honest and transparent, which will be brand new for a government in Queensland, should the people of Queensland agree to giving us that responsibility.

The sovereign risk associated with this coal royalty regime has been horrendous. When we have our second major trading partner in Japan complaining about the sovereign risk of investing in Queensland, which they have done—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** The members over there might not be aware, mainly because they are basically ill-informed puppets of unions. If they are uninformed about the Japanese protests on the lack of consultation they should give their money back, because they are taking money under false pretences as union puppets. That is where we are with the coal royalties. We differ in that we would talk to the industry. It employs a lot of Australian Workers’ Union people—and I think the Treasurer happens to be in this parliament because of the Australian Workers’ Union people—and we would talk to those people who employ the Australian Workers’ Union people so that we would come to, if not an agreement, an understanding of where we were going with coal royalties.

This bill is nonsense. This bill shows that the Treasurer is out of ideas and has given up in terms of being the government of Queensland. He is the tax hound of Queensland, and these coal royalties prove that. That and every other bill we have basically had is chasing money. If by some miracle they are returned on 26 October, you can imagine the taxes and new charges that will be raining down on the Queensland electorate. The Treasurer in his budget speech said, ‘Forget about the last nine years. We would like four more to ruin Queensland—more.’ Forget about the last nine years! Hello? Was the Deputy Premier of the last nine years involved in those cabinet decisions? Was the current Deputy Premier and Treasurer not the Treasurer over those last nine years? I think he did a stint in one other portfolio.

We are where we are at in Queensland on the cost-of-living crisis, the health crisis, the youth crime crisis and the housing crisis because they were all sitting around the cabinet table. They are talking about my leader being on a cabinet table 10 years ago, believe it or not, but they are not talking about the last nine years. The Treasurer said, ‘Forget the last nine years. Give us another four and we will be good.’ It is another promise from the Labor Party that is not going anywhere out there in Queensland politics.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** There are a lot of interjectors over there. I can hear one squeaking from Townsville that—

**Mr Krause:** Which one?

**Mr STEVENS:** I do not know which one it is. It is very forgettable! It is very forgettable, but I think he has enjoyed his time in parliament. I am not sure which one it is, but I can hear a little bit of noise from over there and what you might call a last hurrah, which is a jolly shame for those particular people concerned. Queensland has woken up. They have woken up to the worst government I have ever seen—and I saw Gough Whitlam and thought he was terrible, but this mob outstrips him, for certain.

I can assure members that this stupid bill is not resonating with the people of Queensland. The 'keep them in the bank' bill: what a load of nonsense that is. There are some good people over there—I cannot remember which one it is—but the fact of the matter is that they will cop what Queensland people out there believe, and the Queensland people never get it wrong. Queensland people will recognise these as silly bills. You can try whatever you want—'keep them in the bank' bill or whatever you want to call it—but the people of Queensland know what the government have done in the last nine years and they are not prepared to give them another four years. In fact, on 26 October I am sure that the good people of Queensland will show Labor the door in '24 and we will come back with any matters in relation to coal royalties at any time and, regardless of any interest group, we will do the right thing by Queenslanders. Whatever that means, whether it is the coal royalties, whether it is the hospitals or whether it is the Adult Crime, Adult Time—all of those matters will be dealt with in the interests of Queenslanders.

I am sorry, but I will be saying farewell. This is probably my last speech in the 57th Parliament, as I understand it, and I would like to bid those members who are leaving all the best for their future because this bill will not save their careers. It is a load of rubbish and typical of what they have done for the last nine years. It will not save them on 26 October.



**Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (8.34 pm): Deputy Speaker—

*A language other than English was spoken.*

On behalf of your Japanese comrades, thank you for defending the Japanese multinational companies from the evils of the Queensland government, which is trying to make sure Queenslanders are benefiting from something as simple as Queensland coal in the ground.

I rise to support the Progressive Coal Royalties Protection (Keep Them in the Bank) Bill. The member for Mermaid Beach used a thesaurus for descriptions of this bill and the name of it. I can probably remember some of the more descriptive and really quite useless names of bills that came out during the Campbell Newman years which really were for effect rather than any actual legislative purpose.

As a member of the committee, I was able to contribute to the inquiry into this bill. For all of the deputy chair's comments about this bill and the wonderful and colourful language he used to describe it, I am still looking through the report to find the statement of reservation. It was not worth doing, apparently. It is late in the term and I guess you could say it is a bit of a muck-up time and people really do not want to hand in their homework. He could not even be bothered with a statement of reservation for this particular bill.

I must admit, I had not been involved in too many economics committees before this term, so when we had the Under Treasurer appear before the committee it was an opportunity for me to talk about what setting the royalty rates means for budgeting, particularly giving certainty to the Treasurer going forward when we look at forward estimates and all that kind of thing. When the coal royalties were introduced, the floor progressive royalty rate was not changed at all. In fact, I said to the Under Treasurer, 'Our floor rate is still the same and is, in fact, the lowest.' That has not changed at all. Queensland still has the lowest coal royalty rate of all the mining states. Sorry, there is another state, but they do not have coalmines. In terms of states that have coalmining as a major industry, Queensland still has the lowest coalmining royalty rate.

Mercifully, I do not watch too much free-to-air TV or listen to the radio, so I have missed out, unfortunately, on a lot of the Resources Council's propaganda—scare campaign, sorry—that has been run over the last number of years. However, I did get the opportunity to ask a lot of those stakeholders about the 'devastating impact' that the progressive coal royalties have had on the coalmining industry since this government introduced them. I have to report that profits have been up substantially since the introduction of progressive coal royalties. The workforce has actually grown.

**Mr Millar:** No, it hasn't. It has not!

**Mrs McMAHON:** It was actually the evidence of the Resources Council that, yes, employment had gone up, and the Under Treasurer as well—

**Mr Millar** interjected.

**Mrs McMAHON:** From the Under Treasurer. Thank you very much for your interjection.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Martin): Member for Gregory, the member is not taking your interjections.

**Mrs McMAHON:** I was in the committee and it is in the—

**Mr Millar** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Pause the clock. Member for Gregory, you are warned under the standing orders. You will cease your interjections.

**Mr Millar** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Gregory, I just warned you and you had another go. You will leave the chamber for one hour.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Gregory withdrew from the chamber at 8.39 pm.*

**Mrs McMAHON:** I can only go by the evidence that the committee received from the witnesses who appeared on the record, and by *Hansard*. There were plenty more submitters who were offered the opportunity to attend the hearing, but they did not. As a member of parliament, I examine the evidence that is before the committee. I know that the opposition did not even bother doing a statement of reservation, so that's how interested they were in this process.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs McMAHON:** Listening to the backbench rant over there, apparently the coalmining industry is ruined. 'We will all be rooned,' said Hanrahan. Regardless of what the coal royalty progressive rates are like, no-one seems to be overly concerned about the fact that we have the lowest floor. I talk to Queenslanders about the idea that the superprofits being made on a Queensland asset—an asset that is theirs—are going overseas. The fact that we can have investments in satellite hospitals, reductions in rego and 50-cent fares is due to coal prices being extraordinarily high. You know what: they will not always stay like that but the whole point of a progressive royalty is that it will come down—it will not always be that high. When the coal prices go down, the progressive royalties will go down.


The Under Treasurer needs to have an expectation of the type of money that will be coming into Treasury for the purpose of the forward estimates so that the government can make commitments and forecast infrastructure with a level of certainty. If we are making sure that we are budgeting correctly—look, maybe it is having a tax policy. It is crickets from the other side about a tax policy. A private member's bill—anything really. It has only been four years!

**Mr Hunt** interjected.

**Mrs McMAHON:** It was just one in four years. I think my seven-year-old has handed in more homework than the LNP have in this particular term. This is the worst performing opposition I have certainly seen. Where is the policy that they take forward? Where is the tax policy? There are fewer than 45 days until the election. I am more than happy to talk about the motion that I spoke to. I do not know if the member for Callide bothered to stand up and speak to it.

**Mr Head** interjected.

**Mrs McMAHON:** This is about making sure that money made by multinational companies—they are making a motza off Queensland assets—stays in Queensland and goes into Queenslanders' pockets when the profits are high. It is not about running them out of town. That low coal royalty floor has not changed. Under this legislation, it is not going to change—that is certainty for you. As much as I would like to continue to antagonise the member for Callide, because he has had nothing else to contribute so far this week, I will let others have an opportunity. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (8.43 pm): I am delighted to rise in support of this bill because it lays bare the choice facing Queenslanders in just over a month. I back our progressive coal royalties for a couple of important reasons. One, it is paying for critical government initiatives like free kindy and more FairPlay vouchers—I will speak more on that later. Secondly—this is important—these resources are owned by Queenslanders. We are proud to make resource companies pay their fair share because Queenslanders need and deserve to have those profits—right now they are super profits—invested back into our community. I have been out knocking on doors, like many members of this House, and nobody has said to me yet that Queenslanders do not need our royalties and that they do

not want the services and the infrastructure that those royalties are paying for. But what they do say is, 'Wow, I am so happy about the 50-cent fares, it is making a huge difference for my family. We are able to afford all kinds of things that we were not able to afford before. It is making a huge difference to my family budget,' and that is fantastic.

**Mr Head** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Callide is incessantly interjecting. I cannot hear the member for Mount Ommaney who is only three seats away from me.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Millar. I will remind—

**Mr WATTS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This is a reflection on the chair.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, members! The House will come to order. Member for Mount Ommaney, you have the call. I remind all members to cease interjections so that the member can be heard in silence. Member for Millar, I will be looking over towards the member for Callide.

**Ms PUGH:** Thank you very much for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, the 50-cent fares have been an absolutely huge hit in my electorate. I am sure every Queenslander is enjoying the \$1,000 energy rebate. Of course, that money comes from our coal royalties. We have our FairPlay vouchers: \$200 per child is now available. In an exciting move that I know a lot of people in my community and right across Queensland are excited about, the criteria for those vouchers has been amended so that more Queensland kids can apply. As of yesterday, I am excited to share that thousands of FairPlay vouchers are still available for Queensland kids who are looking to take up a summer sport like cricket, or to come back and play soccer again next winter.

I am also excited to see a record number of those vouchers go to young women, thanks to the significant effort of our Miles government to lift the number of young women playing sports. After the efforts of our Matildas last year, a record number of those vouchers will go to young women. A lot of soccer clubs in my area have had a record number of female players over the last year. A lot of those players, when I handed out their trophies last Sunday, were using FairPlay vouchers. These royalties are making a real difference to families in Mount Ommaney and to families right across Queensland. It is helping kids stay healthy, it is helping kids stay fit and it is engaging them in important activities in their community—learning to volunteer and umpire and to be part of something bigger than themselves, which is kind of like what being in a political party can be like sometimes. I am excited to see a record number of FairPlay vouchers go out to communities right across Queensland. Anybody who has a car will be excited about the fact that they can get 20 per cent off their rego.

**Mr Tantari:** How much?

**Ms PUGH:** It is 20 per cent, member for Hervey Bay—20 per cent! It is pretty exciting. In my humble opinion, it is almost as good as those 50-cent fares. There are so many wonderful initiatives. I have not even started on the school infrastructure that these royalties will be assisting to fund. I know that all members of this House are aware of my passion for the free kindy program because all of our young people need to start school on a level playing field. Free kindy ensures every single Queensland child has the opportunity to access a kindergarten education program. That is so important because we have preppies who have never sat in a classroom a day in their life; then we have children who have been part of an early childhood learning centre from a young age who have had very different socialisation and education experiences.

This gives those children the opportunity to access that early learning program, and there are so many wonderful centres in Mount Ommaney, both traditional kindy models such as the C&K or Lady Gowrie model and long day care models, that offer that free kindy program because they meet the criteria. I know that a lot of centres have worked very hard to meet that criteria and offer that service. I cannot speak enough about how proud I am of the free kindy program and the fact that it is funded because of things like our progressive coal royalties. It is just so important for Queensland kids.

We have fantastic classrooms coming up out of the ground right across Queensland. We are even building some fantastic new schools as well. I am always hearing from the member for Logan about all the schools and school buildings he is getting in his electorate, and the member for Caloundra is also a regular offender in this space. It is absolutely fantastic. This is the infrastructure that our communities need.


**Mr Tantari:** Big Build.

**Ms PUGH:** The Big Build, indeed, as the member for Hervey Bay says. This is the infrastructure that our communities need and it is infrastructure that I am really proud to support.

As I said, when I am out knocking on doors and when I am at train stations, I hear how the 50-cent fares have been an absolute game changer for so many people in my community. People are reconsidering their modes of transport for the first time in a long time because there is now a real cost differential between driving their car to their place of work and catching public transport. That is really exciting because it is giving South-East Queenslanders the opportunity to really look again at their modes of transport and how they move around the city. For those already using public transport, it is obviously very exciting that they have that cost incentive as well. Again, so many people are benefiting. Even people who do not normally use public transport have spoken to me about how excited they are about those 50-cent fares. It is something that I am really excited about as a parent because my kids use it. My husband uses public transport as well. Our family budget has really benefited from it. I know that there would be people sitting in this chamber tonight who have had similarly positive experiences.

There are so many reasons this bill is so important to Queensland, and we have heard some of them tonight. Obviously, we in this Miles government have been really clear about where we stand on this legislation. We stand for Queenslanders. We believe that these coal superprofits deserve to go back to Queenslanders. This bill is so important, but what it comes down to is this: our Labor government had a choice to make. We had a choice between letting mining companies keep their record profits and letting Queenslanders share the benefit of those profits through initiatives like free TAFE, free kindy, our satellite hospitals, 50-cent fares and 20 per cent rego rebates, to name just a few. I know where I stand—that is, on the side of Queenslanders.

In the time I have remaining, can I say how disappointing it is to hear those opposite interjecting constantly. None of them can be bothered to jump up, get the call and have their say on this bill because they do not want to tell Queenslanders where they stand on this bill. They have the opportunity to jump up and speak on this bill. However, they do not want to tell Queenslanders where they stand because they are embarrassed, and that is exactly what we will see right up until election day. They will not tell Queenslanders what they stand for because they stand for nothing.

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (8.53 pm): I stand to speak on the Progressive Coal Royalties Protection (Keep Them in the Bank) Bill. This bill typifies everything that is wrong about this government and this Treasurer.

**Mr Sullivan:** But aren't you supporting that? Aren't you voting for it?

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection from the member for Stafford. I will explain the issues we have. An issue we have is that this bill is purely about politics. When the government have nothing to speak about in terms of their record, when they have nothing to speak about in terms of their past, they will try to create these political wedges about absolutely nothing—about a bill, about legislation that we have supported in the last two budgets. This Treasurer is so desperate that he has to create what he sees as mayhem, but it does not do that at all. An issue we have is when those opposite make a promise to the electorate 26 times that there are not going to be increased taxes and then the Treasurer is tricky, saying, 'I never talked about businesses. I never meant that,' despite being asked that directly.

We have an issue when legislation is brought to this chamber and there is no consultation with the people it impacts. We have an issue with that, about the limited consultation. We have an issue about the sovereign risk that is increased when they do not do that—when they do not consult with the people it affects and when international companies are taken by surprise. They are the issues that we have on this bill, and that talks about the political nature of this particular bill. This talks also about the ego of the Treasurer.

Who will go down as the worst treasurer in the history of Queensland? The first question he was asked when he became Treasurer he fluffed. He did not know the debt level. The 'shadow Treasurer'—there he is working the room for the next election, working the room to get votes for who is going to be the next leader of the Labor Party. There he is, working them over. All the members are getting sucked in by him. Look at him. What is he saying now to them?

**Mr HEALY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I am trying to seek some kind of relevance here.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Martin): I think the member for Everton, whilst he is being loud, is being relevant and is within the long title of the bill. This bill has a wide interpretation and, as such, all members have been talking about lots of different things.

**Mr MANDER:** This is the Treasurer who the shadow Treasurer exposed did not know the difference between credit spread and credit rating. He had no idea what that meant. No matter who is in the Treasury in the future government, it will take decades to repair the reputational damage to our state and also to our economy. This Treasurer could not wipe the shoes of former Labor treasurers like Keith De Lacy and even Terry Mackenroth, may they rest in peace. They would be turning over in their grave to see how this Labor Treasurer has ruined the economy of this great state.

We talk about the ego of this Treasurer. This bill is nothing but an ego trip for this Treasurer, and isn't it ironic that it is the last bill of this 57th Parliament? How ironic might it be! This is the Treasurer who is more focused on posing for presidential photos, thinking he is some sort of American president. This is the Treasurer who claimed he found the Binna Burra bell. He came out of the bushfire that destroyed forests, looking pristine in his sports shirt and his pants, saying, 'We found the Binna Burra bell,' and all those poor volunteer firemen, who actually did find it and saved people's lives—this is how he uses those volunteer workers. This bill is all about the Treasurer auditioning for the leader of—

**Mr Hinchliffe:** Who was talking earlier about living rent free?

**Mr MANDER:** I will take that interjection, and I see the Leader of the House standing there. This is also the brilliant tactician. This is the Treasurer who is the one who orchestrates all the so-called tactics. The Leader of the House is simply a lap-dog who does whatever he is told. We have this supposedly brilliant tactician, but every time he gets up it is a disaster.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly):** Pause the clock. Resume your seat please, member for Everton. I believe you used some unparliamentary language. I would ask you to withdraw.


**Mr MANDER:** I withdraw. As I said at the beginning of my contribution, this bill tells us everything we need to know about this government and about this Treasurer—total and utter incompetence and embarrassment about their past record. The only thing they have to rest on now is to try to create these fear campaigns, whether it is about different personalities or making up things that are not true with regard to who supports this policy and who does not support that policy. This is a government that is desperate—desperate—for ideas, a government for which the time has come. If we want to see change, we have to change the government. Let us show those opposite the door in '24.

Debate, on motion of Mr Mander, adjourned.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly):** It being 9 pm, I notify members that it is time for the automatic adjournment of the House in accordance with sessional order 2.

## ADJOURNMENT

### Rural Fire Service

 **Mr LAST (Burdekin—LNP) (9.00 pm):** In just eight years, 24 per cent of Queensland's Rural Fire Service volunteers have walked out the door. More than 8,600 brave volunteers have hung up their helmets, and the blame for that sits squarely at the feet of this government. This is the government that gave rural fire volunteers just seven days to respond to legislation that directly affected them. When it comes to the appliances that the volunteers rely upon, it is clear that 30 years of volunteer knowledge and experience has effectively been ignored.

As members are aware, volunteers have previously raised concerns about the roadworthiness of appliances, but clearly this government does not listen, given the concerns raised relating to the new fleet of appliances being supplied across the state. The list of concerns is a long one, and we are not speaking about minor issues here. For example, I am advised that the size of the appliance means it simply will not fit on some fire tracks and that the new appliances will actually carry fewer personnel. Believe it or not, the new appliances approved by this government only carry enough water to operate for 90 seconds, and due to the electrical system not operating correctly, brigades have been forced to actually jump-start their appliances.


Just when you think it could not get worse than an emergency vehicle needing to be jump-started, it does. Sometimes the technical jargon can make things difficult to understand, but the term 'bushfire' surely implies that these appliances will need to be taken off the road and in fact the appliances are four-wheel drives. According to the instruction manual, the appliances are 'designed to be driven on sealed and formed unsealed roads'. If it was not so serious, it would be funny.



While the minister is more concerned about media opportunities, volunteers are concerned about touchscreens that do not work, a lack of storage for their equipment and a gearbox that quite simply is not appropriate for the hilly terrain that brigades often operate in. While taxpayers will ultimately bear the cost of fixing the issues, the cost may be even greater for our volunteers—with some volunteers stating that these appliances pose a risk to the lives of volunteers.

Our volunteers deserve to be supported. They deserve to have the resources and the training they need to do their job effectively and in a safe manner. Queenslanders are seeing a stream of brave volunteers walking out the door under Labor's watch. The only way to address the exodus and the only way to change Labor's chaos and crisis is to change this government on 26 October because our volunteers, and particularly our rural firefighters, deserve to be supported. We rely on those firefighters in our time of need and they should not want for anything.

### **Centacare FNQ, School Savvy**


 **Hon. MP HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Sport) (9.03 pm): I rise to speak about the wonderful Centacare FNQ initiative School Savvy which facilitates access to school uniforms and school supplies for children and families struggling financially. That is why you need to vote for Labor, because we look after you in the busy back-to-school period at the start of the school year.

This was first launched back in 2016 as part of Anti-Poverty Week. The appeal called for donations of preloved stationery supplies and school uniforms for a pop-up shop which was opened in early January 2017. This program was developed for the start of each new school year because it is an extremely expensive time, especially off the back of school holidays and Christmas, for families on low incomes. It is estimated that in Australia over 17 per cent of children are affected by poverty, with more than 30 per cent of adults recognised as being in poverty. This has increased obviously after a decade of the LNP in federal government. Add to this the need to purchase new school uniforms for one, two, three or more children along with textbooks, school supplies plus school fees and it creates a significant financial strain on families.

The concept of School Savvy was initially very simple: to recycle preloved uniforms and stationery supplies. However, in reality, and thanks to the generosity of the Cairns community, School Savvy has distributed not only preloved goods but thousands of dollars worth of new supplies in each year of operation. The School Savvy program this year was a game changer for Centacare FNQ and assisted a record-breaking number of students, ensuring that they returned to school with the essential supplies.

The pop-up shops in both Cairns and surrounding areas experienced an overwhelming response this year, exacerbated by the impact of Cyclone Jasper and the subsequent flooding events. These natural disasters just added to the existing financial burden being experienced by families in the Tropical North. The School Savvy program provided assistance to over 1,080 families, equipping over 2,300 children with essential school supplies, plus 227 students returned to school with new haircuts because some barbers were keen to get involved. This continues to grow and that is a reflection of the community. It is a reflection of the great work done by a large range of non-government organisations. Off the success of the FNQ program, School Savvy has spread its wings over the last couple of years, with Centacare now coming on board this year with nine pop-up shop locations, 5,100 visitors and 2,700 students. This is about assisting, helping and working for our community.

### **Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers**


 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (9.06 pm): Spring has sprung well and truly in Queensland and that means it is time to visit the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers. The event has been an award-winning tourism attraction for Queensland, having won multiple national awards. The 75th carnival kicks off this weekend with the food and wine festival and entertainment in the great Queens Park. If you are interested in wine tasting, cheese tasting, beer appreciation or distillery tasting, if you like flowers or if you like music, it is time to get in your vehicles and drive up the hill to Toowoomba. The whole place looks fabulous, with 150,000 seed bulbs and seedlings having been planted in Queens Park and Laurel Bank Park. Over 50 private homes will open their homes up for people to take tours and look at what people plant in the conditions we have in Toowoomba. There are beautiful gardens of all different kinds. We have coach tours coming through.

The other part of it is from a music point of view and I love a bit of live music. Thirsty Merc, Kate Ceberano, Pete Murray and James Reyne will all be playing across the weekend, as well as some local and up-and-coming musicians, particularly on Friday night. Whether you are interested in the garden

competition and going to see private homes, whether you are interested in Laurel Bank Park which is one of our wonderful parks with a scented garden for sight impaired people or whether you want to look at the botanic gardens in Queens Park, they are all absolutely fabulous. My favourite, and I am a little biased, is the UniSQ Japanese Garden, which is one of the most authentic Japanese walk gardens outside of Japan in the world. It is a beautiful place. The only thing missing is koi carp in the pond, but there is a reason why we do not have koi carp in a pond in Queensland. It is a beautiful garden to take the family to and spend some time in.

At the food and wine festival itself, there will be various displays all through the day and into the afternoon and evening. During the day there will be different cooking classes and shows as well as different flower presentations, including from the Bromeliad Society. It is across our whole community. Do not think you can come up and do it in a day; you will need to stay overnight. The carnival is operational from 13 September to 7 October, kicking off with the entertainment in the park this weekend. The flowers, the food and the wine will be flowing well and truly across Toowoomba for the entire month. Let us hope we can win another gold award for a tourism event in Toowoomba. Last year 400,000 people visited.

### Hervey Bay Electorate

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (9.09 pm): Over the last four years the Hervey Bay electorate has seen great outcomes in infrastructure, programs and services under this Labor government. Hervey Bay is booming. Growth in population is at two per cent per annum. Unemployment is around four per cent—it has more than halved in under four years. There is no better example than the massive job growth we have in the area. Infrastructure like new school halls and roads, as well as new hospital services and infrastructure, are underway. They are all committed and delivered by this Miles Labor government.

Last week, I was excited to stand alongside the Premier, the health minister and the member for Maryborough when we announced other great new health services for the Fraser Coast. A satellite hospital will be built to service the extra need created by our booming regional population. Further announcements were also made by the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Seniors in Hervey Bay, with an additional \$1 million per annum being funded to the Wide Bay health service palliative care, adding more resources to our local specialist team. Hervey Bay has been chosen as the base for the telestroke regional and remote service to provide real-time access to doctors and nurses who can assist patients online at a critical time. This is the Miles government acting to ensure that every Queenslanders can access better health care closer to home.

These new services are great wins for health care in Hervey Bay on top of the 35-bed ED expansion, the 22-bed mental health unit that opened this year, the new 24-bed ward underway, the new 550 space car park, as well as a new Medicare urgent care clinic and an increase in PTSS subsidies. All in all that is a total of an extra 81 new beds for the Hervey Bay community since I was elected in late 2020. In addition, there are more doctors, nurses and health professional positions than at any other time in the past.


All these announcements fly in the face of the misinformation being peddled by the LNP across the regions. All they do is talk down regional cities like Hervey Bay, peddle absolute mistruths about our hospital services and just plainly insult our regional hardworking hospital staff by calling them 'duds'. It is absolutely disgraceful.

We all know that the LNP stands for nothing but slick slogans. They think the Hervey Bay people are silly enough to have forgotten what they did to our regional health services when they were last in government when they sacked 345 health staff from the Wide Bay. I was there. I saw what happened when they tore through our health services and our health staff at our hospital. They also defunded dozens of NGOs that provided many local add-on services so that they could introduce their privatisation agenda—the one we still all know they have ready to go if they become the government at the end of October. That is what they are all about—privatisation.

More upgrades and new services have been delivered in the last four years since I was elected than in the whole 11 years and four terms the LNP government were in charge in Hervey Bay—which amounted to very little. The people of Hervey Bay will not ever forget what the LNP did to Hervey Bay the last time they were in government. The Labor government and I will always deliver to build a better Hervey Bay, whilst the LNP will only ever cut, sell and sack.

*(Time expired)*

## Public Trustee

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (9.12 pm): The office of the Public Trustee should be there to diligently help oversee the affairs of the most vulnerable, and for many it does, but when things do not go well, when allegations of overcharging or mismanagement occur, the vulnerable can be left voiceless and the shield to protect becomes a shield to hide the truth. Under gag laws that stop people under administration and guardianship or their advocates from speaking, mistakes and overreach of a system governing their affairs can remain hidden, and what is hidden is harder to reform.


There is still a long way to go to reform the laws underpinning the office of the Public Trustee to ensure stories such as those of Sue Nunn's family do not keep occurring. She and her family had to take legal action against the Public Trustee to protect her disabled brother from the Public Trustee's mishandling of his affairs which nearly cost him the security of his public housing unit and did cost more than I believe about \$80,000 in legal costs from the estate until it was reimbursed after legal action.

There are many examples of mistakes, be it overcharging or mismanagement, that will remain hidden if those who are under administration and their advocates have unreasonable barriers to speak. That is why Sue Nunn has sponsored a petition—it closes today—with more than 2,760 signatories who back her call to overturn these gag laws to give the voiceless and their advocates the legal right to speak publicly.

Sue's story is personal but the cause is one for the public benefit, as she realised that she and her family were not alone. For Sue's family, they won a legal battle to gain administration of their brother's disability pension after the Public Trustee charged him 40 per cent of that pension to manage finances, or about \$8,000 per year. The way that the Public Trustee mismanaged the case also saw tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees expended and this vulnerable man put at risk of losing his public housing unit.

I commend Sue for her persistence and lobbying for change to see this gag law overturned for the benefit of the vulnerable. We are not saying to take away all protections, but the way it is configured now is wrong because it is hurting the very people it is supposed to protect. As her petition says, it is the right of every Queenslanders to have freedom of speech and the ability to tell their stories truthfully and openly without fear of retaliation and prosecution for doing so.

## Freeman, Ms C

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (9.15 pm): Ipswich recently lost an exceptional woman. In fact, the Labor Party lost an exceptional woman—Colleen Freeman. She was born into the Labor Party and she lived out Labor values her entire life. She passed away last month at the age of 91 and she is going to be greatly missed by everyone who knew her, including me. Her grandparents were founding members of the party in North Queensland, and her father, a strong unionist and ALP member, encouraged Colleen to always be prepared to stand up and speak out against injustice, especially on behalf of those less fortunate.

Many people in Ipswich knew Colleen as the wife of the late, great Des Freeman, mayor of Ipswich from 1979 to 1991. Her contribution to the ALP was considerable and should be rightfully acknowledged here in this House. Some of Colleen's significant contributions include being the first woman to sit on Labor's administrative committee. She ran as a Labor candidate for the Senate in 1975. In fact, in that case she got pipped by Mal Colston. That is possibly not the best decision the party has ever made.

She was president of Labor Women in Queensland from 1973 to 1979. She was the founding organiser of the North Booval ALP Branch, which was the precursor of the Ipswich Central Branch, which is my branch and which is a few members away from being the biggest branch in the entire city.

She founded and established the Labor True Believers group, which is a group of older Ipswich branch members who met during the 2000s and 2010s. During that period a lot of our branch base was aging and a lot of them did not want to come out to meetings at night. Colleen, who was battling ill health and her husband had macular degeneration at that time and was caring for him, started this True Believers group, which ended up being a very dynamic branch in Ipswich.


During her husband's time as Ipswich mayor, Colleen set up the Mayoress' Welfare Committee, which raised funds to help children from disadvantaged families in Ipswich maintain their involvement in sport, education and the arts. Probably her greatest claim to fame was that she was a person of interest to Joh Bjelke-Petersen's special branch for her involvement in the labour movement and social justice issues.

Colleen said in a *Courier-Mail* article in 2016 that women like the late Vi Jordan, the Labor politician who was the second female ever to be elected to Queensland parliament, set an example for her. But Colleen herself also blazed a trail for women in politics. She was always a great supporter of mine and the Labor member before me, Rachel Nolan, who was the first woman to ever be elected to Ipswich. She was a very strong supporter. She was always there at the end of the phone for us whenever we needed her.

It is rightly fitting that we celebrate 30 years of Labor's affirmative action rule this month when we acknowledge women like Colleen who set a path for Labor women to become leaders within the party and within Australian politics.

I pass my sincere condolences to Colleen's children—Rachel, Phillip and Paula—their spouses, her nine grandchildren and her great-grandchild. Vale, Colleen.

### Mirani Electorate


 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—KAP) (9.18 pm): This is my last adjournment speech for the 57th Parliament. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge some of the people and the organisations who have supported me over the past four years and to thank them for their support. Not a single day goes by when I do not count my blessings for having been given the huge honour of serving the wonderful people of Mirani.

During my second term, I have worked with many amazing individuals, groups and organisations—all striving to make our community an even better place to live. I would like to say thank you to all of Mirani's wonderful service clubs like the Mackay and Pioneer Valley RSL subbranches, Meals on Wheels, the Sarina Country Women's Association and the Valley Country Women's Association, dozens of progress associations, historical societies, sporting groups, rural fire brigades and many other such groups. If I had the time, I would name and thank them all, but we would probably be here all day, I reckon. However, I send a special shout-out to Tricky Triddy who is a good mate of mine in the People's Revolution, and to Tine McDonald, Lisa Hansen and Rhonda Marriage and the World Wide Rally for Freedom of Mackay. They have provided me with enormous encouragement and personal support during some pretty dark days in the state's history.

The job of working as a lone crossbench member of parliament is a pretty tough gig so a big thanks must go to all the members of my electorate office staff, Jannean, Josh and Dana, who are watching today from Sarina and Mount Morgan. Thanks also to my parliamentary staff, John and Trish, who have supported me throughout my second term in parliament. John will turn 85 in the next two months. He has been here with me every day—two hours out from Gatton. I love him very dearly. To my wife, Kym, my children, Jorja and Kyrah, and my mum and dad: I thank you for your ongoing support and for all the sacrifices you have made that allow me to do this job.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank the people of Mirani who had the faith to put me into this place, twice now. Mirani is the best electorate in Queensland and I love it. My people are always there for me. I am very humbled by the extraordinary support I have enjoyed from many people over the past seven years. Politics was not a career path that I had ever considered so you can imagine my surprise when I was first elected. I love you all. Thank you for always backing me. I also thank all the staff at parliament who have always backed me as well.

### Cooper Electorate, Achievements

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (9.21 pm): I rise to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to my community. To serve as an elected member is a rare privilege that less than 100 women have had in the entire history of Queensland. I have aimed to faithfully serve the people of Cooper, to represent their views, to deliver local infrastructure and, importantly, to lead with conviction and integrity.

It is no secret that people move to my electorate for our schools. I want to thank the school communities. Together we have secured over \$40 million, including for air conditioning for every classroom, solar panels, STEM buildings, sports halls, disability ramps and safer school zones. I look forward to being returned as the local member so that I can continue that work. I cannot wait to deliver a new library for The Gap State High School. I will continue to advocate for a new hall for Ashgrove State School and, as many locals know, I am determined to see a dedicated school for autistic students established in my electorate. I look forward to continuing that fight.


I want to recognise the sports and community clubs that have involved me in their training days, trophy nights, strategy sessions and working bees. I have loved being included in your celebrations and I look forward to being returned after 26 October so that we can continue to work together on what I

see as the greatest issue affecting our community, that is, how to manage an increasing population with rapidly diminishing and contested space. We need to work together, across all levels of government, and we need to work creatively. We have done some great work together. The funding I secured to redevelop the clubhouse for the GPS Rugby Club and Valleys District Cricket Club was a game changer. I have committed funding to sort out their parking issues, which will be another great step forward. I still have unfinished business for The Gap Football Club where the fields and clubhouse need to be done and for Hilder Road State School where new lights are needed. I look forward to continuing that work.

Our people are very invested in caring for our planet. I have never ignored the responsibility I have to represent their views. I was proud to fight for protections for the Lake Eyre Basin and to have our emissions reductions targets enshrined in legislation. I want to thank the folk at the Queensland Conservation Council, Lock the Gate, the Wilderness Society and LEAN who have always given me impartial information and helped to guide my advocacy. We are about to announce the location of our solar community battery for The Gap, courtesy of the Labor federal government. I look forward to seeing that project through as well as continuing to work with The Gap Sustainability Initiative and conservation groups to complete the important work in cleaning our creeks and reintroducing platypus by 2032, which is our big bodacious goal.

In an electorate like Cooper, experience matters, competence matters and leadership and compassion matter. I am proud to have worked every day since I was elected for what matters to the people of Cooper and I always will. That is my commitment.

### Callide Electorate

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (9.24 pm): Firstly, I want to give a quick mention to the team at the CCCI for a terrific Chinchilla One Long Table, which was held on the weekend. It is always a terrific event. It has been running for 10 years. I say a huge thank you to the Chinchilla community for the street food and multicultural festival. It is a great event that is held in September every year. I encourage everyone to get out and enjoy it in the future.


This week it was a pleasure to table a petition on behalf of the Burnett community, alongside local farmer Russell Zahnow, to get the Mundubbera Durong Road fully sealed to two lanes. That is a critical road and a critical route. Sealing the road to two lanes all the way through and allowing road train access will unlock the half-a-billion dollar agricultural economy of the North Burnett. There is huge potential there and we need road train access into the North Burnett.

As the road is currently, there is just over 11 kilometres of single-lane bitumen. It is incredibly inadequate and it is incredibly unsafe, as anyone who travels that route regularly will say. I travel the road very regularly. I have smashed many windscreens when driving along that road because you have to pull off the road when vehicles come towards you. Their tyres will be on the gravel and they throw up rocks at your windscreen. I have seen whole windscreens sitting beside that road because people have had a windscreen smashed so badly that they could not drive any further and had to kick the windscreen out of their vehicle to be able to continue along the road. That is how inadequate, dangerous and unsafe that road is. We need to upgrade the road to twin lanes and we need to make sure that when we spend that money and invest in that road that it is road train rated to unlock the economic potential of the North Burnett, which is the citrus bowl of Queensland. It is a great little agricultural hub and it has so much potential if we get the right freight access to that community.

With regard to crime, many questions and concerns are raised with me when it comes to policing resources in Callide. Earlier in the year it was incredibly disappointing to learn, from an answer that I received from the minister, that in Callide and the broader Callide region, comparing June 2019 to February of this year, there were 18 fewer police officers. That is 18 fewer coppers who are servicing the broader Callide region over a period of a few years. It is no wonder that crime is out of control in this state.

That is why the LNP is serious about bringing in terrific crime policies such as Adult Crime, Adult Time and backing it up with rights of victims and early intervention programs, boosts to residential care and the rest. It is no wonder that the police are overworked. They are sick of simply doing paperwork and locking up the same offenders, which is why they are leaving. It is why there are 18 fewer coppers in Callide and across the Callide region. That is why we have to turn things around and bring in strong crime policies in Queensland. If you want to see change, change the government and show Labor the door in 2024.

### Milliner, Mr M

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (9.27 pm): I rise to give my last adjournment speech for this parliament. Tonight, in the last sitting week of the 57th Parliament, I rise with a heavy heart to speak about a dear friend of mine and my No. 1 supporter as the Labor member for Barron River and also of the Labor Party movement in Far North Queensland who is fighting his own battle. His name is Maurice Milliner. Maurice has received some devastating news in the past few days after a recent health battle over many months. He is currently being looked after by palliative care and his family, who I am pretty sure are tuned in to these proceedings. We are hopeful of moving Maurice home within a few days to be with his partner, Wayne, for his final journey.


Since my election in 2015, Maurice has been out on the streets with me. No matter what we were campaigning on, he was there. No matter what we asked of him, he was there. Nothing was ever too much for Maurice and I am truly grateful for that. From pre-poll voting to election day, he ran the Holloways Beach booth from 8 am until 6 pm. He was always there and he always brought Wayne. He was always loud and always proud. My opposition candidates knew exactly who he was. Some cringed when he arrived for his shift, knowing what they were about to cop. There was no way of stopping the passion from Maurice.

Only in the past few days it was brought to my attention how much the Labor movement has been in the Milliner family. I did some research. The member for Sandgate, our learned House historian, will appreciate this. Maurice's Uncle Bert was Bert Milliner who was a federal ALP senator from Queensland. His 1975 death in office triggered a stoush over his Senate replacement in this very House. The senator sent by the Bjelke-Petersen government, at the opposition of the Queensland ALP, was rejected in Canberra, which cost the federal government supply in the Senate and led to the demise of the Whitlam government. Through his death, Maurice's uncle lit the fuse on one of the biggest political events in this country's history. Maurice's cousin Glen Milliner was a member of this chamber from 1977-98, holding the seats of Everton and Ferny Grove. He served many roles, including as minister. Queensland Labor politics runs thick in the Milliner family.

Maurice, you are a fighter, you are Labor to the bone, you are a supporter of the oppressed and the working class and, most of all, you are a dear friend of Rosie and me. You will always be the 'King of the knob', which refers to the name of his beloved community of Yorkeys Knob in Cairns. Tonight, Maurice, this speech is a tribute to you, mate.

## DEPUTY SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### Member for Greenslopes

 **Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Members, this will be the last adjournment and my last adjournment as the Deputy Speaker in the 57th Parliament. I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to be the Deputy Speaker of the 57th Parliament, and I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to listen to all of the adjournment debates. I have learned a lot about you, I have learned a lot about your electorates and I have learned a lot about Emu Swamp Dam. I have learned about the things you are proud about. I have shared your losses with you. Far too often I have heard your grievances, but I have mostly enjoyed hearing about the people you are proud of in your electorate. Surprisingly, last night we learned that the member for Redlands can sing. I would like to thank the Temporary Speakers for their fantastic work over the last four years, I would like to thank the clerks at the table for their patient advice, and I would certainly like to thank the attendants for keeping us well hydrated and looking after all of our needs. Thank you, and good luck in the upcoming election.

The House adjourned at 9.31 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, Furner, 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, MacMahon, Mander, Martin, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mullen, Nicholls, Nightingale, O'Connor, O'Rourke, Pease, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Skelton, Smith, Stevens, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Watts, Weir, Whiting, Zanow