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# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS (PROOF)

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## FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

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## WEDNESDAY, 12 MARCH 2025

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The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

Mr Speaker (Hon. Pat Weir, Condamine) read prayers and took the chair.

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I acknowledge the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people of this state and their elders past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge the former members of this parliament who have participated in and nourished the democratic institutions of this state. Finally, I acknowledge the people of this state, whether they have been born here or have chosen to make this state their home and whom we represent to make laws and conduct other business for the peace, welfare and good government of this state.

### MOTION

#### Sitting Days and Order of Business

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (Leader of the House) (9.31 am), by leave, without notice: I move—  
That the House—


1. notes the Speaker's notification on 8 March 2025 under sessional order 3 that, due to the impact of and recovery from Cyclone Alfred—
  - (a) the sitting for Tuesday, 11 March 2025 was cancelled;
  - (b) the House would meet today at 9.30 am; and
  - (c) the Speaker proposed that—
    - (i) the House will meet Wednesday, Thursday and Friday this week; and
    - (ii) the sitting program for this Wednesday will be the normal Tuesday sitting program; this Thursday, the normal Wednesday program; and this Friday, the normal Thursday program.
2. endorses the Speaker's proposal and orders the alteration of the program for each day accordingly.

In briefly addressing this motion, I acknowledge the cooperation, assistance and collaboration you undertook as Speaker, in consultation with myself as the Leader of the House, along with the Clerk of the Parliament and the Manager of Opposition Business throughout the recent weather event and circumstances of Tropical Cyclone Alfred. There was significant complexity and detailed consideration that had to be given to not only matters involving the parliamentary precinct but also electorate offices, staffing arrangements and other matters involving all members of parliament and specifically with respect to the current sitting week. On behalf of the government I thank you, Mr Speaker, and your staff, along with the Clerk of the Parliament and his staff, as well as the Manager of Opposition Business for the collegiate and genuine spirit of cooperation during this recent event.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

### ASSENT TO BILL

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

The Honourable P. Weir MP

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Parliament House

George Street

BRISBANE QLD 4000

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

Date of assent: 28 February 2025

A bill for an Act to amend the Duties Act 2001, the Land Tax Act 2010, the Payroll Tax Act 1971, the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009 and the Taxation Administration Act 2001 for particular purposes

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

Yours sincerely


Governor

28 February 2025


*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 28 February 2025, from Her Excellency the Governor to the Speaker advising of assent to a certain bill on 28 February 2025.

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on behalf of the parliament I wish to express our thoughts to everyone affected by Cyclone Alfred and the resulting floodwaters. I thank the Leader of the House, the Manager of Opposition Business and the Clerk for their cooperation in amending the sitting days for this week to ensure the safety and security of members and staff. I also extend my thanks to all members and Parliamentary Service staff for adjusting your schedules accordingly.


### 100 Women in Parliament

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I wish to inform members that a significant milestone has been reached in this, the 58th Parliament: 100 women have now been elected to the Queensland parliament. This achievement is part of a long journey towards gender equality in politics. In 1902 Australia became the second country in the world to grant women the right to vote, following New Zealand in 1893. This milestone of 100 women in parliament is a testament to the progress made, but it also reminds us that the fight for fair representation is ongoing. To commemorate this achievement I invite you to walk through level 3 of the Parliamentary Annexe. You will find an exhibition showcasing stories of Queensland's pioneering women in politics, including our first female member of parliament, Irene Longman, and a register of all 110 female MPs since her election in 1929. While you are there be sure to check out the limited edition 100 Women in Parliament commemorative products available in the parliamentary gift shop, including tote bags, scarves and a locally produced pink gin which is also available in the Lucinda Bar.

Recently, our marketing and communications team interviewed current female members of parliament to share their wisdom and advice for future generations, along with a few fun insights like their go-to coffee order and the theme song that best represents their political journey. You can now watch the full video on the parliamentary website.


We had planned several events to celebrate International Women's Day, including a question and answer panel lunch with current and former members and a debate for high school students. Unfortunately, Cyclone Alfred forced us to postpone these events. However, we hope to reschedule these events in the coming months and we look forward to celebrating this significant milestone further.

### Visitors to Public Gallery

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

## MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

### Beard, Mr PF

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Premier and Minister for Veterans) (9.36 am): I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of services rendered to this State by the late Peter Francis Beard, a former member of the parliament of Queensland and deputy leader of the Liberal Party;

2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the Members of the Parliament of Queensland in the loss that they have sustained.

Today, the House is paying its respect to Peter Francis Beard, who served as a member of the Legislative Assembly from 1986 to 1989, and extending our condolences to his family. While his time in this House was short, Peter Beard can claim a unique record: he is the only member of the Liberal Party to have held the then seat of Mount Isa. Peter Beard was a son of Mount Isa. He was born in Mount Isa. He married his wife Gayle; he raised his family in the city. He worked for its major single industry, Mount Isa Mines, and his political career was centred on the city.

Peter Francis Beard was born in Mount Isa on 22 May 1935. He went to several primary schools before attending All Souls in Charters Towers and then studying a bachelor of arts at the University of Queensland and training to be a teacher. He returned to Mount Isa to teach from 1957 to 1965 and made such a good impression with the students that when he first became ill Peter's family received messages of love and support from former students who are now aged in their seventies.

It should be acknowledged that upon his election to parliament he noted that his father and grandfather were miners and that he and three of his children worked for the company. Peter Beard joined the staff of Mount Isa Mines in 1965, serving as a public relations executive. He was the face of Mount Isa Mines in the region and he connected with people so easily that politics was second nature to him. The 1986 election saw the Liberal Party make a concerted effort to re-establish itself in Queensland. Peter Beard was successful in winning Mount Isa from the sitting ALP member. Thirty-eight years ago, on 10 March 1987, Peter Beard outlined in his maiden speech what motivated him to enter politics to represent the people of that great city. He said—

I was born in Mount Isa when it was very much less than a city; in fact, it was little more than an embryo company town rising above the canvas and bark huts of a mining camp...I want it understood early and clearly that Mount Isa is very much my home town. I have been intimately involved in its life for most of my life, and I am here as the representative of the people of that city, of Camooweal and of the countryside between and round and about.


In that speech he spoke of Mount Isa as a wealth creator not a wealth consumer. He referenced the importance of the mining and pastoral industries, but he referred to the role of his electorate as a commercial and business centre and the base for many hundreds of public servants, teachers, police, court staff and state work staff.

Throughout his time in parliament, Peter Beard sought to highlight the specific challenges facing the people of Mount Isa: the viability of the cattle industry, the problems facing students needing to leave home for tertiary education, the need for suitable Aboriginal housing and the difficulties for residents to access adequate health care. Mount Isa and its people were always utmost in Peter Beard's mind.

At the same time, Peter Beard was a passionate advocate for private enterprise. He served as a member of the Parliamentary Building Committee and as the Liberal Party spokesman on mines and energy, northern development and primary industry. In early 1988, the Liberal Party moved to prepare its party for the crucial 1989 election. Angus Innes, the then member for Sherwood, became parliamentary leader and Peter Beard became his deputy, which was a position he held until 1989 when he lost his seat.


Peter Beard returned to Mount Isa Mines, became a policy adviser and used his vast knowledge, experience and many talents as a consultant and a speechwriter. Even in retirement he continued to serve the community, volunteering as a radio announcer for a show assisting people with cognitive decline in care facilities. Peter and Gayle supported charities helping with food distribution for people needing a hand. They sang in choirs and they attended language classes.

Peter Francis Beard passed away on 19 September 2024, aged 89. I place on record the government's thanks for the service that Mr Beard gave to this House and to the Queensland community. We welcome his daughter, Gabrielle Lawrence, and other members of Peter's family to the House. We extend our sympathy on his passing.


 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.41 am): I rise on behalf of the opposition to express my condolences on the passing of the former member for Mount Isa, Mr Peter Francis Beard. Queensland won the geological lottery. For Mount Isa, that came in the form of some of the world's richest deposits of traditional minerals such as lead, silver, copper and zinc. While Queenslanders today know Mount Isa as a symbol of our state's mining heritage, Peter Beard described the Mount Isa that he was born into in 1935 as little more than an embryo company town.

Peter came from a mining family. Before studying education at uni, Peter worked as a labourer for Mount Isa Mines, following in his father's and grandfather's footsteps. After graduating and working as a teacher for 10 years, Peter returned to Mount Isa Mines. By the time he entered parliament, he had already passed the baton on to three of his children, who were also working at Mount Isa Mines. Mount Isa has been built on the hard work of its residents and by families such as Peter's. It is because of them that Mount Isa and the entire north-west region continues to thrive.

On behalf of the opposition, I extend my deepest sympathy to Mr Beard's family and friends including Gabrielle, who I am told is celebrating a birthday today, Terry, Eleanor and a former member for Sherwood, Mr Angus Innes, who are with us today. Vale, Peter Beard.

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (9.42 am): I rise to contribute to the condolence motion for Peter Beard and add to the comments made by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. There is wonderful history around Peter's time in Mount Isa. He lived and worked through the adversity and the many challenges that came with the growth of Mount Isa and the creation of our municipality following the split from Cloncurry. Peter worked in the region and represented the then seat of Mount Isa in parliament through a period that was, to say the least, extremely problematic. It was a big task.

I can say with certainty that, to this day, long after he left parliament, Peter Beard's name is still well recognised. He is known around town for the impact that he and his family have had on Mount Isa. We pay tribute not just to Peter but also to his family who supported him through that period. They were a very big part of his success during his time in Mount Isa. It should be said that his contributions were much more than just his service in politics. The fact that he chose to live, work and contribute to the Mount Isa region is in itself a big step given all the adversity that can come with living in a remote area. We pay tribute to the contribution he made not just in his political career but also to the north-west. On behalf of the people of Traeger, I send our condolences to the family. Vale, Peter Beard.

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.44 am): I was not going to speak on this condolence motion but then I reflected back on my career. I actually knew Peter Beard. I was a member of the Young Liberals in 1986 when Peter took the world by storm and certainly took Queensland politics by storm as a Liberal who won the seat of Mount Isa. Peter was a Liberal who proudly wore his liberalism on his sleeve. He did not pretend to be anything other than what he was. He believed in free enterprise, he believed in small government, he believed in the power of the individual and he stood up and proclaimed those values no matter where he was. He participated in the full political life of the Liberal Party for the three years that he was a member here. I remember him speaking at conferences about the challenge of being a Liberal who had won the seat of Mount Isa and was continuing to represent that area. I note that a former leader of the Liberal Party, Angus Innes, is in the gallery today. No doubt he would have equally fond memories of Peter.

I heard the Premier say that upon Peter's passing his former students, now in their 70s, contacted the family to express their regard and appreciation. I remember the regard and appreciation with which he was held by a now older generation of Young Liberals from that time—much older, I might say—and the inspiration he provided because he did take up the cudgels in a tough area. He showed that with personality, perseverance, hard work and the right attitude and by bringing everyone along with him, he was able to win in a seat that no-one would ever have contemplated could be held by the Liberal Party.

I remember that Peter spoke with fondness of his home city of Mount Isa, for what it was able to contribute to Queensland and what he thought it would continue to contribute to Queensland. When we think back on representatives in this place, it is important to look at what they said and what they did and the passion with which they brought their case to this place. Even in the short time that he was here, Peter brought that passion. As he did in his roles as an educator and an employee in Mount Isa, he brought that passion to politics and he inspired another generation of politicians. Vale, Peter Beard.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Will honourable members indicate their agreement by standing in silence for one minute.

*Whereupon honourable members stood in silence.*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, question time will begin at 10.33 am.

## PETITIONS

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

### Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018



**Mr Katter**, from 3,360 petitioners, requesting the House to repeal the order that bans freedom of speech and allow members of parliament the right to move motions or amendments regarding the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018.

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

#### **Public Housing, Wi-Fi Services**

465 petitioners, requesting the House to provide Wi-Fi services to all public housing and social housing for a fee of \$10 per week on a fixed data limit.

#### **Residential Tenancies**

1,071 petitioners, requesting the House to limit long and short term rental costs to 25% of the renter's income.

#### **Pumicestone Passage, Watercraft Speed Limit**

1,096 petitioners, requesting the House to reduce the maximum speed for watercraft on the entire Pumicestone Passage to 20 knots.

#### **Native Forests, Timber Production**

706 petitioners, requesting the House to bring the not fit for purpose 'Code of practice for native forest timber production on Queensland's State forest estate' to the attention of the Minister for the Environment.

Petitions received.

## **TABLED PAPERS**

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

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

21 February 2025—

- [127](#) Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council—Annual Report 2023-24
- [128](#) Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal—Annual Report 2023-24
- [129](#) Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—Annual Report 2023-2024
- [130](#) Magistrates Court of Queensland—Annual Report 2023-2024
- [131](#) District Court of Queensland—Annual Report 2023-2024
- [132](#) Director of Child Protection Litigation—Annual Report 2023-2024
- [133](#) Queensland Law Reform Commission—Annual Report 2023-2024
- [134](#) Public Interest Monitor—Annual Report 2023-2024
- [135](#) Coroners Court of Queensland—Annual Report 2023-2024

24 February 2025—

- [136](#) Health, Environment and Innovation Committee: Report No. 2, 58th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 10 September 2024 and 27 November 2024

25 February 2025—

- [137](#) Statement for Public Disclosure: Expenditure of the Office of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Hon. Curtis Pitt) for the period 1 July 2024 to 25 November 2024
- [138](#) Statement for Public Disclosure: Expenditure of the Office of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Hon. Pat Weir) for the period 26 November 2024 to 31 December 2024

26 February 2025—

- [139](#) Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal—Remuneration Determination: Review of the entitlement to additional staff members of cross bench Members of the 58<sup>th</sup> Parliament—Determination 34/2025, 26 February 2025

27 February 2025—

- [140](#) Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 3, 58th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 10 September 2024 and 28 November 2024

28 February 2025—

- [141](#) Governance, Energy and Finance Committee: Report No. 4, 58th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled on 28 November 2024

3 March 2025—

- [142](#) Primary Industries and Resources Committee: Report No. 2, 58th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 11 September 2024 and 28 November 2024

4 March 2025—

[143](#) Education and Care Services National Amendment (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024 made by the Education Ministers under section 301 of the Education and Care Services National Law as applied by the States and Territories

[144](#) Education and Care Services National Amendment (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024 made by the Education Ministers under section 301 of the Education and Care Services National Law as applied by the States and Territories, human rights certificate

5 March 2025—

[145](#) Public Report of Office Expenses for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition for the period 1 July 2024 to 28 October 2024

[146](#) Public Report of Ministerial Expenses for the period 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024

6 March 2025—

[147](#) Family Responsibilities Commission—Annual Report 2023-2024

7 March 2025—

[148](#) Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 4, 58th Parliament—Trusts Bill 2025

#### TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

#### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Legal Profession Act 2007:

Legal Profession (Society Rules) Amendment Notice 2025, No. 6

Legal Profession (Society Rules) Amendment Notice 2025, No. 6, explanatory notes

Legal Profession (Society Rules) Amendment Notice 2025, No. 6, human rights certificate

Forestry Act 1959, Nature Conservation Act 1992:

Forestry (State Forests) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 7

Forestry (State Forests) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 7, explanatory notes

Forestry (State Forests) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 7, human rights certificate

Nature Conservation Act 1992:

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2025, No. 8

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2025, No. 8, explanatory notes

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2025, No. 8, human rights certificate

Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024:

Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2025, No. 9

Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2025, No. 9, explanatory notes

Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment (Postponement) Regulation 2025, No. 9, human rights certificate

Making Queensland Safer Act 2024:

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 10

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 10, explanatory notes

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 10, human rights certificate

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994:

Rural and Regional Adjustment (Variation of Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 11

Rural and Regional Adjustment (Variation of Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 11, explanatory notes

Rural and Regional Adjustment (Variation of Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants Scheme) Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 11, human rights certificate

Building Act 1975, Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018, Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991:

Building and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 12

Building and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 12, explanatory notes

Building and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 12, human rights certificate

Nature Conservation Act 1992:

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 13

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 13, explanatory notes

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 13, human rights certificate

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999:

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 14

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 14, explanatory notes

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025, No. 14, human rights certificate

#### REPORT BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Clerk—

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

#### **Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2024**

Amendments made to Bill

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

*Omit—*


'Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2024'

*Insert—*

'Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025'

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Premier and Minister for Veterans) (9.50 am): Rainfall has eased and rivers are receding. We are delivering on our promise of no daylight between our response to Tropical Cyclone Alfred and the recovery from this historic weather event. Today, 584 of the 661 schools that were impacted have reopened. That means that around nine out of 10 schools have students back at their desks, allowing our young people to return to normal life and enabling their parents to get back to work. All major roads, including the Warrego and Cunningham Highways, are flowing again. The vast majority of traffic lights are now working. Commuters are back on trains across the entire Queensland Rail network and most buses are back on roads. Our airports and ports are back online.

The SES completed another 400 tasks in the last 24 hours. They have never received as many calls for assistance as they did during Alfred. The SES have completed more than 13,000 jobs throughout the event, helping to get thousands of Queenslanders on the road to recovery. More importantly, over 40 people rescued from floodwaters are all safe. Today, there are 11 Community Recovery hubs open across the region providing a one-stop shop for Queenslanders who need support. More will follow.


Since the start of Alfred, our power companies have reconnected in excess of 390,000 homes and businesses—that is approaching 90 per cent of the huge number impacted by the cyclone. We sincerely acknowledge the ongoing strain on those who remain without power and the stress and impact it is having on their daily life. We also acknowledge the around-the-clock efforts of Energex and Ergon workers to get the lights back on.

Each region has experienced in different ways the four challenges of Alfred—waves, wind, rain and flood. Alfred's storm surges carved out escarpments along the Gold and Sunshine Coast beachfronts. It struck the Redlands and Moreton Bay packing winds of around 100 kilometres an hour, toppling 30-metre tall gum trees and blowing sheets off roofs. In less than a week, Alfred dumped more than 1.1 metres of rain over Upper Springbrook. Major flood levels were reached in the Logan, Albert and Bremer Rivers and Warrill Creek. There were specific challenges at Hervey Bay and throughout the Lockyer Valley, and the communities are working hard on the clean-up and damage assessment right now.

I will shortly be appointing a disaster coordinator to lead the recovery. I acknowledge the tremendous efforts of our Public Service: our frontline police who were out doorknocking; the swiftwater rescue crews who were conducting rescues; those working in the State Disaster Coordination Centre; and the nurses and other health professionals who slept overnight at the hospital to ensure there was around-the-clock care.

I acknowledge our ministers and all local members who have been on the ground supporting their respective communities. It is incredibly important work. I want to acknowledge Queenslanders who did everything they could to prepare and continue to look out for each other as we start the recovery. I want to acknowledge Queenslanders from one end of the state to the other—many of whom are at different stages of the recovery process—because every Queenslander matters and every Queenslander deserves the chance to recover. We know the work is far from over and we are continuing that work. We will keep supporting Queenslanders in the days, weeks and months ahead.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.54 am): The Crisafulli government has left no stone unturned through the latest severe weather event. Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred follows the North Queensland weather event where North Queensland is still recovering, as the Premier said. I want to thank our North Queensland colleagues in this chamber who reached out to the South-East Queensland representatives and offered support. Through the QDMC and all the meetings that we have been having as a result of ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred, we have received support and encouragement from the members in North Queensland. Councils have also offered assistance and sent flood disaster coordinators down to South-East Queensland. It was heartening to see. I want to thank all honourable members for the support and encouragement during the last week in South-East Queensland.


I want to thank all Queenslanders, as the Premier has, particularly the grocery store workers. As the Minister for State Development, logistics is part of my responsibility and working out the logistics for the freight is very difficult when roads are shut and power is down. I want to thank Jay in my department who led all the discussions with the grocery stores, the major supermarkets, Metcash, our IGAs and the convenience stores to get stock into stores, which was very difficult at times. We all saw the photographs in our communities of empty grocery shelves as a result of the rush of people buying all the stock. I want to thank Jay in particular and all the team in the department for their amazing effort of looking at all the ways to get the groceries delivered to where the people needed it the most. It is still an ongoing challenge. We heard only two days ago of a distribution centre of one of the majors reopening and 500 trucks leaving to restock the shelves.

As the Premier has done, I also thank the SES, the QPS and the truckies in our supply chain. Members will not know this but my dad is a truckie and he was an Esso fuel tank driver in Griffith, New South Wales. He still drives excavators and trucks today. I want to pay tribute to our wonderful truck drivers across the state. It is the truck drivers who get these supermarkets restocked. It is a challenge when the roads are flooded and rail is down, so thank you to those drivers. I thank the suppliers, farmers and Energex and Ergon workers—and I know the energy minister will talk about them in a minute.

During the floods in North Queensland, I declared an applicable event for the local governments in that area which allowed for 24-hour resupply efforts. Usually resupply efforts are restricted based on noise. We also declared an applicable event for 21 local government areas in South-East Queensland but we did the declaration for the first time in history earlier than the event. We saw the onslaught of Alfred coming and it was moving quite slowly so I declared an applicable event to allow that 24-hour resupply. Yesterday, I further extended the applicable event to fuel stations so fuel stations can recover. I have also declared it for abattoirs and food processing facilities. We did it earlier and it was a commonsense approach.

I thank again all honourable members in the House for their support of the residents of South-East Queensland. As the Premier has said, it is not over yet. There is still a lot of recovery to do—there are still many Queenslanders without power—but we are leaving no stone unturned to ensure we recover as quickly as possible across the state.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. DC JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership) (9.58 am): The wind and rain whipped up by Tropical Cyclone Alfred led to the greatest loss of power from a natural disaster in this state's history. It has led to the largest and fastest restoration of power that Queensland has ever seen but there is more work to do. Many South-East Queenslanders are still doing it tough and remain without power, and they can be assured that our Energex and Ergon crews are doing everything they can to get the power back on.


The crews have done a remarkable job, given the challenging circumstances. I can report to the House that, as at 9 am this morning, 58,000 homes and businesses remain without power. The

restoration plan outlined by Energex on Monday night detailed that 75 per cent of outages would be restored by tonight, 95 per cent by Friday night and 100 per cent by Sunday night. Given 58,000 homes remain without power, Energex and Ergon have now restored 87 per cent of outages. That is ahead of the restoration plan but there are countless more urgent tasks to complete.

Energex and Ergon crews are back in the field right now working hard to restore power. It has been a significant challenge. Faced with 450,000 homes and businesses without power from 1,700 fallen powerlines, a team of more than 2,500 Energex and Ergon workers exceeded their regular duties to help restore connections. Energex and Ergon crews who travelled from across Queensland to support the restoration efforts endured wind and driving rain to get power back for Queenslanders. One crew member said that restoring power in Sunday's torrential rain was 'like someone spraying you directly in the face with a garden hose while you are trying to get a job done'. All the while, one in five of these crew members had no power at their own homes and many had to leave their families while they went out to help others.

The work of Energex and Ergon continues day and night to restore power. Every resource is being deployed to ensure that homes and businesses have power restored as soon as possible.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. DG PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.01 am): I wish to advise the House of the response by our frontline emergency services to Cyclone Alfred that wreaked havoc in parts of Queensland over the past week. In particular, I want to inform the House of the magnificent efforts of our police and SES volunteers in assisting in the preparation and evacuation of many of their fellow Queenslanders. In the face of personal danger, hundreds of our police and volunteers went from door to door, waded through flooded creeks and roads warning of potential danger and, where necessary, guided evacuees to places of safety. Through diligent preparation, attention to detail and committed execution, the contribution of these dedicated workers cannot be faulted.

Queenslanders faced a significant challenge over this period and it was with the help of these agencies and volunteers that our response has been both timely and effective, with no lives lost and no reports of missing persons. To put this into perspective, it should be noted that 736 extra police were deployed to assist in vulnerable districts. This included undertaking over 10,000 doorknocks, warning residents of the potential threats to their lives and property as well as assisting in a host of rescues.

I visited a number of sites throughout last week from Hervey Bay in the north to the Gold Coast in the south. On the Gold Coast and in North Brisbane I met a group of police recruits doorknocking ahead of the disaster. Still in training, they were given a glimpse of what life in a blue uniform would be like. Some have just started at the academy while others are on the verge of graduating. Wherever I went, local police were leading by example, doing the hard work required and looking after their fellow Queenslanders.


Other state agencies also figured in this response. Marine Rescue Queensland was activated on 71 occasions for tasks including welfare checks, medevacs and other calls for assistance—a hazardous undertaking for which they are owed our thanks and admiration.

Our SES volunteers responded exceptionally, as they always do. From 2 March to 11 March there were 13,150 SES jobs across 18 local government areas from Bundaberg in the north, to the Gold Coast in the south and the Southern Downs and Toowoomba in the west. In the 24 hours over last Sunday and Monday there were 3,676 calls for help to the SES—the most calls ever received in one day. SES volunteers helped distribute more than one million sandbags, as well as assist with the evacuation of residents at risk of inundation.

As I indicated, I travelled extensively throughout the south-east over the past week. I was determined to meet as many of our frontline officers, personnel and volunteers as possible to offer my thanks and appreciation, on behalf of the Crisafulli government, for their efforts, but also, just as importantly, to make sure they were receiving the support they needed. I could not have been more impressed with their efforts.

While a disaster of this nature throws up many challenges, ensuring the safety of our communities is the most crucial and the most challenging. What our police and frontline personnel did to assist during this time was commendable. With two significant natural disasters confronting Queenslanders this year, at both ends of the state, the police, SES, fires and all our frontline personnel have responded in a way that only they know how—with courage, determination and professionalism. All Queenslanders owe them a debt of gratitude.

### Weather Events, Health System

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (10.04 am): The health and wellbeing of Queenslanders is a priority for the Crisafulli government. While extreme weather events are not unprecedented in Queensland, the scale and impact of Tropical Cyclone Alfred has been deeply felt by many. Across our health system, through planning, preparation and perseverance, patient care continued to be delivered to Queenslanders—a remarkable achievement. With few exceptions, Queensland Health facilities remained open and available. I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude—and I am sure the gratitude of members in this place and Queenslanders—to our healthcare workers and paramedics whose dedication has seen us through these trying times.

I have heard some amazing stories of exceptional patient care across the board—care from paramedics, nurses and doctors—and consideration by our hospital administrators. Beyond the front line, countless others played critical roles in our emergency response. Dedicated hospital staff, administrators and volunteers have worked to ensure medical facilities remained operational. Last Friday, over 2,000 staff stayed at our hospitals in preparation for the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

Over the course of the last few days, I have taken the opportunity to meet many of them and thank them in person. On Saturday and Sunday I visited the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital where I met many of those workers. I met Pat at the hospital's main entrance, who loved staying overnight and was pulling another 12-hour shift the next day to ensure patients who were attending had someone friendly to talk to. I met Andrea, in the haematology and bone marrow transplant unit, who was part of a combined effort to get an emergency transfer of stem cells from Sydney to Brisbane. If they had not arrived by Sunday that patient would not have been saved. This was a coordinated effort between a volunteer donor group that arranged for the flight into Sydney, the QAS who met a driver at Armidale in New South Wales and our clinicians at the RBWH to get those life-changing stem cells to a transplant patient. The procedure went ahead on Saturday afternoon, saving the patient's life.


When Toowoomba access was cut off due to flash flooding, the Queensland Health team arranged a CareFlight helicopter to ferry urgent blood supplies from the Royal to the Toowoomba Hospital and the St Vincent's Private Hospital. Supplies of blood products were dangerously low and that mercy flight meant 120 patients could be treated with life-saving blood products from Red Cross Life Blood. If you can, get out and donate.

At the QEII Hospital yesterday, I met Dr Sanjeev Naidu who stayed overnight but also took up the role of full-time barista, supplying coffee to the 144 staff who stayed onsite last Friday.

We also cannot forget the effort in North Queensland and the ongoing recovery there. During my time in North Queensland two weeks ago, I was delighted to meet with staff and patients at the Ingham Health Service. Led by Medical Superintendent, Dr Selina Porter, and Director of Nursing, Janine Johnson, many of the staff at the Ingham Health Service bunkered down at the hospital during the floods, and the days that followed, sleeping on the floors, underneath desks and in day rooms in between shifts. They even delivered two babies on the Saturday morning. In a 20-bed hospital we had more than 40 people and a dog staying overnight, charging their phones.

The Queensland Health staff went above and beyond. I am sure, on behalf of everyone, I can say: thank you for your efforts; you make our community stronger.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. BA MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.07 am): This morning I want to take time to acknowledge the many Queenslanders whose lives have been impacted by the weather events over the last few days, firstly with ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred and then with the subsequent flooding and rain. I know that for so many Queenslanders this is another reminder of how quickly Mother Nature can turn, and how important it is to be prepared for these kinds of moments.

I hope that Queenslanders can take comfort from the fact that the Crisafulli government was well prepared to manage the challenges presented over the last few days. We did not underestimate the work needed to safely and efficiently respond as issues arose and the weather deteriorated, working closely with the state Disaster Management Centre to ensure that our road and transport infrastructure and, most importantly, our people were well equipped and backed in to get the job done in a way that Queenslanders rightly expect.

That is why I want to acknowledge, and echo the sentiment of the Premier and other ministers, the remarkable way that officers from my department, and indeed many others, stepped up in the response to these events. Over the last few days, I have seen some outstanding examples of collaboration and community across our responses, from working to ensure that Energex were enabled and empowered to recover the electrical network to providing on-the-ground real-time intelligence where access was needed to areas without power.

When the substation at Banyo was nearly inundated, TMR officers were called to assist. Our RoadTek crews worked with QPS, the Brisbane City Council, Energex and others to place a dam wall around the structure and to pump the water out. This prevented a significant number of homes from losing power and, in turn, played a part in softening the blow of Alfred for many residents.


Our road teams responded to 752 call-outs for support across Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and the Southern Downs and more than 14,000 hours have been worked during this time. That contribution cannot be understated as they worked night and day, in spite of the difficult conditions, to ensure that our road and transport network was trafficable and safe.

I want to take a moment to thank every single one of our staff who stepped up in responding to these events. I could not be more proud of the efforts of our RoadTek staff who worked around the clock to open roads and to make them safe in the most difficult of conditions. I want to thank them, because I know what their contributions have given us. In the south-east we had 495 signalised intersections impacted, of which more than two-thirds are back to operational as of yesterday. Countless roads have been cleared and made safe. In the space of a couple of days, our crews have gone above and beyond to return normalcy to our part of the world—and that is something we should be proud of.

I can also confirm that, thanks to the hard work of our Queensland Rail and Translink team and our delivery partners, we have resumed public transport services, with most areas back to normal timetables. Some services will operate with diversions as we deal with localised recovery efforts, and I thank passengers for their patience and understanding during this time. We are working closely with our delivery partners to restore full service for all public transport customers as quickly and as safely as possible.

Queenslanders are a resilient bunch, and I know that they can get through anything. These past few days have shown exactly that. I assure every Queenslander that they now have a government, in the Crisafulli government, that has their back in these times of uncertainty. The job is far from over though. I want Queenslanders to know that the Crisafulli government will have their back as we transition to recovery as well.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education and the Arts) (10.11 am): South-East Queensland has just experienced the first tropical cyclone in 50 years. We know that for many this has meant widespread flooding and damage to homes, businesses and communities. As the Premier outlined regularly during the preparation period, there were more than four million people in Tropical Cyclone Alfred's path. That included more than 1,000 state and non-state schools and more than 2,000 early childhood centres.

Based on the advice being provided by the Bureau of Meteorology and emergency services, the government took the decision to close 661 state schools on Thursday, 6 March. This decision was to ensure the safety of our students and staff and allow time to prepare schools for impacts of the weather. In fact yesterday I was at Rocklea State School, where I met principal Deb James and two staff from the Metro South team—Mark and Simon. They were there on Wednesday, 5 March, helping students and teachers move their resources to the library. They were calming the students down and that was very helpful. When I was there yesterday the Metro South team—these are people in our regional offices—were helping to put all of those resources back so that the school could open again today. I want to thank all of those staff.

I am proud to report today that nearly 90 per cent of state schools have reopened, with students and teachers safely back in classrooms. I thank the staff in the Department of Education, QBuild—I thank Minister O'Connor and his team for the efforts that they have made—school principals and leadership teams for the mammoth effort to complete the repair works and inspections as soon as it was safe to do so.


The 77 schools in South-East Queensland which remain closed have more significant damage, with some still without power. Access has also been an issue in the worst impacted areas. We are

working to have those schools in a position to open very soon, and principals will work with school communities to ensure disruption to students' education is limited.

For most schools NAPLAN will commence today, but for schools impacted by ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred the tests will commence from Monday, 17 March, if it is safe to do so. I want to extend my best wishes and good luck to the nearly 280,000 students across Queensland in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 who will participate in NAPLAN. The Crisafulli government has a strong commitment to lifting literacy and numeracy standards in our schools. We know these skills are fundamental to improving life outcomes for Queensland children and young people, supporting them to be successful learners in school, positively engage with society and enhance their future employment prospects.

By increasing NAPLAN participation, engagement and confidence, trusting the work of our teachers and school leaders, and refocusing the curriculum on literacy and numeracy, we know that the improvements we see in student learning outcomes across the state will lift Queensland's NAPLAN results.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. ST O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Youth) (10.15 am): Queenslanders have once again shown remarkable resilience in the face of a natural disaster. Just last month we were standing up with North Queenslanders through devastating floods and today we stand with the communities of South-East Queensland, the Lockyer Valley and the Wide Bay as they recover from the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

From the moment Alfred approached our coastline, the Crisafulli government kept Queenslanders well informed and encouraged councils and communities to get prepared. As the cyclone crept closer, Queenslanders came together to prepare for its impact. This included my department's housing and QBuild teams. Housing sent emergency messages to our social housing tenants to help with their preparedness activities and to provide support when needed. We arranged for housing staff volunteers from outside SEQ to be deployed to assist with the housing recovery response.

Our numbers of housing officers on the ground were ramped up in the days before the cyclone hit, conducting outreach across South-East Queensland. Over 50 staff engaged with rough sleepers at over 80 locations across the south-east in those few days before the cyclone. They secured a safe refuge for 57 people in temporary emergency accommodation—basically everyone who was offered it accepted it.

I had the privilege of joining our housing officers Zac and Lana and Selina, our HSC manager from the Gold Coast, in hotspots across our city, seeing the incredible work they were doing to support these vulnerable Queenslanders. We worked closely with local councils, our state funded specialist homelessness services and community organisations to ensure the at-risk individuals were receiving the housing support they needed.

We had 43 housing staff deployed across evacuation and recovery centres, ensuring Queenslanders could access housing support as they began to rebuild their lives. Our housing service centres kept operating under emergency conditions. Staff assessed risks, they ensured service continuity and reopened physically quickly after the worst had past. The recovery effort is now in full swing and our priority remains, ensuring that every Queenslanders impacted by this disaster has a safe place to stay and a pathway forward.

QBuild has deployed 112 staff to conduct rapid damage assessments. Our first priority has been schools, ensuring children can return to classrooms safely and supporting principals to make the decision to reopen their school. As at a 10 am update from my director-general, 310 of the 382 damage assessments of schools have been completed since Sunday—that is over 80 per cent—and every single one requested by Education will be completed by the end of today.

Social housing properties are also being assessed to identify and action urgent repairs and long-term reconstruction needs. Emergency accommodation remains available, with almost 1,800 hotel rooms ready to book, if needed, across Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast for those who are unable to return home. We continue working closely with local councils, our state funded specialist homelessness services and community groups to ensure affected individuals receive not only housing support but also social and financial assistance.


While our Energex and Ergon Energy crews work to restore power, we continue prioritising vulnerable residents, especially our social housing tenants. Community recovery hubs are coordinating



with QBuild, local councils and emergency services to ensure a smooth transition from temporary accommodation to stable housing solutions. The Crisafulli government is committed to supporting affected communities through every step of the recovery process. Our housing service centres will continue outreach efforts, ensuring all those who need assistance will receive it.

I want to thank every Queenslander who stepped up to help their neighbours, particularly our hardworking housing and public works staff for the outstanding job they did. My message to those impacted is the same as last month's message to North Queenslanders: if your home has been damaged or destroyed, we are here to help. This applies to home owners, renters and those in social housing. Together we will recover, rebuild and ensure more Queenslanders have a place to call home.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. A LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers) (10.19 am): Queensland's remarkable spirit and ability to respond and recover when faced with our unpredictable weather is unparalleled. I thank the thousands of Queenslanders who restored power, cleared roads, kept hospitals running and got our kids back to school. The wind has eased and the floodwaters are receding. We are committed to ensuring there is no daylight between response and recovery. The Crisafulli government has worked swiftly with the Commonwealth to activate vital support to the communities that need it most.

We are working quickly with all three levels of government to activate personal hardship assistance to communities in order to help Queenslanders get back on their feet. Personal hardship assistance is available to residents in the Redland, Gold Coast, Logan and Moreton Bay city councils as well as eligible localities in the Fraser Coast Regional Council area. Today I can announce that assistance has been extended to eligible localities in the Brisbane city and Scenic Rim regional council areas. Support includes grants of—

**Opposition members** interjected.


**Mr SPEAKER:** Members to my left, I am sure there are many people who would be interested in hearing this.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Support includes grants of up to \$180 for individuals and up to \$900 for a family of five or more to cover essentials like food, clothing and medicine. As further impacts are identified we will extend this assistance to Queenslanders who need it.

I make special mention of our mayors and councils and the work they have done to support their communities. As they were faced with this weather event they worked around the clock to secure resources and mobilise volunteers to get their communities ready for what was ahead. For example, council workers and volunteers filled more than one million sandbags and I thank them for that effort. I also acknowledge the tireless worth of Alison Smith from the LGAQ and her advocacy and assistance with councils.

From the start, the Crisafulli government moved swiftly to ensure councils—the eyes and ears of our local communities—were equipped to deal with the weather. We pre-emptively activated critical disaster operations and repair funding to councils from Bundaberg to the border. I am advised that is one of the first times this has occurred. This funding helps support activities including sandbagging, evacuations, debris removal and emergency road repairs. As we move to recovery we will continue to engage with mayors and councils to help their communities rebuild. Recovery from this weather event will take some time, however, the Crisafulli government will not rest until we see things through.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation) (10.22 am): Mr Speaker, I also acknowledge all Queenslanders who have been impacted by these events, particularly across South-East Queensland, over the past week. I particularly acknowledge the 58,000 homes the Treasurer mentioned that are still without power. In my own electorate I think of Diamond Valley, which received 433 millimetres in less than 24 hours earlier this week. This morning, alongside all other ministers and the Premier, I add my thanks to our frontline officers: emergency services personnel, SES, council officers, health workers who pulled double shifts and the Energex workers who are still out in the field making sure power is back on.

I also acknowledge my departmental staff, including the rangers who were out on the ground early warning people about the coming weather event, closing camp sites and reassuring visitors. They are now working tirelessly to assess the damage to our national parks so they can be re-opened. They

have also stood up a ready rangers program to assist wherever possible. I also acknowledge the scientists who have fed monitoring data through to emergency headquarters and are now assessing and informing the work needed around recovery, particularly around coastal erosion.

Mr Speaker, I do want to particularly focus on the tourism sector. With Easter just three weeks away, we know that we need to recover quickly. Our message to the rest of Australia and the world is that Queensland remains open for business. We are a huge state. We have plenty to offer across the tourism spectrum. I urge tourists from Australia and around the world to make their bookings now. Yes, our coastline is a tourism drawcard; that is why there are literally machines on the beaches as we speak. They are reprofiling those beaches; they will be replenished. I even learned a new term in the last couple of days. As those dredges move offshore and into place they will be rainboding—providing sand onto the coastline to restore our wonderful beaches.

Mr Speaker, please be reassured that more will be done. I have been in constant contact, as has my department, with regional tourism organisations, tourism operators, Tourism and Events Queensland and QTIC to make sure our marketing continues throughout this period so that tourism operators get their bookings and our hotels will be full at Easter. I can assure the tourism industry that more is to come. We are already working with QRA and our federal colleagues to ensure that more marketing continues to let people know that Queensland is open for business.

## MOTION

### Absence of Member



**Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (Leader of the House) (10.25 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That this House—

1. notes that the member for Macalister will be unable to attend sittings of the House in the coming months for medical reasons;
2. in accordance with standing order 263B, grants the member for Macalister a leave of absence from and including this day's sitting;
3. notwithstanding standing order 263B(1), agrees that the length of the leave of absence is indefinite.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL

### APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL

#### Cognate Debate



**Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (Leader of the House) (10.25 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, in accordance with standing order 172, the Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2023-2024) Bill and the Appropriation (Supplementary 2023-2024) Bill be considered as cognate bills for their remaining stages, with—

- (a) separate questions being put in regard to the second readings;
- (b) the consideration of the bills in detail together; and
- (c) separate questions being put for the third readings and long titles.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Mr SPEAKER:** Question time will conclude at 11.26 am.

### Independent Ministerial Advisory Council



**Mr MILES** (10.26 am): My question is to the Attorney-General. While Queenslanders were preparing for Tropical Cyclone Alfred the Attorney-General secretly sacked the Independent Ministerial

Advisory Council established to look at youth justice measures. Can the Attorney-General advised why she used a natural disaster as cover for this decision?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I do thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. What a shameful display. The first time the Leader of the Opposition gets up in this chamber—

**An opposition member:** Answer the question.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have three minutes and I will use it. Queensland has seen an unprecedented disaster down here. We heard from the Treasurer about the number of people still sitting at home right now without power. It is unbelievable—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** These guys cannot get it. I will get to the answer to their question. Thanking Premier Crisafulli and all of the ministers involved for the disaster response should have been the first question. I know the opposition is struggling, but seriously that is your first question? I am more than happy to speak about the—

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Lytton, you are warned.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I hope the member for Lytton's community is safe and has power. I am very proud of the work the Crisafulli government has done in relation to victims in this great state. For the first time we have a Minister for Victim Support. Minister Gerber is doing an incredible job. These guys are playing politics with Labor's Independent Ministerial Advisory Council, which is no longer under this government. We have spoken to them and said there is a victims' minister, there are victims' groups and committees that are running. We have offered them positions. We have spoken directly to the director-general, Bob Gee, in relation to that. Bob Gee forwarded those—

**Mrs Gerber** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Yes, they are really struggling. This was Labor's Independent Ministerial Advisory Council. That is what it was: Labor's Independent Ministerial Advisory Council. Did the work of government continue during TC Alfred and ex-TC Alfred? Yes, it did. Those people over there obviously do not care about the people of Queensland. They do not care about the victims in Queensland, and they do not care about the victims who are sitting at home without power or who cannot get out on their roads. I mean, come on. This is from a former health minister who cannot even ask about the health and wellbeing of the people of Queensland. Shame on every one of you.

*(Time expired)*

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** We will have silence in the House before we go to the next question.

### Independent Ministerial Advisory Council

**Ms FARMER:** My question is to the Attorney. Can the Attorney advise whether they personally met with or read any advice from IMAC members, which included victims and victims' advocates, at any point before the Attorney axed IMAC under the cover of Cyclone Alfred?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Mr Speaker, yes.

### Cyclone Alfred

**Mr STEVENS:** My question is to the Premier and Minister for Veterans. Will the Premier update the House on the steps the Crisafulli government is taking to respond to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Alfred on Queensland communities?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I want to thank the member for Mermaid Beach for the question and indeed for his advocacy for his community, who did indeed bare some significant cost and damage from the event. I also want to thank the member for asking a question about what is a really important issue and a really important part of this state's response to disasters at both ends of the state. That is why I think it is important today that we use this opportunity to raise these things.

In my ministerial statement, I spoke about some of those challenges. We have had 90 per cent of the schools and 90 per cent of the power connections restored—or close to it—yet there is still so much more to do. I spoke about the sheer number of the SES tasks and the number of swiftwater rescues. What I want to speak about now is people because in the end disasters and recovery from

them—the way you can go from response to recovery—is about people. I want to tell it through the eyes of a few Queenslanders I have met since the event.

I want to start with Bryce who I met on the Gold Coast at the SES. He is a long-term volunteer there. I had the chance to speak to him and some of his colleagues and indeed to some South Australians who had just arrived to come and help Queenslanders in their hour of need. I texted their Premier and I thanked him for that service coming over. I spoke to Bryce and asked how he was going. He did not say anything other than to show me a photo of a tree that had crashed on his home. Bryce did not know when he was going to get home to fix it; he was helping other people. There he was in a disaster, and I want to acknowledge that.

I was with the member for Redcliffe and we met a lovely family who were due to get married on the weekend. Alfred saw those plans scuttled and they are having to reschedule. I met their beautiful little boy called Rylan and his parents told me about how scared he was and how every couple of hours he was asking what it meant and whether he was going to be okay. I thought about all of the kids—the vast majority of whom have not gone through that experience. Having grown up in North Queensland, I remember floods and cyclones and the anxiety that brought. I thought about that.

Then I met Michael, an Energex worker, and I asked him how he was going. He was at the end of a 14-hour shift. I asked, ‘How are you? How are things for you?’ He said to me that his wife and three kids were at home and he did not have power, yet he was out there helping others.

That is why I am really glad to get a question about this—because this stuff matters. It matters to people. It matters to people to know that every one of us is on a unity ticket to help them in their hour of need and to acknowledge the work. That is why these things truly matter—as does going from response to recovery.

*(Time expired)*

### Law Reform Commission

**Ms SCANLON:** My question is to the Attorney-General. While Queenslanders prepared for and went through Cyclone Alfred, the Attorney-General scrapped nearly two years worth of Queensland Law Reform Commission work regarding mining leases. Can the Attorney-General advise why they used a natural disaster to cover for this decision?

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I will have silence in the House before the minister responds.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** First of all, the premise of the question is completely incorrect. I first had a conversation with the chair of the QLRC on I think it was 25 February—well before the BoM was able to predict what went on. The premise of the question is around doing work while the cyclone was coming. I spoke to the chair of the QLRC to communicate a government’s decision that was, again, following up on a 100-day commitment from the Crisafulli government to establish—

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Yes, it was—to establish the Resources Cabinet Committee who has worked and is assessing this job. I thank the chair of the QLRC, Fleur Kingham, and her team in the QLRC for the work they have done and note that all of the resources are available on the website as we discussed. After I spoke to the chair by phone—

**Mr Bleijie:** Because everyone’s out talking about the Law Reform Commission in cyclones, aren’t they.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am happy to take that interjection. I know that the people in the lower end of the Nanango electorate are still struggling, as are those in the lower Lockyer in the member for Lockyer’s electorate. They are struggling with the impacts on their day-to-day livelihood from the impacts. I am pretty sure that they are now seeing what the rest of Queensland has seen—how out of touch this opposition is.

I met with the chair, Fleur Kingham, on Tuesday because that was the date that was arranged when I spoke to her on 25 February—well before the cyclone.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I do not know what these former ministers used to do, but on the Tuesday before the storm I met with the chair and had that conversation about the QLRC, what they were working on and what their future work could be. That is what we were discussing. If the chair was unable to

make it because of the impending cyclone that was not there yet, she would have cancelled the meeting. I do not know what those guys over there did, but I can tell the House that every single one of us on this side were either working on preparation or continuing to work for the people of Queensland to make sure the best outcomes can happen. I again thank the Premier for his work.

### **South-East Queensland, Electricity Supply**

**Mrs YOUNG:** My question is to the Treasurer. Many residents in South-East Queensland, including in my electorate of Redlands, are still without power following the impact of Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Will the Treasurer update the House on the efforts underway to restore power to Queensland?

**Mr JANETZKI:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a question from a local member who is grounded in her community. It is a question that those opposite may not be wanting to ask today, but those of us on this side of the House who have been impacted—from Hervey Bay, down to Coolangatta, across the southern Gold Coast and in Mudgeeraba—are asking these questions. I want to share some more information with the House and for the member for Redlands and all those who are interested in the fallout from Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

The wind, the rain and the challenges that flowed thereafter—with power outages once the cyclone hit and the subsequent consequences—were significant. As a government, we were determined that as soon as it was safe to do so work would begin to restore power. Even before the cyclone hit, Energex had in fact deployed generation capacity to the Southern Moreton Bay Islands in the member's electorate and to key infrastructure assets right across the south-east corner.

At first light on Saturday morning, Energex crews were on a barge to the southern Moreton Bay islands to commence the restoration work and damage assessment. At the height of the impact on Sunday morning, 41,000 people were without electricity supply across the Redlands. Many connections of those impacted have been restored, but there are still major outages across the region, including at Redlands Business Park. We have come a long way, but there is a long way to go, and that work is continuing. We need to get community infrastructure points that still need restoration up as soon as possible.

Across Queensland right now there are still 58,000 homes and businesses without power. There are 2,500 team members of Energex and Ergon crews in the field right now, restoring power. We have had 1,700 powerlines down. It is a significant task that they are undertaking. I want to make it clear that it is not just Energex that is getting to work; Ergon crews from across the state have come into the south-east corner. They have flooded the south-east corner to get to work, supporting Energex crews on the ground.

Yesterday I met some crews from the Sunshine Coast that were reconnecting the northern suburbs of Brisbane. Just as those Energex crews in the south travelled north to the people of North Queensland to support them in their hour of need, we have seen crews from northern Queensland right around Queensland come to the south-east corner to support the south-east corner in their hour of need—collaboration and partnership at its very best. I commend everyone for their efforts. We understand how frustrating it is for those remaining without power, but Ergon and Energex crews are getting to work to get power restored as soon as possible.

### **Housing Supply**

**Mr DICK:** My question is to the Minister for Housing. While Queenslanders prepared for and went through Cyclone Alfred, whistleblowers have told the opposition that the LNP government commenced tearing up head lease agreements around the state, putting thousands of homes on the chopping block. Can the minister advise why the LNP government used a natural disaster to commence the axing of Homes for Queenslanders?

**Mr O'CONNOR:** I would love some validation from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is engaging in an appalling scare campaign there. That is completely false. That head lease product is an important product that is in place while we build the houses that those opposite did not. It is an important product to make sure that these Queenslanders can get through, and it will continue. There have been no actions to change that. If the member has something to the contrary, then I would love to see it because that claim is completely false. That head lease product is important. It is continuing and it will continue. To use a natural disaster to try to scare these vulnerable Queenslanders is incredibly disappointing. We know their housing legacy is one in which it is harder than ever for Queenslanders to have a place to call home.

On the topic of community leases for vulnerable Queenslanders, we are working with the community housing sector to do what those opposite did not, and to empower that sector, to make sure that sector has everything it needs to thrive. Community housing in this state has been held back from those opposite. They have engaged ideologically. They wanted to do it all themselves. They wanted to make sure that they were the only ones building social and affordable housing in this state. They did not provide the policy settings for community housing providers. We are continuing with that work.

I completely reject that assertion from the member. The member cannot validate it. That head leasing program is important; it will continue. There are a range of products the department is offering. We are working to clean up the mess left by the Labor Party in the housing space. I really do not understand where that was coming from and why this member would be trying to—

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr O'CONNOR:** It is a great point made by the Attorney-General. While we have been focused on responding to Tropical Cyclone Alfred, while we have been focused on making sure that vulnerable Queenslanders—those experiencing homelessness—had a roof over their head, had a safe, secure place to sit out this cyclone and to get the support that they need, those opposite are spreading fear. They are saying false things in this House. They are making out that we are cutting something which we are absolutely not. This program will continue. We recognise that it is important and it will continue, certainly while we build the houses that Queenslanders need—the houses that those opposite did not deliver. Not a single new build was delivered under their Housing Investment Fund of which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was the mastermind and who failed to deliver a single new build in three years.

*(Time expired)*

### **Cyclone Alfred, Recovery**

**Mr VORSTER:** My question is to the Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers. Will the minister inform the House on how the Crisafulli government is working with all levels of government to ensure funding support for Queenslanders impacted by Tropical Cyclone Alfred?

**Ms LEAHY:** I thank the member for Burleigh for his question. Finally we have a question about people who are impacted by the disaster. It is really important to be thinking about those Queenslanders. South-East Queensland has been hit hard by ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. I know that the member for Burleigh's electorate has also experienced those impacts. As we turn that road to recovery, it is important to thank the efforts of all Australians and Queenslanders who have pitched in—the Energex workers, the SES, Marine Rescue, council workers, and the volunteers out there filling sandbags as well.

**Ms Boyd:** What about the fires?

**Ms LEAHY:** And the fires and swiftwater rescue people as well who have been absolutely dedicated to ensuring they are looking after Queenslanders and preparing Queenslanders for this event. My thoughts are with those of New South Wales as well as North Queensland, areas that are also hit hard by flooding.

With regard to the member's question, I want to extend my gratitude to all of the councils for the work that they have done, particularly their staff. Down at the Redlands, I met one of the council workers who had just been up in North Queensland for two weeks working with the Hinchinbrook council and then came back home, only to be doing exactly the same disaster work again at the Redland council. I also want to thank the federal government for its cooperation which has really helped to get a lot of assistance back out on the ground for Queenslanders. That is what we do in the Crisafulli government: we work with all levels of government to get the support needed to Queenslanders.

When councils apply for activations, we immediately begin to work alongside the federal government to get this support to where it needs to be. The Commonwealth government has turned around councils' activation requests swiftly. We have been able to pre-emptively activate support for council disaster operations with the federal government's quick action to our requests. The personal hardship assistance has been activated in the Moreton Bay, Redland, Logan and Gold Coast councils, as well as Brisbane and the Scenic Rim as well as in targeted areas throughout the Fraser Coast. This is available for the purchase of essential items and to replace damaged household goods.

This support is only the start of our recovery. When Queenslanders need support, we will have their backs. We will continue to work with the Commonwealth, we will continue to work with councils and we will continue to activate assistance to get the help to where it is needed in order for

Queenslanders to get back on their feet. The Crisafulli government is here for the long haul. We are here to support Queenslanders. We will make sure we have Queenslanders' backs.

### Premier and Minister for Veterans

**Mr MILES:** My question is to the Minister for Local Government. The *Australian* has reported that the Premier 'blew up' and used stern language with a mayor during last Sunday's hook-up of council leaders regarding the weather event. Has the minister apologised to the affected mayor who was the subject of the Premier's temper?

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Speaker—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I have a point of order. We will hear the point of order in silence.

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Everton, did you not hear me? I said we will hear the point of order in silence.

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order with respect to the line of questioning from the opposition this morning. There have been a number of questions which have contained not only inferences and imputations but also a lack of authentication. I ask the member to authenticate the question.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, I will allow the question.

**Ms LEAHY:** I thank the opposition leader for his question. We have been working very closely with local governments not only in North Queensland but right across the south-east corner. We have been working pre-emptively. I have spent a lot of time on the phone to local governments, in particular, making sure they are well aware of what is happening. Just last night we have signed our *Equal Partners in Government Agreement* with Queensland councils right across the state. I have had messages this morning.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Don't worry, we remember what you did to local government.

**Ms LEAHY:** I take the interjection from the member—just remember what they did. In 2008 they cut the number of councils. You amalgamated councils; you sacked mayors and councillors. We recall the times in the last 10 years when the previous government actually sacked mayors and councillors before they had the legislation in place. Who can forget the Logan fiasco as well?

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I cannot hear the minister.

**Ms LEAHY:** I refer to the member for Scenic Rim who had to come in and deal with all of the problems that were caused by previous Labor governments in respect of Logan and how they sacked those councils.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118(b). Respectful and equal relationships with local governments are important. That is why we want to know if the minister has apologised for the Premier's temper? We would like you to draw the minister back to the specific enquiry in the question.

**Dr ROWAN:** With respect to the element of the question that relates to anger and temper, I submit that there is an inference or an imputation.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I allowed this question, and the minister can answer to her knowledge of this newspaper report. I am struggling to hear whether she is answering the question or not because of the noise in this House. I will be naming members from this point forward.

**Ms LEAHY:** The ones who should be apologising in this House are the members opposite for this line of questioning which is not about Queenslanders who are impacted by this disaster. They should be apologising to Queenslanders for wasting the time of this House on these sorts of questions. I can say that the Premier interacts very regularly with all mayors and councillors across the state. The opposition members should apologise for this appalling question at a time when people are out there trying to recover from a disaster. It is absolutely appalling. It is nothing about people; it is just playing politics.

**Mr McCallum** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Bundamba, you are warned.

**Ms LEAHY:** There is nothing in relation to the people who are impacted by this disaster. We work in a partnership, we have an *Equal Partners in Government Agreement*. We have signed that Partners in government agreement, and we will work with councils right across Queensland.

### **Cyclone Alfred, Recovery**

**Mr LEE:** My question is of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Can the minister advise the House how Queensland police and SES volunteers are helping Queenslanders to recover from the impact of Tropical Cyclone Alfred in areas that include Hervey Bay?

**Mr PURDIE:** I acknowledge the member for Hervey Bay for the question. I saw firsthand the commitment and passion he has for his local area and electorate. I spoke to the member on Sunday as the weather event was unfolding in Hervey Bay and, as he was seeing, I was able to confirm to him that all hands were on deck—not only rostered police on the Sunday roster but all police in Hervey Bay whether they were detectives, from traffic branch, scenes of crime or on days off. They were on the frontline responding as they do. It was not just the local police. Fifteen police from Rockhampton arrived on Sunday, coupled with police from the surrounding area.

I note today that Acting Inspector Brooke Flood, who I met with in Hervey Bay when I was there on Monday, has announced another 14 police have just arrived today from around the Capricornia district. I met the member at the RSL which had been decimated with a few inches of water gushing through the lower level which is their main conference room, bar and foyer—there is even Army memorabilia on that level. Luckily it was saved. The member introduced me to the president, Jason Lynch. As they do, the RSL members and volunteers rallied. By Monday morning they were ripping out the carpet and doing what they could to help recover from this event. We went to the police station and met with Acting Inspector Flood and Superintendent Anne Vogler. As they always do, our police put the community above themselves. Even though the station was without power on Sunday, during the event, they moved to a temporary police station at St James school and they operated out of there. I commended them and all of the visiting police on the work they had done.

We then went to visit the SES depot where I walked in and saw some familiar faces from the SES group on the Sunshine Coast at Tewantin and I met SES volunteers from Blackbutt and further afield who had been working around the clock. At this stage they were not just helping respond to the event but they were well and truly helping with the recovery. We then went and saw the firies at the station and on site. A lot of them were in Freshwater Street which backs onto the Esplanade where high-rise unit complexes had flooded underneath. Our firies were using their appliances—hoses that normally pump forward—to suck water out of underground car parks. I want to acknowledge a group I have never acknowledged before and I do not know when I will again: the concreters of Hervey Bay! There were not too many slabs being poured on a Monday but they were using their concrete trucks—like the firies with their pumps in reverse—to help high-rises pump out the water, and the firies were helping old people to escape from these buildings. I thank the member and I thank all of our frontline services.

*(Time expired)*

### **Hervey Bay, Weather Alerts**

**Mr BUTCHER:** My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. As the minister responsible for disaster management, why did the residents of Hervey Bay not receive a timely emergency alert regarding the impacts of Cyclone Alfred over the weekend?

**Mr PURDIE:** I thank the member for the question. Being a Queenslanders from Central Queensland I am sure he is aware—as we are all aware—that cyclones are unpredictable. They always have been and they always will be. The alerts being sent out are done in conjunction with the BoM. I am certainly not a meteorologist or an expert on the weather. Every day, multiple times a day, as we got closer to the event, the Premier, the QDMC and the public were getting hourly updates from the BoM. The warnings were sent out by local disaster management groups, by councils and in districts. Local district officers of police regulate those warnings in conjunction with the BoM.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I am sure you want to hear the minister's answer.

**Mr PURDIE:** I do not think those opposite should be criticising us about sending out alerts and closing down schools when it turns out there was absolutely no reason to do so. Staffers in their office were sending texts saying 'how about we shut down some schools' when there were not even any



storms showing on the BoM radar. Everyone in Queensland who was watching the radar—not only listening to the hourly updates from the BoM—as I and everyone was, even my kids, could see there was a volatile and dynamic system approaching large parts of Queensland. People were ready. Our police were ready to respond and did respond, as did the SES.

Those opposite should not come in here and have a crack at the BoM. Without the BoM's advice, they took the advice of their staffers to close down schools on the prediction of storms that never eventuated. Everyone in Queensland watched the radars and could see the advice from the BoM and know that there was a volatile system heading to their area and they were prepared and we were prepared. Our SES responded to over 13,000 calls for assistance and it was a similar case with our police and fire; there were dozens of rescues and they evacuated hundreds of people from their properties. They were doorknocking. Even post the event our police and recruits are still doorknocking today. There was George from Mount Tamborine who is 96 years old. In a pre-emptive doorknock police stumbled across George, who was alone in his house at Mount Tamborine. He had no power and his cooktop had run out of gas. The police drove to Bunnings and out of their own money they bought a gas bottle and a cooktop and took them back to George and monitored him through the event. Our police were prepared. I am not going to have those opposite have a crack at our police and our frontline personnel: our SES, our fire, our volunteers and the BoM.

**Ms Farmer** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member Bulimba, you are now warned.

### **Cyclone Alfred, Recovery**

**Miss DOOLAN:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. Will the minister outline to the House how the Crisafulli LNP government is working to ensure Queenslanders have continued access to health services as we recover from the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Alfred?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** What a delight it is to get a question from the member for Pumicestone—the best member for Pumicestone I have seen in this place in recent times. I have seen a former member for Pumicestone in this place on the odd occasion who seems to have gotten lost on their way through. This member for Pumicestone is someone who cares for her community. I had the opportunity to have a quick look at the member for Pumicestone's Facebook page and she put out over 65 Facebook warnings over the period of Tropical Cyclone Alfred's imminent arrival, and as it was sitting off the coast of Bribie Island this was entirely appropriate. As I say, she is the best member for the seat of Pumicestone we have seen in many a long year.

**Mr Healy** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Cairns, you are warned. You have had a fair go.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** As I said earlier, with few exceptions Queensland Health facilities remained open and operational during the cyclone. Obviously the Gold Coast was without power and that made a significant difference, but that power was restored early on Sunday. Our satellite health centres are now up and running, the Redlands being the last of those to be reopened yesterday. We continue to provide business-as-usual care and we have been doing that since Monday. All of those patients who have planned surgeries should expect—and they should turn up to their hospitals—they will receive that service unless they are contacted by the hospitals and told otherwise.

Over and above that, we also have our Virtual Emergency Care Service. Because we were planning, because we were properly prepared, the Crisafulli government was able to ramp up our Virtual Emergency Care Service to a 24/7 operation, and that was a tremendous success. That is a service staffed by doctors and nurses to provide virtual emergency care for conditions that require immediate attention but are not life threatening. Since Thursday, 6 March the Virtual Emergency Care Service treated more than a thousand patients. Over the weekend only 2½ per cent of those patients actually had to be admitted to a physical hospital, saving our hospital EDs from the presentation of all those people. Now the storm has passed, that service will continue to be available from 8 am until midnight until Friday this week, after which it will resume normal operating hours of 8 am to 10 pm seven days a week. There is not just that; there is also our 13HEALTH number, 13432584. It provides services 24 hours a day and it continues to provide those services. It received over 1,200 calls per day during the peak of the event.

Because of the proper planning, because of the investment we are making and the additional money we are putting into health that those opposite failed to put in, we are able to deliver healthcare services to Queenslanders where they need them when they need them, as we promised we would.

### Regional Plans

**Ms BOLTON:** My question is to the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations. Can the Deputy Premier provide a timeline for the development of new regional plans under the State Planning Policy and say whether this will include a review of contentious local government amendments and the excessive population targets for Noosa set by the previous government in the *ShapingSEQ* update?

**Mr SPEAKER:** That is a fairly long question, member for Noosa, but I will allow it. It was very lengthy.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It is a long question, but I want to answer it because I have a lot to say about the former Labor government's contempt for government. I laughed when they asked a question about local government. That is from the very party that did everything they could to stampede over local government authority. For the last 10 years the opposition leader, when he was local government minister, never consulted with local government and never took into consideration anything they said. The answer to the honourable member's question is this: as soon as possible. Do honourable members know what we are going to do? We are going to review every regional plan in Queensland and we are going to review them in consultation with local government—not only in consultation but with local government.

Let me give an example. Are members opposite ready for this? Before Christmas I was handed a large document and it was the draft Far North Queensland Regional Plan. I had a Zoom meeting with all the Far North Queensland regional mayors from FNQROC and I said, 'We are about to put this out for public consultation.' The mayor said, 'Deputy Premier, we've never even seen it.' They had never even seen the Far North Queensland Regional Plan that was about to go out for public consultation. I looked at my director-general, I held up the document and I said, 'This is not going out. This is going to be immediately sent to every mayor it affects in Far North Queensland and we are going to give them until the end of February to come back to us with their view on their document.' The time for state government acting like Big Brother over local government is over. It helps that our Premier is a former local government deputy mayor and he believes in local government. We believe in local government, so we will review it. We will look at the population targets, but we will work with councils.

There is another issue with Noosa: we made an election commitment because of these SFDs, state facilitated development applications. The former minister implemented these to ride roughshod over councils—no community consultation. I will say this to every developer that has had an SFD approved under the former Labor government that ran roughshod over local governments: work with local governments in their planning schemes and if you do not I am going to cancel them. If they do not work with local government and take community concerns on board, I will not ride roughshod over local governments.

In terms of the one in Tewantin, my department is working with them. We say to the developer that they must take community with them. If not, this government will take action. God knows the former government took action, but it was not for community, it was not for housing; it was against local government. Those opposite have no record to be proud of in housing: not one house developed and built under their Housing Investment Fund. Shame on the Labor Party!

*(Time expired)*

### Cyclone Alfred, Recovery

**Ms MORTON:** My question is for the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Crisafulli government continues to respond to Tropical Cyclone Alfred and also ongoing work to restore vital supply chains?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable member for Caloundra, and what a mighty member for Caloundra she has been, particularly with the daily updates she was giving her community as Cyclone Alfred was approaching which could have had devastating consequences for the residents of Golden Beach. That would have been due to the inaction of the former Labor government for 10 years. It knew that Bribie Island was spreading apart and the water was coming in, but it did nothing to protect the Pumicestone Passage. That led to much fear and anxiety for the residents of Golden Beach and Caloundra. Thank you, member for Caloundra, for your great advocacy in your region. How positive are the people of Caloundra now that they have a member who actually loves Caloundra and fights for Caloundra and fights for the residents of Caloundra? She is not Jason Hunt, the former member for

Caloundra, who was like a walking, talking puppet of the Labor government. Now there is a true advocate for the people of Caloundra.

The member asks about the supply chain. It is very difficult in natural disasters. As I did earlier, I particularly thank all of the truckies who are trying to get as much stock as possible to North Queensland and South-East Queensland. I am reminded that without trucks Australia stops. Talking about resupply efforts, did someone say KFC? The member for Caloundra has an amazing business in her electorate: Woodlands poultry. Woodlands supplies Golden Cockerel in Mount Cotton. Golden Cockerel is responsible for 38 per cent of the poultry supply to our supermarkets, our IGAs and KFC. Mount Cotton lost power. When you look at re-energising critical assets, can you imagine if Queenslanders lost 38 per cent of their poultry supply? I thank Ergon and Energex workers who worked 24/7 to get power reinstalled to abattoir operations before 1.5 million chickens had to be euthanised. I acknowledge the irony. Golden Cockerel is a big asset. It provides 38 per cent of our poultry supply. I thank all of the workers in Queensland who re-energised and got things going again.

*(Time expired)*

### Premier and Minister for Veterans

**Mr RYAN:** My question is to the Minister for Women and Women's Economic Security, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Multiculturalism. Last week the Premier was forced to host a teleconference with members of parliament regarding Cyclone Alfred, but the Premier hung up on the teleconference before any questions could be asked, denying the minister the opportunity to ask a question. Did the minister subsequently receive an answer to her question after the Premier hung up on her and other members and, if so, what was the answer?

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. With respect to the question as asked by the member for Morayfield, there are clear inferences and imputations within the question, and I would ask you to rule that question out of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I will have silence while I take advice.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Did anybody hear me say, 'Order'? I will allow the question.

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a further point of order. I would ask you to clarify whether this relates to the minister's portfolio area.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The minister can answer the question as she sees fit.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I am happy to answer on any matters to do with my portfolio. This was not related to my portfolio, but the answer is that I did get an answer.

### North Queensland, Weather Events

**Ms MARR:** My question is to the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. Will the minister update the House regarding the ongoing response in North Queensland following last month's flooding?

**Mr LAST:** I thank the member for Thuringowa for her question. I also acknowledge the work that the member for Thuringowa, along with the members for Townsville and Mundingburra, has done in that community following the floods and to date to get that community back up and running. There is a message very clearly here to North Queensland: you have not been forgotten. We are continuing to do the work to build those communities back better than they were. The TV cameras have gone, but the work in North Queensland continues.

I am pleased to advise today that extraordinary disaster recovery packages worth more than \$50 million have been announced to support North Queensland's full recovery from last month's devastating floods. Funded by the Australian government and the Crisafulli state government under the joint Commonwealth-state Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, that assistance includes \$30 million to the Sport and Recreation Facilities Recovery Program to rebuild and carry out repairs on flood-impacted sport and rec facilities; \$20 million for the Community and Recreational Assets Recovery and Resilience Program, a grants-based program to repair and rebuild affected community facilities; and \$2 million for a monitoring and evaluation package to review the effectiveness of event-specific funding packages. Of course, the previously announced \$25,000 Extraordinary Disaster

Assistance Recovery Grants will also increase to \$75,000 for primary producers and \$50,000 for small business owners and not-for-profits. I am sure these announcements will be welcomed by those communities as they move forward and go through their recovery process. I can advise the House that, to date, more than 110 applications for Extraordinary Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants have been received, with 49 grants approved for \$251,000. The work is being done. We are rolling out that money when it is needed and we will continue to roll out those funds as required right across the state.

In addition to this, we have appointed Andrew Cripps as the State Recovery Coordinator in response to the North Queensland flood event. I cannot think of anyone more eminently qualified to undertake that role. I know that he is working with members of parliament from North and Far North Queensland. He is out on the ground, and the recovery team he is leading is undertaking extensive engagement in multiple communities. I know that he has been to Palm Island, Magnetic Island, Townsville, Ingham, Charters Towers and the Burdekin. We look forward to working with the Recovery Coordinator to get these communities back on track.

*(Time expired)*

### Premier and Minister for Veterans

**Ms FENTIMAN:** My question is to the Premier. Peter Dutton attended the disaster management centre for a briefing before he fled to Sydney to fill moneybags rather than sandbags. Why did the Premier provide a briefing to the federal opposition before the state opposition?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** There has been a line of questions today. Not only have they been false but also they have been pretty poor form.

**Ms Boyd** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Pine Rivers, you are warned.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** There was a question to the Attorney-General in which the timeline was completely wrong. There was a question to the housing minister in which the accusation was completely and utterly false. There was a question about local governments. I am happy to stand on my record with councils every day of the week. Just now we have heard a question about so-called politics when it comes to disasters. Now I want to put a few things on the record.

First, I want to thank the Prime Minister for the way he has conducted himself during this event. I want to thank the federal minister, who from day one turned up. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition, who has called me every day. These people are from both sides of politics and there is not a cigarette paper's width of difference between them. Both of them wanted what was right. We have not seen that today.

**Ms Fentiman:** Only one went to a fundraiser in Sydney—with a cyclone.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I will get to that, member. We have not seen a single bit of decency today. There are people who are sitting at home today wondering when their power is going to come back on, there are people who still cannot send their kids to school because their school has been impacted, there are casual workers who have missed shifts, there are business owners who have not turned the lights on for the last seven days—and today we get this.

I want to go to the nub of the question. There was a reason why the federal opposition leader was not at that meeting: it was because I did not invite him. I did not think it was right. He was good enough and gracious enough to accept that. That shows true character. I will tell members who was at that meeting. There was the federal Treasurer. The federal Treasurer came as my guest. I asked the federal Treasurer because I thought that was fit and proper as he is writing the cheques. There was the federal minister—

**Mr de BRENNI:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118(b).

**Mr SPEAKER:** I find that the Premier is being relevant to the question.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Can I outline my point of order, Mr Speaker?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Yes.

**Mr de BRENNI:** The question was about why the federal opposition leader was briefed in advance of the state opposition.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I find that there is no point of order. I find the Premier is being relevant.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** At that meeting with the federal minister—and she attended nearly every one, I have to tell members—the only other guest was, in fact, the federal Treasurer. I thought it was appropriate that he come because, while this disaster is going to test us financially, disasters are about more than the economy; they are about people, and people need representation. Today is an opportunity to come in and represent your people. Today is an opportunity to speak for them. It does not matter what side of politics you are from; it does not matter where you represent. That is the cause of this place. This place is to do good. To have both sides of politics in Canberra conduct themselves beautifully and those opposite pathetically is a dark day for democracy in this state.

### **Cyclone Alfred, Public Transport**

**Ms DOOLEY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Can the minister outline to the House what steps the Crisafulli government took to protect our public transport network from the impact of Tropical Cyclone Alfred?

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I thank the member for Redcliffe for her question and acknowledge her hard work, both in advance of the cyclone keeping her community informed, helping them prepare, and then her subsequent work helping her community recover after the cyclone. I ask all Queenslanders to compare the approach taken by the member for Redcliffe to the approach taken by the opposition here today: a member fighting for her community, listening to her community and putting her community above politics while those opposite stoop to the lowest of low levels for cheap political points.

I am asked how we prepared to protect the public transport network in advance of the cyclone. Like all Queenslanders, Translink and my department took the warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology seriously. We moved trains and buses to higher ground. We checked that generators and our boom gates were ready to go. We strategically positioned things like ballast and railway sleepers in case we needed them to recover post the cyclone. All of that work has allowed us to get the public transport network up and running faster than we would have otherwise. There have been interruptions and disruptions, but the work of the Department of Transport and Main Roads, Translink, our delivery partners, Brisbane City Council and Queensland Rail has enabled public transport services to get back up and running. We had over 900 Queensland Rail staff out working on the network on both Saturday and Sunday rectifying many hundreds of kilometres of track that was impacted as a consequence of the cyclone. As a result of their work we were able to deliver rail services on Monday. That was a massive achievement and it is a testament to the commitment of Queensland Rail staff who worked around the clock to address significant impacts, whether that was fallen trees on railway tracks, flooded tracks or bridges that were impacted as a consequence of floodwater. The work of Queensland Rail staff meant that we were able to get services up and running on Monday.

**Mr O'Connor:** With the LNP's permanent 50-cent fares.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I take the interjection from the member for Bonney. People were able to catch the trains on Monday morning as a consequence of the LNP's permanent 50-cent fares. As of today, Queensland Rail is back operating largely full services; buses are operating on a normal weekday timetable, although there are some diversions and the Lockyer Valley and some Mount Tamborine services remain suspended as a consequence of flooding and road damage; Southern Moreton Bay island ferries are running during daylight hours; Brisbane River ferries are still suspended largely as a consequence of debris coming down the river; and Gold Coast trams are back on the weekday timetable. It was a massive effort and it was as a consequence of the hard work of public servants in Translink, public servants in Queensland Rail and our delivery partners.

### **Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers**

**Ms BOYD:** My question is to the Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers. Can the minister explain why Queenslanders did not see their dedicated disaster recovery, fire and water minister on their TVs briefing them—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I will hear the question in silence.

**Ms BOYD:** Can the minister explain why Queenslanders did not see their dedicated disaster recovery, fire and water minister on their TVs briefing them during Tropical Cyclone Alfred? What was the minister doing?

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The question was to the minister. You have one minute to respond.


**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. One of the reasons why many people would not have been able to see people on their TVs is because they did not have any electricity. It is a little bit hard to turn the telly on when you do not have electricity. We have been working with all levels of government to make sure that when information is available information is provided. Our approach is to make sure that we look after Queenslanders through these disaster events. It is not about going out there and being on TV; it is about making sure that we have a swift recovery for the people of Queensland. I want to thank the local governments in particular that worked very closely with us in relation to this event to make sure that we had that information. They have been very cooperative, as has the Commonwealth government, in making sure that we swiftly get that assistance out there to people. We are focused on the people, not on the TV like the opposition.

*(Time expired)*

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

## NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Introduction

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation) (11.27 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994 and the Nature Conservation Act 1992 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

*Tabled paper:* Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, explanatory notes.

*Tabled paper:* Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, statement of compatibility with human rights.

I am pleased to introduce the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. The purpose of the bill is to establish a contemporary framework for using electronic systems to automatically deal with particular low-risk authorities in the Environmental Protection Act 1994 and the Nature Conservation Act 1992. The bill also makes minor and technical amendments to clarify the operation of a transitional provision in the Environmental Protection Act. To put it simply, this bill is essential to ensure our environmental authorities' permitting system is fit for purpose and can continue to function. That way we can keep red tape out of Queenslanders' lives and continue to deliver exactly what we said we would: protecting our pristine natural environment and enabling Queenslanders and visitors to enjoy our stunning flora and fauna.

I want to touch firstly on the existing framework for using electronic systems. Each year thousands of authorities are issued under the Nature Conservation Act and the Environmental Protection Act. These range from low-risk activities such as keeping a pet blue-tongue lizard to high-risk activities such as operating a large resource project. Different types of applications require different levels of assessment proportionate to the environmental or conservation risk.

This bill deals specifically with low-risk activity and has no effect—I repeat: no effect—on the robust and rigorous approvals process larger projects are rightly subject to. For some years, authorities for low-risk activities have been issued via an automatic process where non-discretionary criteria are met. This process is not being changed for the vast majority of authorities. Rather, the process for authorising an electronic system to issue those authorities is being clarified and updated to meet modern drafting standards. The changes will enable the continued use of electronic systems to issue authorities for low-risk activities, providing outcomes for business and community members in a timely and efficient manner.

The amendments proposed through this bill will put beyond doubt the validity of automatically generated authorities previously issued under both the Nature Conservation Act and the Environmental Protection Act. Although both acts have provided for the use of an electronic system, the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation examined the suite of authorities that were being automatically issued. Through this process it was identified that those provisions should be updated to remove any doubt about the validity of previously issued authorities as well as to ensure that an electronic system could continue to be used to automatically grant authorities.

For the Nature Conservation Act, the bill clarifies the power for an approved electronic system to automatically issue and deal with low-risk permits and licences. The system must be approved by the

chief executive for this purpose and the intent is that it will be used for low-risk animal licences, such as pet keeping, as well as for permits for camping in protected areas such as national parks.

One of the most important functions of this bill is its interaction with pet licences. In 2024 alone, over 6,000 licences were issued to enable a person to keep up to ten captive-bred native animals as pets. This includes snakes, such as the children's python; and a range of lizards, skinks, and geckos including the pink-tongued skink, the shingleback lizard, the bearded dragon and the velvet gecko. Various turtles, several species of frog and some native birds, including the king parrot and the rose-crowned fruit dove, can also be kept as pets. Many of these animals are sold by pet shops, which rely on licences being able to be issued on the spot to support their business. Others are sold and traded by specialised hobbyists. While many of these animals may be common in captivity and not threatened in the wild, conditions placed on licences, such as record keeping, are important to help manage risks associated with these pet-keeping and trade activities and to manage potential threats to wild populations.

A robust and efficient licensing system also gives us the tools we need to properly and safely regulate the trade of animals. The data from the licensing system helps to identify potential illegal activities, such as wildlife trafficking, that can pose a significant threat to wild populations, infrastructure and facilities. Unfortunately, Queensland's uniqueness and diversity make us a target for unscrupulous illegal wildlife traffickers who unlawfully take native animals from the wild to sell and trade, both nationally and internationally. Illegal trade is a serious concern for the conservation and management of native animals in Queensland and the protection of our environment and natural values. Illegal wildlife trade is a significant threat to the ongoing population viability of rare and threatened native animals in the wild.

However, it is not just threatened native animals that are targeted and at risk from illegal wildlife trafficking. Even native animals that are not currently threatened, such as the shingleback lizard and the blue-tongue lizard, are popular targets for illegal wildlife trade and trafficking. Compliance and enforcement officers in the department are to be commended for their efforts and commitment to protecting Queensland's native animals and biodiversity. Without going into too much detail, those officers have successfully disrupted wildlife trafficking and smuggling networks and continue to work in the background to detect and deter wildlife trafficking.

The animal authority requirements for captive-bred animals under the Nature Conservation Act, in conjunction with the online record-keeping system—which is where authority holders record details of animals they obtain, give away or sell under their authority, and other matters related to the keeping of native animals—help support the department's ability to detect and deter illegal wildlife trade. The online system is fundamental to the delivery of statewide auditing and monitoring of wildlife authorities and operational delivery of services to conserve and protect native wildlife and associated habitat. The system allows for compliance management decisions to be based on the analysis of comprehensive, accurate and contemporary science and information. This allows the department to regulate the market for the trade and sale of high-value native animals in a way that closes loopholes for illegal wildlife trade, while also allowing legal trade to continue.

Being able to use an electronic system to automatically grant low-risk authorities helps ensure that this important regulation is applied, while also reducing red tape for individuals and businesses that want to legitimately enjoy having native animals as pets, as a hobby or as a business. With over 25 pet-keeping and trade licences granted per day, it makes sense to use appropriately designed technology to support the issue of these authorities and free up departmental resources. This bill ensures that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to issue authorities automatically where specific criteria have been met and to use an electronic system specifically approved for this purpose to issue the authorities.

I want to make it clear that the bill is not about using artificial intelligence to make decisions or grant authorities. It is about using an electronic system to support government processes and focus resources on the assessment of those applications that are of higher risk. There is no discretion in the types of authorities that can be automatically issued. This means that, if an applicant meets the criteria, they must be issued with an authority. If they do not meet the criteria or they are seeking an authority for a higher-risk activity, such as the keeping of a dangerous snake, then while the application can be made online the chief executive or delegate will decide the application.

For the Environmental Protection Act, the bill clarifies the process to authorise an electronic system to issue an environmental authority where a standard application has been made. These environmental authorities, or EAs, were always required to be approved if criteria were met, but the

process to authorise an electronic system to auto grant the authority was not clearly outlined in the legislation. The amendments to provisions for standard applications for an environmental authority ensure that operators of businesses that carry out those low-risk activities can continue to obtain EAs quickly and easily.

The last time I was the minister for the environment, I was proud to bring through the Legislative Assembly the Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2012. That act clearly established a proportionate licensing framework that ensured that lower risk activities had a simple approval process, while higher risk activities were subject to robust assessment processes. Lower risk activities have well-known and manageable environmental risks due to their location or the nature of the activities. The conditions required to manage environmental risk for those activities can be standardised and this is why they are able to apply for an EA through a standard application. That does not mean that they should not be regulated. The department has a rigorous process to establish the eligibility criteria and standard conditions for those environmentally relevant activities through a document known as an ERA standard. ERA standards must be made by the chief executive of the department and they are subject to a statutory consultation process prior to being established through amendments to the Environmental Protection Regulation 2019.

The green-tape reduction project reduced the cost for industry and government of those licensing assessment standards without reducing environmental standards. It rebuilt the assessment process—the whole approval process, actually—for environmental licensing. It improved business investment certainty and allowed frontline environmental regulation to be delivered more efficiently. It is a project that has continued to deliver good outcomes, including during the tenure of those opposite, for the people of Queensland.

The amendments to the Environmental Protection Act in this bill ensure that this process continues to be as streamlined and as smooth as possible for businesses. Those low-risk activities have been automatically granted through an electronic system since 2017. This means that an applicant who meets the eligibility criteria for a low-risk activity can obtain their licence almost immediately. They must be able to comply with the published standard conditions and the department can and does enforce compliance with those conditions, but the application process is very straightforward and does not require a site-by-site assessment. An example of a mum-and-dad business that can take advantage of this process is one that retreads tyres. This is an environmentally relevant activity, or ERA to use the common term, under the Environmental Protection Regulation. In the case of retreading tyres, the eligibility criteria include activity location criteria, such as that the facility must be more than 500 metres away from a residential premises or other sensitive use and must be more than 500 metres way from a protected area.

The eligibility criteria also limit the contaminants released, as the activity must not exceed combustion of fuel more than 500 kilograms per hour and must not release any aqueous waste to waters. Once the eligibility criteria have been met, a standard application can be made, provided the operator can meet the standard conditions. These include conditions such as requiring any processing operations to be carried out in an enclosed building and all waste generated must be reused, recycled or lawfully disposed of offsite.

The automatic grant of these environmental authorities by the electronic system enables quick and certain licensing conditions for businesses, while ensuring environmental standards are maintained. The amendments in this bill do not change that process for businesses. They will still be able to utilise the streamlined approval process for low-risk activities where they meet the eligibility criteria and can comply with the standard conditions.

This bill will shore up the administrative procedures behind the scenes, which include a specific authorisation process so that the electronic system which provides for the automatic grant of environmental authorities will be authorised by the chief executive, and there will be a specific obligation on the chief executive to ensure that the system remains fit for purpose. This is smart and sensible legislation that will help to keep Queensland open for business.

For both the Nature Conservation Act and the Environmental Protection Act, the bill ensures that existing authorities that have been automatically issued can continue to be relied on. Businesses and the wider community will be provided with unequivocal certainty as to the validity of their authorities. The systems which are used to autogenerate authorities have been designed and implemented to ensure that they only grant an authority when the activity is low risk and the person, or company, applying is appropriate to hold the authority. When the activity and the person, or company, meet the criteria, the system will automatically grant the approval. This reduces the burden that would otherwise



be placed not only on government resources but also on businesses and the greater community and provides more timely advice. The bill also ensures that where authorities have been, or are to be, automatically granted all existing review rights are safeguarded, as if the decision were made by a person.

For the Nature Conservation Act, amendments to subordinate legislation will be required to establish clear criteria and a framework for animal authorities suitable to be dealt with automatically. Further, amendments will be required to subordinate legislation to ensure the continuity of processes for issuing camping permits for protected areas. The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation will provide an exposure draft of the amendment regulation to the parliamentary committee to assist with its consideration of the bill.

Regulation amendments will specify which low-risk animal and protected area authorities under the Nature Conservation Act can be automatically granted. The specific animal authorities proposed to be included are: a standard licence, which is for keeping a small number of protected animals as a pet; a specialised or advanced licence, which is for keeping or trading larger collections of protected animals provided they are not dangerous; and camping permits on protected areas.

As part of the examination by the department of automatically issued authorities, it has been decided that it is no longer appropriate to continue to automatically issue some types of authorities at this time. These authorities include: rehabilitation permits for the return of sick or injured native animals to the wild; damage mitigation permits, including for relocating animals from people's homes; and dealer licences to process protected animals for commercial use. The electronic system for these authorities will be switched off on 26 March 2025 for their automatic issue. The department will provide specific advice to affected stakeholders to ensure preparedness for these changes.

Authorities for higher risk activities, including those that were previously automatically issued, may still be applied for online but the decision will be made by the chief executive or delegate. The scope of the validation amendment in the bill includes rehabilitation permits, damage mitigation permits and dealer licences previously issued by the electronic system since 2017. This will provide the greatest amount of certainty for individuals and the community.

In Queensland, sick and injured native wildlife may only be cared for by qualified wildlife carers. Native wildlife can become sick or injured due to both disease and other reasons. Often this results in orphaned young. In such situations, specialised care and rehabilitation from a trained wildlife carer becomes essential.

Licensed volunteer wildlife carers and wildlife hospitals perform a valuable community service by rescuing and rehabilitating thousands of protected animals each year. These groups and individuals give their time and resources generously to help affected animals. It is these dedicated individuals and groups—such as the RSPCA; Wildcare Australia; Australia Zoo; Wildlife Preservation Society; Bat Conservation and Rescue Queensland; Reptile Rehabilitation Queensland; and Australian Native Animals Rescue and Rehabilitation Association—which time and time again are prepared to help injured and orphaned native wildlife, as we are currently seeing following the recent cyclone event affecting South-East Queensland and the flooding in North Queensland. These qualified professionals have the expertise to give the animal the best chance of recovery and returning to the wild. Without this skilled care, wildlife may not recover or be able to continue to live a healthy life in the wild.

In recognition of the valuable work of wildlife hospitals, the Crisafulli government has committed to add to the levels of current funding and provide significant additional resources to rehabilitation centres in Queensland. This includes: \$15 million for a newly built Moreton Bay Wildlife Hospital; \$12 million for the expansion and relocation of the RSPCA Wildlife Hospital to Capalaba; a further \$2 million to Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary to deliver a world-class research and training precinct; \$10 million to the Sea World Foundation for the relocation and expansion of their marine hospital; and \$600,000 to the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre for a facility on Green Island.

Another permit type also moving to manual assessment—the damage mitigation permit—recognises that, from time to time, wildlife and humans can come into conflict for a range of reasons and it becomes necessary to remove and relocate wildlife that is causing a threat to human health or wellbeing or for reasons of protection of property. We rely on the skills and expertise of licensed professionals in situations such as removing possums or bats from residential roof spaces or removing snakes from inside homes—or, in my case, from inside my electorate office. To ensure the safety of the community, we need to check permit holders can do this in a safe and humane way; have the requisite skills, ability and knowledge to identify a variety of native species; and have an understanding of their required habitat.

Finally, the bill also amends transitional provisions in the Environmental Protection Act to provide clarity regarding the enforcement of former orders and notices. In 2024, the Environmental Protection Act was amended to introduce a new compliance tool called an environmental enforcement order. This order combined several former compliance tools—namely, environmental protection orders, direction notices and clean-up notices—into one enforcement order to better respond to environmental harm events.

Transitional provisions were inserted as part of this process to ensure that the former compliance and enforcement tools continued to apply and that offenders were not absolved of their obligations under the Environmental Protection Act. However, the terminology used in the transitional provisions created uncertainty about whether a penalty infringement notice could be issued to recipients of a former compliance tool as an alternative to a court proceedings being brought. A penalty infringement notice requires the payment of a fine for noncompliance rather than requiring a full court process. This amendment makes it absolutely clear that an administering authority may issue a penalty infringement notice under the former sections of the Environmental Protection Act where noncompliance has been identified.

This legislation is all about being smart, sensible and pragmatic. We are doing exactly what we need to do to keep our streamlined systems in place, ensuring we can continue to keep red tape out of Queenslanders' lives and ensuring our state is open for business. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

**Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation) (11.48 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 Innovation Committee


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

## QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 20 February (see p. 288), on motion of Mr Janetzki—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (11.48 am), continuing: I have been really looking forward to the resumption of this second reading debate. I missed out on finishing my speech last sitting week. I was going to get into some very interesting points but I thought I might confine myself to some very relevant rebuttals to some of the brazen untruths that emanated from the opposite side of the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): Member for Southern Downs, I am sorry to interrupt you, but I think it would be quite a good time to remind some members that they are on warnings before you get going. The members for Lytton, Bundamba, Bulimba, Cairns and Pine Rivers are on warnings until lunch. I apologise member for Southern Downs.

**Mr LISTER:** There were brazen untruths and falsehoods coming from the other side surrounding the Productivity Commission Bill. I find it incredibly difficult to reconcile the polar opposites where the Labor Party is saying that there is somehow this dystopia where the Productivity Commission is accountable to no-one while at the same time these arguments are being advanced by people like the member for Woodridge who, as the former treasurer, abolished the truly independent Productivity Commission and instead installed those functions, so he said, within Queensland Treasury. I cannot imagine the Queensland Treasury Corporation disobeying the iron will of the member for Woodridge so to suggest that what he did at the time was somehow consistent with democracy and openness is a total nonsense.

The Productivity Commission is being instituted for the good of Queensland, and rightly so. The first thing it will be tasked with inquiring into is productivity in the building industry. Anybody who has observed construction sites where Labor's mates in the CFMEU and others are running the show will know that productivity has plummeted to unprecedented low levels.


This hurts people because if we are borrowing from our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren to build a hospital, do people not think that we should get as many hospital beds for that hospital as possible. Every time a deal is cut which favours a union that then organises for the preselection of a Labor MP to come in here and vote for what they want or puts them in the ministry or even decides that they are going to be premier that costs Queenslanders. The opportunity cost in terms of infrastructure forgone is massive, as is the amount of debt we accrue. Debt is fine when it is for infrastructure, but not if we are paying triple what we should pay for it. I think the Productivity Commission will have some vivid insights into the practices that have persisted for years under the Labor government where they put their Labor mates and their own careers ahead of the public interest in Queensland.

The member for Bundamba said during his contribution that we should let the sunshine in, as some sort of veiled criticism of this bill. I say to the member for Bundamba that the sun is shining in. It shines hot and strong on this government. In fact, we inhabit the sunlit uplands of openness and accountability. Nothing proves that more than the fact that we did what Labor never could. We came in here and forced the release of the Jackie Trad report, which was illuminating reading. The fact that we had it, after instructing the Clerk to make it available to the House, within an hour or so shows that Labor simply cannot be taken seriously when it comes to talking about openness.

I heard the member for McConnel say that this should have the National Seniors test. She said that she has a National Seniors branch that meets in one of the pubs in her electorate and they would tell you that this is no good. I say to the member for McConnel that the world is greater than the confines of the inner city of Brisbane and if she were to for once venture out to a pub like the Queensland Hotel in Goondiwindi, the Karara Tavern, the Ballandean Pub or the Blue Cow in Allora she might find that the majority of Queenslanders actually want us to inquire into matters such as the appalling productivity and corruption in the building industry, among other things.

In my electorate I have certainly not had people bailing me up saying, 'I'm lying awake at night biting my fingernails over the independence of the new Queensland Productivity Commission.' What they want is a government that lives within it means. They want a government that runs a tight ship, respects taxpayers' money and delivers for Queenslanders and not for sectional interests like thug unions that are the paymasters and the political masters of the former Labor government.

I wholeheartedly support the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. I look forward to seeing the fruits of its first investigation. I congratulate the Treasurer on introducing this very important legislation so early in the Crisafulli government's term.

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (11.54 am): Deputy Speaker Krause, I cannot go any further without wishing you a very, very happy birthday.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): Thank you, member for Maiwar.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I rise to make my contribution on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. As others have said, this bill will 're-establish the Productivity Commission that will undertake inquiries and research and provide independent advice to the minister in relation to economic and social issues, regulatory matters or legislation, having particular regard to productivity, economic growth and improving living standards in Queensland'. Wow! That is a lot.

The Queensland Greens do not oppose the establishment of the Productivity Commission. In fact, when the previous Labor government rolled the productivity and regulatory review functions of the former QPC into Treasury as part of the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill we spoke out against it. We raised concerns that the move deprived us of the Queensland Productivity Commission's independence by making the government itself responsible for doing analysis and preparing reports that scrutinise government activity and inform decisions. In simple terms, we need more independent scrutiny of government, not less.

While the commission will ostensibly be independent of government that does not prevent the LNP from stacking it with a commissioner or board members who will make the kinds of recommendations that favour the LNP and its corporate mates. The Queensland Council of Unions pointed out in their submission that this—

... does not appear to be a productivity commission at all. Rather, it appears to be a statutory body established to provide centralised policy and legislative advice on any government business and inquire into any matter the Minister, or Government, may determine.

The QCU also observed that there is a risk the commission will be used to 'circumvent existing statutory review or parliamentary processes to consider legislation or regulations'.

Many others have gone over the very real concerns about ministerial control and approval requirements so I will not labour that point any further. We have heard a lot from other members in this debate about productivity not being some kind of abstract economic principle. Productivity refers to how efficiently inputs like labour, raw materials and capital are used to produce goods or services. I would suggest that, while it might be measurable and reportable, it is in fact a pretty abstract economic principle and indeed what one might deem to be productivity and efficient is in itself quite a subjective thing. The dominant economic metrics that are used to justify the power of big business, the enormous wealth of billionaires and the rapidly growing divide between the very wealthy and ordinary people are far from objective.

Conventional concepts of productivity or efficiency prioritise activities that generate profits, often at the expense of those who sustain communities, care for people or protect the environment. Such social impacts—like declining living standards or housing security or environmental impacts, for that matter; little things like the global climate and biodiversity crisis—can be minimised and bundled together and euphemistically written off as externalities. If an industry externalises its costs on the environment and community or forces workers to do more for less it will appear more productive. Some lines on an economist's graph will go up, even if the long-term costs far outweigh the short-term gains.

Meanwhile, the things that truly enrich our environment, our communities and our other lives—things like raising children, caring for the elderly, sustaining communities or preserving the environment—are undervalued or ignored in productivity metrics because they do not directly contribute to profit making. A nurse rushing between patients due to understaffing is seen as more efficient and more productive than one who has time to provide proper personalised care. A worker who does unpaid overtime to answer emails, skips breaks and takes on extra tasks is seen as more productive than one who works reasonable hours and has time for family, hobbies or rest. Is a society where people are too exhausted to enjoy their lives more advanced, more productive or preferable?

Public libraries, local parks or community centres can be readily dismissed as unproductive because they do not generate much cash flow or profits, and they contribute negligibly to GDP or GSP; yet these are the places where people meet, socialise and build relationships. When they are replaced by supposedly more productive commercial developments, social bonds weaken and loneliness grows.

In many neighbourhoods, rising workloads and long commutes leave people with very little time to interact with their neighbours and their communities. The informal networks that once existed—whether that is helping a neighbour, watching someone else's kids or simply sharing a conversation—slowly disappear. These networks, however, do add tremendous value to our lives where they exist, but they are essentially invisible in economic thinking and benchmarks.

A person working multiple jobs to make ends meet may be counted as highly productive in economic terms but, if they have no time to spend with their children or community, what does that say about the priorities of the system? When economic growth is pursued without primary regard for human wellbeing, we end up with a system that sacrifices what actually matters for the illusion of progress or productivity.

Very early advancements in technology led to an optimism that productivity gains would allow workers to work less while retaining a comfortable wage and high living standards. Instead, and even more so in recent decades, workers' wages have stagnated while the rich get richer off the back of the increased productivity of labour. According to the Australian Council of Social Services latest inequality report, in the last five years 47 per cent of all new wealth created in Australia accrued to the wealthiest 10 per cent. That is very nearly half of the wealth accruing to the wealthiest 10 per cent. The bottom 60 per cent of households—a substantial majority—accrued only 14 per cent of this newly created wealth. Let's be clear-eyed about this. Productivity does not equal equality. Productivity does not equate directly to any values that we might hold as a society or as individuals.

I have had my reservations about some of the work of the Productivity Commission for these reasons and more in the past, but I am interested to consider what it could do in this new form. A Productivity Commission that is genuinely interested in improving living standards for all Queenslanders could dedicate its time to myriad exciting solutions to some of the biggest problems facing

Queensland—issues like the growing divide between the very wealthy and ordinary people, the climate and environmental crisis created by corporate profit seeking, and the erosion of our social fabric.

First of all, it could provide advice about the implementation of a four-day working week in Queensland in response to our long increased productivity. It could use the 100:80:100 model recommended by the 2023 Senate inquiry into work and care. This is a model where employees retain 100 per cent of their salary while reducing their hours to 80 per cent and maintaining 100 per cent productivity. How good would it be for workers to have more time to spend with their families and friends, taking the time to rest and play, and investing in the vibrancy and cultural life of their communities?

Next the commission could research what is needed to not just fully fund our state schools but explore other opportunities to eliminate the stratification of Queensland's education system and ensure that education caters to the diverse needs of all Queenslanders including those Queenslanders with a disability.


The new commission need not stop there. Coles and Woolies have both been posting record profits while exploiting workers and farmers and hiking up prices for shoppers. Under its regulatory advice functions, the commission could advise in relation to breaking up corporate monopolies and ending price gouging. What about investigating the benefits of increased investment in active and public transport to reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, and improve public health and community connection? It could plan a rapid end to new coal and gas projects while providing a just transition for workers to safeguard not only productivity and living standards for future generations but their very capacity to survive on a livable planet.

Despite the commission's apparent aim of improving living standards for Queenslanders, you can guarantee that the LNP's idea of productivity is not one that will suit the vast majority of people experiencing housing stress, wage stagnation, skyrocketing grocery prices and poor working conditions, but it will work for the same big business interests that the LNP always favours.

In closing, we have to ask the question: even if we see some good work come out of the Productivity Commission, will it been listened to? I will remind the whole House that in 2019 the commission carried out an inquiry into imprisonment and recidivism and found that increasing rates of imprisonment correlated with increasing rates of recidivism despite overall crime rates falling. It made some great recommendations around drug reform, particularly drug decriminalisation and legalisation for low-risk drugs. Those recommendations were completely ignored. None of those recommendations have been taken up. Let's see what the LNP has to offer.

*(Time expired)*

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): Before I call the member for Caloundra, the dull roar of conversation is getting a little bit noisy. Please keep your noise to a minimum. If you want to have a conversation, take it outside.

 **Ms MORTON** (Caloundra—LNP) (12.04 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill—an essential legislative step to restore accountability, efficiency and economic growth to our great state. I would like to acknowledge that 'productivity' is not a dirty word. Productivity is a fantastic concept that has benefit to each and every single Queenslander. This bill is a direct response to the failures of former governments which systematically dismantled the very mechanisms assigned to ensure Queensland's prosperity.

Let's be clear: Labor's decision to abolish the Queensland Productivity Commission in 2021 was a calculated move to eliminate independent oversight and suppress transparency. This was not an innocent restructuring but a deliberate act to conceal their failures in managing Queensland's economy. Under their leadership, productivity declined, government waste soared and Queenslanders were left asking: where did all the money go? They are still asking that question.

In 2015, when the commission was first established, even Labor acknowledged its value. The now Leader of the Opposition in a rare moment of clarity described it as a 'vital service' for the government and the state. Yet, despite those acknowledgements, Labor systematically defunded, ignored and ultimately abolished the commission—an act of policy vandalism that has cost Queenslanders dearly.

The facts speak for themselves. Between 2016 and 2021 Labor referred a mere seven matters to the commission, rendering it ineffective before finally shutting it down. They then had the audacity to claim that its functions would be performed inside government agencies—a thinly veiled excuse for moving vital economic assessments behind closed doors away from scrutiny and accountability.

The consequences of economic mismanagement are staggering. A 2020 report by the Queensland Productivity Commission itself highlighted that productivity had declined under Labor's watch since 2015. Had productivity growth remained at pre-2018 levels, Queensland's real per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher in 2023-24. Instead, thanks to these failures, Queenslanders have experienced, over a decade, lower wages, higher unemployment and raising inflation.

The construction and utilities industries—key pillars of our economy—have been particularly affected, experiencing minimal productivity growth over the past three decades. While the broader market sector grew since as far back as 1994-95, these industries lagged behind at just 17 per cent. This stagnation is directly attributable to Labor's indifference and incompetence, driving up costs for businesses and worsening the housing affordability crisis.

We can simplify this in two main ways. First, productivity is something that affects all Queenslanders in their overall livability. I will say that again: productivity is something that affects all Queenslanders in their overall livability. Productivity is something that is so critical to the way this state functions. How? It is because, when the productivity rate remains stagnant and wages costs are driven higher, companies are forced to increase their prices. The mismatch between the wages growth rate and the productivity rate while they continue to exist in mismatch is a reason Queenslanders are in a cost-of-living crisis as it is a driver of inflation.

Second, Queenslanders want and are demanding to know why everything is costing so much. These are very simple questions that Queenslanders are asking: why is it taking so much longer and why is it costing so much more? The Productivity Commission will exist to find out why. In Caloundra I have spoken to builders who have explicitly stated that it is taking twice as long to build anything. What used to take six months is now taking 12 months. They cite many reasons for this. From an individual, real-life, real-world example, having a conversation—what a concept!—many of those reasons could be from red tape to work sites being shut down due to puddles, to overregulation or to systematic failures of processes that dictate to industry.

Unlike Labor, the Crisafulli government takes its responsibility to Queenslanders seriously. In 2022 we made a commitment to restore the Queensland Productivity Commission, and today we deliver on that promise. This bill will ensure that Queensland once again has an independent body dedicated to identifying and driving productivity improvements across industries and government services without political interference. The restored Queensland Productivity Commission will not be the token advisory body it became under Labor. It will operate with true independence, free from manipulation. Its primary objectives will be to cut red tape, streamline regulation and deliver cost-saving measures that benefit businesses and consumers alike. Queenslanders deserve better, and this bill is a crucial step towards reversing the damage.

This bill enshrines in law the fundamental principles of transparency, efficiency and independence. The commission will function as a statutory body, ensuring it is not beholden to political influence. It will be led by a full-time Queensland Productivity Commissioner with the power to appoint additional commissioners as required. Its inquiries will be conducted through an open, transparent process with full public consultation, ensuring its findings cannot be buried or manipulated. The Treasurer may refer matters to the commission but, crucially, cannot dictate the content of its reports. This is an explicit safeguard against the kind of the interference Labor has engaged in for many years.


The first order of business for the commission will be a comprehensive inquiry into productivity challenges within the building and construction industry. Years of Labor neglect and bureaucratic red tape have hampered this critical sector, driving up costs and exacerbating Queensland's housing crisis. This inquiry will provide actionable recommendations to increase efficiency, reduce costs and ensure that critical infrastructure projects are delivered on time and within budget—unlike the countless cost blowouts and delays characterised by the last government.

Additionally, the commission will prepare an intergenerational equity report, ensuring that future generations are not burdened by the reckless economic policies of past Labor governments. This forward-thinking approach will help secure long-term economic stability—something that has not been delivered for a very long time. Key industry stakeholders have voiced strong support for the re-establishment of the Queensland Productivity Commission. Business Chamber Queensland describes it as essential to economic reform in Queensland. The Property Council confirmed that the bill provides the necessary framework for robust independent economic analysis.

Predictably, the opposition resorted to misleading claims in a desperate attempt to justify past failures. They argue that the commission will be accountable only to the LNP Treasurer, but this is patently false. Labor also falsely claims that the commission will overstep its advisory role and dictate

government policy. This is an outright distortion. The commission will provide independent expert analysis—nothing more, nothing less. Policy decisions will remain the prerogative of the elected government, as they always have, in a much more informed, responsible way. Honourable members, the choice before us today is clear. Do we allow Queensland to continue down the path of economic stagnation, red tape and government inefficiency—the path we have been forced onto for the best part of a decade—or do we take decisive action to restore productivity, cut waste and ensure a prosperous future for all Queenslanders? The Crisafulli government chooses the latter.

With this bill we reaffirm our commitment to accountability, transparency and economic growth. We will not allow Labor's past failures to dictate our future. Queenslanders deserve better, business owners deserve better, consumers deserve better, people who want to buy their own home deserve better and families deserve better. With the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 we will deliver better livability for all Queenslanders. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (12.14 pm): The rigour and legitimacy of productivity commissions operating throughout the nation come fundamentally from their independence: the ability to initiate research and analysis on their own and provide unbiased advice to government. This bill does not allow for this. It forces the commission to consider or even seek approval from the Treasurer prior to undertaking any so-called self-initiated research. This construct only serves to create a 'DOGE lite' echo chamber for right wing ideology which, through that narrow lens, will never allow the commission to achieve its central purpose: making better public policy decisions in our state's best interests.

The broad nature of the commission and its power to elicit confidential and personal information reeks of a typical LNP plot for Treasury to investigate politicised targets whilst at arm's length from any scrutiny or consequences. Productivity commissions are not a new concept. While we see them utilised in different ways through different jurisdictions, I want to start my contribution by highlighting in the strongest terms that this LNP Productivity Commission will not be in lock-step with the current models we see in current operation.

By design, this is not a model with any veracity, integrity or independence. This is a politicisation of government at best and a political witch-hunt at worst. Concerningly, the bill outlines the purpose for keeping the function of the commission broad: to allow for anti-intellectual investigations into the veracity of scientific evidence behind economic and social issues. By design, this is a model that will be entirely under the influence and direction of the Treasurer and one that, by design, can never hope to be taken seriously. It is fundamentally flawed, intentionally debased and incapable not only of independence but also accountability and transparency. How can Queenslanders trust the findings of this commission when a sitting commissioner—

**Mr Crandon:** As opposed to you mob cancelling the productivity commission. As opposed to you cancelling it because you didn't like a report they sent.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): Order, member for Coomera! Your interjection was not taken.

**Ms BOYD:** I would like to recommence my contribution by taking the interjection from the member for Coomera. If the member for Coomera is such a strong supporter of Labor's productivity commission, which was set up in 2015, why not re-establish a productivity commission that is based on the same foundation of the very productivity commission that was already in place in Queensland?

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, members. I was struggling to hear the member for Pine Rivers over all of the interjections from both sides.

**Ms BOYD:** It seems the LNP blokes over there are very keen for cancel culture to gag people in this place in any kind of debate.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Pine Rivers, I would ask that you please refer to members by their appropriate titles. There have been rulings made by Speakers in the past about the use of the term you just used to refer to particular LNP members. Please refrain from doing so.

**Ms BOYD:** Sadly, these flaws are not an error but are rather an operating model from this Treasurer. This is the minister who tells us there are \$17 billion in savings from scrapping Best Practice Industry Conditions and proves it with a 44-page document with all but two lines redacted. That reeks of transparency! He doubles down when quizzed by the media as to why this information is withheld. Do you think we got an answer, Mr Deputy Speaker? No, of course not. He refused to explain why. 'Not to worry', optimistic backbenchers will cry, 'all will be explained' through the pro-active release model that now front bench integrity, openness and accountability virtue-chanting warriors champion from the

Coaldrake report. No, that is not happening either. What a dark pit of despair this has become under the LNP government. More than 100 days and counting now and it is very much 'do as I say and not as I do' from this inept government. We saw on their very first day—

**Mr Crandon:** Pot. Kettle. Black.

**Ms BOYD:** Riveting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Pine Rivers, you have the call.

**Ms BOYD:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. We saw on their very first day of parliament sitting this term that the LNP came in here and trashed democracy with the repeal of the Path to Treaty Act. In their second week, they gagged the parliament around debate on termination of pregnancy in a desperate attempt to keep their fractious party room united—

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order relating to relevance and the long title of the bill. I seek your clarification in respect to the member's contribution.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am going to take some advice about that. Member for Pine Rivers, I would ask that you please ensure that your comments remain relevant to the bill.

**Ms BOYD:** Thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. These very reforms that the LNP used as their political playthings to lecture around integrity were instantly trashed—and repeatedly trashed—once they got to the government benches. So entrenched is this culture of disregard and contempt that during the committee process on this bill the modelling used to justify the Productivity Commission would not or could not be provided by Treasury officials, despite multiple opportunities to substantiate the basis of LNP facts Queenslanders were being fed through this committee process.

The Treasurer stated that the first order of business of the commission needs to be a comprehensive report of the state's construction sector because BPICs were adding 30 per cent to the cost of major projects. The Treasurer informed Queenslanders that Treasury modelling has also exposed that productivity losses made up the majority of cost increases to major projects. If the Treasurer is fair dinkum about these claims and fair dinkum about his claim to restore respect for the money of Queensland's taxpayers, I call on him to table that advice in this place proving those claims. His department will not or were not permitted to. Queenslanders can be confident of one thing: this is a government that will always put themselves first—their privilege, their political survival and their extreme agenda.


**Mr Lister** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Southern Downs, your interjections are not being taken.

**Ms BOYD:** It is little wonder this Treasurer is outsourcing his work. His first 10 weeks in the job included three entire weeks spent holidaying. Who gets a new job and heads straight on leave? It is little wonder that one of the major elements of this legislation is the functions and the governance of the commission. This legislation, like the Treasurer's performance, provides limited explanations and, despite big promises on big agendas, work has not started and cynics are lining up around the block.

One of the major deviations from the last Queensland Productivity Commission is the stark reduction in the commission's independence. In submissions, this iteration of the Productivity Commission was described as 'captive to the minister' by stakeholders. It is not to be taken seriously. Submitters to the legislation were generally optimistic about the future opportunities to drive economic growth and enhance productivity in Queensland. With the way this legislation has been drafted, many of them went on to express scepticism and fear around how this would occur.

The commission's capacity to direct its own self-initiated research comes with the caveat that not only may the Treasurer edit the results to fit in with his political agenda but there is no requirement for the findings of the commission to be tabled. Rather, findings will be left to rot in some buried page hidden on the commission's own website. As long as the Productivity Commission remains a neutered political weapon for the Treasurer to control, there is no chance that the Productivity Commission will ever deliver for Queenslanders.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (12.23 pm): I rise to address the debate on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 which delivers on yet another key election commitment of the Crisafulli LNP state government. This legislation will restore an essential pillar of economic growth and prosperity in our great state. This legislation is not just about reinstating an institution; it is about reinforcing the Crisafulli LNP state government's commitment to improving productivity, enhancing competitiveness and securing a brighter economic future for all Queenslanders. The Treasurer outlined



that clearly to Queenslanders in his contribution. We thank him for the work that he has put into this to date and there will certainly be more work into the future.

The importance of enhanced productivity cannot be overstated. It is the key driver of economic growth, higher wages and improved living standards, yet under the former Labor government productivity was neglected with Queenslanders suffering the consequences. Weak productivity growth has had real-world implications for our state, with lower economic growth and lower wages along with associated employment and inflation impacts. These are not abstract economic concepts; they are challenges that affect every household, every worker and every business across our state.

It is important to understand the historical context of the Queensland Productivity Commission and why its re-establishment by the Liberal National Party is so vital. The Queensland Productivity Commission was first introduced in 2015 by the then treasurer, with the stated goal of providing independent economic advice to lift productivity. Indeed, even as the now leader of the Labor opposition acknowledged when in government, the commission had a vital role with respect to that.

Yet despite these acknowledgements, Labor systemically undermined the commission's relevance. In its first year alone, the commission was referred four inquiries on critical issues, including electricity pricing and service delivery in Indigenous communities. However, over time the Labor state government effectively starved the commission of work, referring only seven matters between 2016 and 2021 when it was abolished altogether under the then treasurer, the current member for Woodridge. The member for Woodridge defended this outcome by claiming the Productivity Commission's work would be continued within government agencies. However, this was seen by many as dubious at best, given the loss of an independent and rigorous body.

The consequences of Labor's neglect of productivity in Queensland have been substantial. A 2020 report from the Queensland Productivity Commission itself highlighted a troubling decline in productivity since 2015. We know that, had productivity growth remained at its pre-2018 average, Queenslanders' real per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher in 2023-24. Instead, we have seen declining productivity in key industries such as construction and utilities, where productivity has grown by less than 17 per cent over the past three decades compared to 64 per cent in the broader market sector. Such stagnation is costing Queenslanders potential job opportunities, higher wages and economic security.

It is in this context that the Crisafulli LNP state government is committed to reversing this decline. In 2022 it was made clear to Queenslanders that an LNP state government would restore the Queensland Productivity Commission and today we are delivering on that promise. Restoring the Queensland Productivity Commission is not a symbolic move; it is a substantive reform aimed at reinvigorating Queensland's economic engine.

Restoring the Productivity Commission is just the first step. This important independent institution will play a pivotal role in shaping a positive future for the Queensland economy. It will help to reduce cost-of-living pressures, improve public services and build the infrastructure that Queensland desperately needs. What is particularly important for our businesses across Queensland is that the re-established Productivity Commission will also drive one of the LNP state government's key economic imperatives: cutting red tape and reducing unnecessary regulation. This will lower costs for businesses and consumers, enhance investment and ensure Queensland remains an attractive destination for industries looking to expand and innovate.

The Liberal National Party state government made it clear that the Queensland Productivity Commission will waste no time in examining and getting Queensland's productivity back on track. Importantly, the first major inquiry for the commission will focus on productivity in the building and construction industry—an industry that has struggled with declining productivity growth in recent years. By increasing the productivity of this sector, we can improve housing affordability, reduce costs for businesses reliant on construction inputs and ensure that the state government's Capital Works Program is delivered on time and on budget. There is no doubt here in Queensland that we need to ensure that we have sufficient housing stock coming online, and the Queensland Productivity Commission will assist with that task.

This is not just about economic efficiency; it is about ensuring Queenslanders have access to affordable housing, better infrastructure and a more resilient economy. In addition to this, the commission will be tasked with preparing an intergenerational equity report. This will ensure that government policies not only are benefitting the economy today but also are sustainable for future generations. The ultimate substance of this legislation is about ensuring independence and accountability. These are hallmark features of the Liberal National Party state government. This

legislation sets out a clear framework for the operation and governance of the commission. Crucially, it will be established as an independent statutory body, ensuring that its work is free from political interference. This independence is vital for restoring public confidence in economic policy-making.

In short, the Productivity Commission will identify areas for improvement in policy and regulatory settings to support business growth and income growth; provide independent analysis and recommendations to the government on economic, social and regulatory matters; operate with core values of independence, rigor, responsiveness, openness, and effectiveness; and it will be led by a full-time Queensland Productivity Commissioner, appointed by the Governor in Council, with up to three additional commissioners as required. I also note that, importantly, the commission will conduct inquiries through an open and transparent process informed by public consultation and, what is more, maintain full control over its reports and findings, ensuring recommendations remain independent and contribute meaningfully to the policy-making process.

In an increasingly competitive global economy, Queensland cannot afford to be left behind. Other states and nations are investing in productivity-enhancing reforms, cutting red tape, and modernising their economies. If Queensland fails to act, we risk falling behind, losing investment and stifling economic growth.

The re-establishment of the Queensland Productivity Commission by the Liberal National Party government demonstrates our commitment to securing a better future for all Queenslanders. It is a commitment to evidence-based policy-making, as well as economic growth and a more prosperous Queensland.

This legislation is the first step in restoring Queensland's economic potential by putting in place the structures that are needed to drive long-term growth, create jobs and ensure Queenslanders enjoy a higher standard of living.

In concluding my contribution today, the Crisafulli LNP state government is committed to making Queensland a leader in economic reform and in productivity growth. By re-establishing the Queensland Productivity Commission, the Crisafulli Liberal National Party state government is taking a decisive step in delivering a more competitive, prosperous and resilient future. As such, I commend the bill to the House.



**Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (12.31 pm): On a surface level, the bill's introduction to re-establish the Queensland Productivity Commission does have precedent, of course. Productivity commissions do exist on a federal government level, as well as in the South Australian and New South Wales governments, and previously we did have one here in Queensland, as has been canvassed. However, when you look below the surface, the emerging, destructive patterns of the new Crisafulli government continue. We see another bill rushed through public hearings and briefings from key stakeholders with a lack of transparency regarding Treasury's modelling used to justify the commission's need. This bill outlines a commission that is in the pocket of the Treasurer to be a vehicle to further push the LNP's agenda. This bill would provide, in its current form, a hammer in the hands of the Treasurer by giving full control to published advice and research. This bill will prevent the commission from investigating its own research without the Treasurer's permission. This bill will ultimately restructure government machinery to serve the LNP's agenda.

As referenced in the committee report, under this legislation, if the commission intends to initiate and publish research in its current state, firstly the commission must give the minister notice of their intention to do research; the minister can approve or refuse the commission doing this research; the minister can amend the research proposal; and, finally, the minister decides whether or not the commission can publish this self-initiated research.

**Mr Ryan:** Does not sound very independent.

**Mr MELLISH:** Absolutely. I take that interjection. Clearly the government has no intention to legislate an independent productivity commission.

What do stakeholders say? Looking into the very brief committee hearings, the Business Chamber of Queensland said, 'We do think that independence is a very important element of a Productivity Commission.' The Queensland Renewable Energy Council said, 'Providing that level of transparency at arm's length through a Queensland Productivity Commission is certainly something that we wholly support.'

Clause 3 under 'Main purpose of the bill' does state that the Productivity Commission will provide independent advice. However, there is nothing in the bill to effectively establish independent action by

the commission such as the ability to publish directions from the Treasurer. There is clearly not enough in this bill to actually ensure independence of this proposed Queensland Productivity Commission.

Supposedly, commissions are to function as independent bodies to give advice and undertake research to assist in policy decisions and other works of government. Unfortunately, this bill clearly does not respect this well-established principle. Yet again, this is a move by the Treasurer that does not quite sit right with their promise of transparency. Recently when the Treasurer announced the pause of Best Practice Industry Conditions—BPICs—he cited ‘independent economic modelling of Treasury’. He then refused to share that independent modelling when the *Courier-Mail* lodged a right-to-information request for it. If independent modelling can be done by Queensland Treasury, why does the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction need to be transferred out of Treasury?

In a similar vein, we asked in a separate committee hearing of the Department of Transport and Main Roads what savings figure it put on pausing BPIC. We have heard some pretty outlandish figures across its entire budget, but of at least a \$37 billion QTRIP—a \$37 billion transport budget—we were given no percentage and no dollar figure from transport officials. It is clear that this government has no intention for this Productivity Commission to be a source of independent research and independent advice.

The opposition does, however, remain committed to holding this government to account for yet another broken promise, this time the promise of an independent Productivity Commission. As such, I support the shadow treasurer’s commonsense amendments as they are around removing the Treasurer’s ability to interfere in the self-initiated research of the commission; the commission has the ability to instigate its own research without the Treasurer’s approval; and the commission should be allowed to publish that research without the need for the Treasurer’s approval. Because the government is deeply opposed to transparency, as this LNP government is and will never let truly independent findings be published, if the Treasurer does give written directions to the commission, Queenslanders deserve to know exactly what has directed them before the research commences.

These amendments remove the Treasurer’s ability to interfere in a self-initiated research of the commission. The government promised an independent productivity commission. That should mean the commission has the ability to instigate its own research without the Treasurer’s approval and it should be allowed to publish that research without the Treasurer’s approval.

What will the Productivity Commission look into? At the moment we have only heard politically motivated ones but, in terms of the government’s actions since taking government, I would suggest that the Productivity Commission should look into what they are planning to do on their Sunshine Coast direct rail project. We have heard backflip after backflip. We have heard a potential broken promise on this. The Deputy Premier wants to look at alternatives. The Productivity Commission, once it is set up, should look into Sunshine Coast direct rail and see what the loss would be to the community when the LNP breaks its commitment to get this line to Maroochydore by 2032.

**Mr Crandon** interjected.

**Mr MELLISH:** I am glad the member for Coomera supports Sunshine Coast direct rail all the way to Maroochydore by 2032.

**Mr Crandon:** Not as much as I support the Coomera Connector.

**Mr MELLISH:** The Coomera Connector is a fantastic project—

**Mr Crandon** interjected.

**Mr MELLISH:** I will take part of the member for Coomera’s interjections there, but I note that he will not say whether or not he will support a tolled Coomera Connector and he will not state on the record—

**Mr Crandon** interjected.

**Mr MELLISH:** I look forward to that being looked into by this Productivity Commission in due course. As we have learned from the last sitting, the Treasurer is not one to take advice he does not like. He is not one for proper process. He has appointed his mate from Toowoomba to be the Under Treasurer. I have plenty of mates from Toowoomba as well, Treasurer.

**Mr JANETZKI:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I take personal offence to those remarks and I ask that they be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McDonald):** Member for Aspley?

**Mr MELLISH:** I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have plenty of mates from Toowoomba as well, but I did not try to make them my own director-general.


**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Aspley, you will withdraw in total, please.

**Mr MELLISH:** I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. This is the Treasurer, of course, who presided over a ratings outlook downgrade under his watch. To quote from Standard & Poor's at the time—

It is unclear how the government will address spending pressures and how much lower expenditure and debt will be in the upcoming budget. This uncertainty is captured in our negative outlook. Furthermore, this government hasn't incorporated its own fiscal strategy or any of its decisions in fiscal forecast.

That is a quote from Standard & Poor's, clearly not a Labor-aligned lobby group or any sort of left-wing source on that note.

At the moment as it stands, this commission would be accountable to no-one except the LNP Treasurer of Queensland who would assume new powers through the Productivity Commission to inquire into any aspect of Queensland life. The commission would move beyond giving advice to being an active participant in setting and implementing the LNP government's agenda.

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (12.38 pm): Today I rise to speak on behalf of the Barron River community in support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. This bill will play a pivotal role in removing the red, green and gaffer tape holding our great state back from getting things done on time and on budget. Productivity is key to success in any project. Productivity means you remove redundant tasks to be more efficient and productivity means you constantly improve stuff to get it done. Who does not like that feeling of having achieved things? Who does not like that feeling of feeling that you got something done in less time and for less cost than you expected? Who does not like that feeling of being productive?

From what I have seen and learned about how the government was run by the Labor Party, I am outraged at how much they stalled, the many layers of bureaucracy and time wasting and how many projects were years, if not decades, behind and often double—if not triple, if not quadruple—the projected cost. If the former government were a company they would be bankrupt, with the amount of money and time they wasted. This leads me to ask: why would a former government that is supposed to represent the people of Queensland operate this way? Why would the former government put so many obstacles in the way of progress? Why would the former Labor government waste our hard-earned tax dollars? When I see bad behaviour, I look at the benefit of that bad behaviour. Behind every behaviour is a positive intention, secondary gain—or a payback, as some like to call it. It is the benefit we derive from our actions. What benefit would the Labor Party gain by having low productivity and in things costing more? Their union mates and donors get more money—that is why. Lower productivity has significantly impacted Queensland's economic growth.


The fundamental outcome that Queenslanders expect from everyone in this chamber is very simple: to be productive and to get things done. We have seen years of a lack of real results from the former government. The Crisafulli LNP government is filled with high achievers, business owners and people who want to get things done. That is why we are here. We want to be productive. What gets measured gets managed. We want to reduce the red, green, blue and gaffer tape for small businesses, companies, investors, government and private sector organisations. We on this side all agree that a productivity commission will ensure the government is productive.

I support the Productivity Commission Bill as it will ensure there is independent advice to the LNP Crisafulli government to guide our decisions. I support the Productivity Commission Bill as we need better productivity in our building sector. I support the Productivity Commission Bill as we need to unshackle our Public Service. I support the Productivity Commission Bill as we need to lower costs, lower delays and get better outcomes. I support the Productivity Commission Bill as we need to take the advice of those who will offer candid advice. This will lead to a stronger budget and will get funding where it needs to go, instead of being wasted on things like a cassowary bridge that was supposed to cost \$10 million but instead cost \$40 million and took twice as long as it was supposed to to build. The worst thing about this project is not the time and the cost blowout. The worst thing is that not one cassowary is known to have ever crossed this bridge as it was built too steep. That is not very productive.

**Mr Stevens:** Why would you hate cassowaries?

**Ms JAMES:** Exactly. If they really loved cassowaries, they would have spent that money on their conservation—or on fixing the Bruce Highway or the Barron River Bridge. This bill is about practical solutions for real problems. It is about getting expert advice from experts to get the job done faster and

in a fiscally responsible way. It is about reducing red tape, green tape, blue tape and gaffer tape. It is about fixing roads and building houses—delivering what our communities want on time and on budget. It is about transparency and accountability in government. It is about measuring outcomes and a commitment to constant improvement. It is about ensuring Far North Queensland—in fact, all of Queensland—gets the attention and the investment that we are promised. It is about regaining the faith and trust of Queenslanders. It is about being productive for the betterment of all and stopping the fiscal vandalism of the former government. Today, I stand in support of this bill for Barron River, for Far North Queenslanders and for the future of Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr SMITH** (Bundaberg—ALP) (12.43 pm): As this is the first time I have been on my feet today, I want to acknowledge everyone in the south-east corner who has been impacted by the cyclone or by floods. Mr Deputy Speaker McDonald, I acknowledge your community and I hope all is going well.

I thank the committee for its examination of the Productivity Commission Bill. I sat on one of the public hearings. It was very interesting and it gave me unique insight. I had a lot of questions and I wanted to ask more questions on the day, but, unfortunately, apparently we ran out of time and we were not able to ask more questions. It is a bit of a shame but that is okay. I did get to join my good friend the member for Bancroft again, so that was well worthwhile.

The LNP would have you believe that this bill will establish an independent productivity commission, but we know it is not a truly independent productivity commission. This is a version of a productivity commission that attacks union workers. Let us be very clear and up-front about what this productivity commission will do. It will single out industries where there are unionised workers and it will attack those unionised workers. It is a plaything of the LNP. It is a plaything of the Treasurer and, as we know, the Treasurer is a plaything of the Premier. Whatever the Premier wants the Premier will get through this so-called independent productivity commission. Let's be honest: it is a proxy for unpopular policies. It will be a proxy for the LNP to put in place politically sensitive policies that they want but that they know Queenslanders do not want. They will rely on the Productivity Commission. It is a commission, by proxy, for unpopular policy.

They are trying to say that this commission is similar to the Australian Productivity Commission and to the South Australian Productivity Commission, but there is a clear difference when it comes to independence. The LNP say it is like the South Australian Productivity Commission, but the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in South Australia state—

In order to support the independence of the Commission, the Premier will not direct the Commission regarding the conduct of its work except through written directions, which may be published by the Commission.

We know that this commission will be tied down by the wont of the Treasurer. The treasurer at the time will dictate unpopular LNP policy to that commission. We know this to be case. In respect of independence, the member for Bundamba asked—

Have I missed anywhere in the bill where I could find the words 'independence' and 'transparency'? Are those words in there and I have just missed them?

In response, Ms Mulder from the Queensland Renewable Energy Council said—

Providing that level of transparency at arm's length through a Queensland productivity commission is certainly something we wholly support.

The member for Sandgate then asked—

Would you say the words 'transparency' and 'independence' should specifically be included in the bill?

Ms Mulder replied—

That would be great; yes, absolutely.

We know that stakeholders across Queensland want a truly independent productivity commission, but we know that we are not going to get that.

Not only can the Treasurer refuse the commission the opportunity to commence its own research; he can amend the research proposal without limit. The commission still requires the Treasurer's approval before publishing its research. Where is the independence? They will have to go cap in hand to the Treasurer to ask, 'Do you mind if we do this? No? Okay, we will do what you want instead—wonderful.' The Treasurer will get up and say, 'We will work as a team but we are going to do it my way'. For some of us who run electorate offices, that is not a bad thing at the same time! It is a horrible thing in terms of the productivity commission. The Treasurer is having a crack anyway. Good on you. Well done!

During the hearing, the member for Sandgate asked a Treasury official—

... under the new act it seems like the Productivity Commissioner must give the minister notice of any intention to do research. ... the minister could refuse any attempt of the Productivity Commissioner to do their own self-initiated research or publish it; would that be true?

The Treasury official said—

Where there is a consideration that the report would be made public, then the bill proposes that that would have to be discussed with the Treasurer first. ... it is important that it is focused on the priorities of the government.

This independent productivity commission will focus on the priorities of the government—this anti-worker, anti-union LNP government. We know that they are anti union and anti worker. Their own member for Caloundra on the committee revealed how much they dislike the Public Service. It was incredible. The member for Caloundra asked of QCU witness Mr Tosh—

So do you think the proposed bill and the proposed Productivity Commission are less independent than a department sitting within Treasury?

Mr Tosh said—

It would appear at the moment that it is, given some of the remarks we have made in our submission ...

The member for Caloundra went on to say—

The question, though, was specifically a direct comparison to what currently exists, which is a department that sits within Treasury. Do you think the Productivity Commission would not offer more independence?

In other words, would this commission not offer more independence than the hardworking public servants of Queensland? Mr Tosh said—

Are public servants not bound by their code of conduct to be independent? If they are not, they can be found to be in breach of the code of conduct.

Apparently, according to the member for Caloundra, department workers—hardworking mums and dads; everyday Queenslanders—who go into their department role to serve the people of Queensland—not to serve the government but to serve the people of Queensland—cannot be trusted. The member for Caloundra was given a huge rap by the minister today so it is clear that the LNP front bench do not support their own departments.

We also need to consider what the Productivity Commission will talk about. What kind of independence will there be?

**Mr Crandon** interjected.


**Mr SMITH:** I hear the member for 'Weekend at Bernie's'. He has been returned. I did not know they revived him at the end; I did not know there was a sequel. Apparently it is Coomera. I digress, Mr Speaker. I see you are looking at me. I will move on. You love the movie, though, don't you? I will move on.

As I said, this so-called independent Productivity Commission is a proxy for unpopular policies in the eye of the base that do not support the LNP. For instance, will the Productivity Commission be tasked with vegetation management laws? Will it be tasked with reef regulations? Will that be the case? In the committee hearing the primary industries committee held during the last sitting only two weeks ago we asked the department whether or not it had been tasked with investigating overturning reef regulations and vegetation management laws, to which the department said very clearly no. Meanwhile, we have LNP backbenchers running around agriculture forums in Queensland promising that they will overturn vegetation management and reef regulations; in fact, they were hosting events. I will give honourable members a clue: the forum was in Bundaberg. Who could it be? What a mystery! It is such a mystery! Could it extend to fishing restrictions? Will the Productivity Commission look at fishing restrictions and regulations as well? We know that in that same committee hearing the member for Mackay had his own question ruled out of order by his own chair because it was asking for policy around the LNP's future on fishing restrictions. How bad is it when a government member has their question ruled out of order by their government chair? That is obviously why you need an independent Productivity Commission. 'Shoosh, don't be like me running around Bundaberg telling everyone they were going to get rid of vegetation management'; that would be out of order. I am not saying it was the member for Burnett obviously—not at all. He is just a good neighbour.

Will they look into the Shark Control Program? Will shark control be off to the Productivity Commission? Will the business case for the new Hervey Bay Hospital—and the member for Hervey Bay has promised that he would deliver a brand new hospital into Hervey Bay and he would do it by demolishing the current TAFE site—be off to the Productivity Commission? It is very clear that that is

what the member for Hervey Bay has promised his community. Then only a couple of days ago he was having his picture taken on the TAFE campus saying, 'I love TAFE.' The problem is he is on record as saying he wants to demolish the TAFE campus and send the classes out to the university. He has not even spoke with the university about it. Will it be in the Productivity Commission's remit to investigate the business case that it is going to deliver? Is that why the new Bundaberg Hospital is under review and currently on pause, so he can deliver that?

Then there is the member for Maryborough. Will they be renegotiating the contracts at the Torbanlea train-manufacturing facility? I hear that the member for Maryborough was not very popular when he was out there last week. In fact, I believe that the union refused to meet with him. That says quite a bit, because this is an anti-worker bill.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (12.53 pm): In rising to speak to this bill I want to start by making a few comments in relation to the natural disasters that have occurred this week, particularly the damage in the Scenic Rim electorate around Logan City and Scenic Rim but also in parts of Ipswich. Significant power losses on Tamborine Mountain and Beechmont are still being endured as well as damage caused to other public assets and farms. Our thoughts are with all the people affected by that.

I also want to say thanks to the Energex and Ergon workers who are on the ground doing their best in a very productive manner to try to restore power as quickly as possible. It is interesting that we are talking about the productivity bill because in the last 14 months Tamborine Mountain, Beechmont, Tamborine, Cedar Grove and Cedar Vale in the electorate have now endured two really bad natural disasters which have caused there to be a great call on Energex and Ergon workers. Our community has seen the great work they do. It goes to show that there can be a huge effort put in, a very productive effort put in, to helping out the communities from those entities and I want to thank them for that. I urge them to restore power as quickly as possible to those affected communities.

Turning more specifically to the provisions of the bill and also the comments about it that the Labor Party continually make, it is clear that under the Labor government that was in power in Queensland for the best part of 10 years Queensland has paid more for everything and received much less value for money. That is the hallmark of so many previous ministers of that government, and many of them now sit on the opposition benches. One only needs to look at the member for Miller and his record as the former minister for transport and main roads and the blowouts that occurred under his watch.

**Mr BAILEY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find that personally offensive and I ask that he withdraw.

**Mr KRAUSE:** I withdraw. I make the point that under the Labor government Queenslanders paid more and got less. Productivity is a discussion that we need to have in Queensland, but we also need to have it in Australia as a whole. It is a discussion that needs to be had because recent national accounts referred to in the media showed that productivity in our nation declined by 1.9 per cent in the year ending September 2023 and it also went down 0.8 per cent in the year ending September 2024. Lowering of productivity makes it harder for families in the Scenic Rim electorate, Queensland and the whole of Australia to pay their bills because a lowering of productivity means costs go up and real incomes decline. When you have inflation running as it is—higher than it should be and higher than the Reserve Bank wants it to be—and there is a lowering of productivity, inflation goes up by more than real wage increases and so people find it harder to pay those things. A lowering of productivity leads to a decline in living standards and that comes from economic settings that do not put productivity at the core.

I also wish to reflect on comments from members opposite about whether this commission will be truly independent of government. Of course it will be, but it is the height of hypocrisy for those opposite to criticise this bill when in their very recent history they abolished the Productivity Commission, and they abolished it because they received a report they did not like. I will not be lectured to by members opposite about the virtue of an independent Productivity Commission with their track record, and it was not decades ago. It was to 2019 or 2020 when they did it, all because they received a report that demonstrated that productivity had declined under their government. As I said, under Labor you pay more and get less; that is what the Productivity Commission was saying and so they abolished it. We made a commitment to bring it back and that is what we are doing in this bill. It is productivity that leads to higher real wages. It is productivity that leads to improved living standards in Australia and across our state as well. That is why it is so important that we are bringing this back.

There is an old saying that prior preparation prevents poor performance. Some other people add another P as well, but I am not going to do that. When it comes to this Productivity Commission that we

are establishing, it is about the ‘five Ps’ principle, and that is doing the research into areas that need improvement and ensuring that there is not poor performance. We know that we can do better in some ways and other members have indicated issues that need to be looked into from a productivity point of view. When we are talking about electricity and natural disasters—and I know the issue that I am about to raise is something the member for Theodore is interested in as well—it relates to the impact of overlays in our planning schemes and how it deals with vegetation overlays. It also relates to how the management of our power network can be affected by some of those regulations and the costs that imposes on our community in times of natural disasters not only in the days of inconvenience caused when people lose power but also by the costs imposed on our electricity sector—and insurance as well—when the settings are not right from a residential home point of view, from a commercial premise point of view but also for our electricity infrastructure. The damage caused by fallen vegetation can be significant—millions of dollars and lost electricity and productivity—when those settings are not right. I have had more than one person who has previously worked for Energex talk to me about the impact that a lack of vegetation maintenance on those electricity lines has caused and the damage it has caused when they go down. It can be done better and it used to be done better.


Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your forbearance with the time. I am concluding my remarks. We need to bring back the Productivity Commission. I support the bill wholeheartedly. The members opposite have no right to criticise this when looking at their track record.

Debate, on motion of Mr Krause, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

## MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

### **South-East Queensland, Weather Events; Attorney-General and Minister for Justice; Member for Macalister**

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Queenslanders are built tough. We are resilient through it all—rain, hail and storms. Just a few weeks ago we were helping North Queensland through these challenging times and now it is our turn here in the south-east. Like many Queenslanders, I spent days preparing my home, family and community for one hell of a storm. On Tuesday I joined the Meals on Wheels team in Petrie to help prepare hundreds of meals for vulnerable people in our community. That is double the normal amount to account for the cyclone. It was great the next day to join the member for Bancroft and Bert to deliver meals to people who needed them in Deception Bay. We delivered to about 13 homes and had some great chats along the way, making sure that our most vulnerable were ready for the severe weather that was headed our way. Shoulder to shoulder, shovel by shovel, we banded together to get ready. It is something that we are unfortunately very good at.

At home my kids and I charged the battery packs, filled the bathtub with water and tied down the trampoline—something I am sure many other parents did, too. Across Moreton Bay, more than 300,000 sandbags were used to protect homes and businesses. That is about 30,000 tonnes of sand. I want to thank those local MPs and candidates who joined me. I will tell you who I did not see at the Margate sandbagging station: Peter Dutton. As our Moreton Bay community braced for impact, Peter Dutton braced for landing in Sydney: off to dine with millionaires in their mansions while his community—my community—feared their roofs would be ripped off as Cyclone Alfred passed above us.

On Tuesday morning, Peter Dutton was here in Brisbane talking about a special briefing he received from the Premier and emergency services. He was telling us how very serious Cyclone Alfred would be and how major this event would be for our state, and then he popped off to the departures lounge and deserted the people of Dickson. It is just not good enough. In the darkest times the Queensland spirit shines brightest, and it is clear that Peter Dutton is devoid of all that makes our state great if he is happy to leave it behind to line his own pockets.

When I saw Peter Dutton on that Tuesday morning doing a press conference from outside the Queensland disaster management centre I thought, ‘That’s weird. I must have missed the invite for an opposition briefing.’ Members will not be surprised to learn that we had not received one. I wrote to the Premier to request one, because why should the people of Moreton Bay miss out on critical disaster information? Some two hours later the Premier requested all MPs join a quick Teams call—a Teams call that was so quick his own ministers did not even get a chance to ask him questions. Member for Maroochydore, I am glad to hear that you received an answer eventually.



Now, as we enter the recovery phase, it is about returning to normal as soon as possible. Yesterday I was out with the chainsaw helping to clear fallen trees from our footpaths and at Dakabin State School. My team was busy helping local families apply for disaster assistance, once it had been activated for our regions. In Moreton Bay, that only came after advocacy from Moreton Bay Labor MPs. Some have not been so lucky. I have just returned from Fitzgibbon with the member for Sandgate where I visited Glenda and Danny. They are a family significantly impacted by the cyclone, yet in the activation of Brisbane City Council areas by the state government they have been left out. They believe that people impacted should not be excluded because of their postcode, that it is not fair they are not even able to be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is simply not good enough and the government should rectify it immediately.

Small businesses should also be included in this critical support package. Many owners are grappling with the cost of spoiled stock and days without trade. While it is great that this support is now available for North and Far North Queensland, we must see it activated for the thousands of small businesses here in the south-east that have been affected.

As Queenslanders tuned in to their twice-daily cyclone updates from the Premier, the Attorney-General was secretly drafting letters to members of the Independent Ministerial Advisory Council to scrap their important work. This is a body that Voice for Victims called on us to create—the same Voice for Victims that the LNP stood by throughout 2023 and 2024. The council was a body that gave victims and victim representatives a voice in the judicial process, to make the process better and fairer for those at its core. It included victims of crime, representatives from the legal sector and peak advocacy bodies, First Nations representatives and expert practitioners. In her letter the Attorney said that the council and their work would cease effective immediately, with their funding to be diverted elsewhere. We do not know where. Why are victims and their representatives no longer afforded the right to work with government on improvements for them? Was it because the Independent Ministerial Advisory Council made a submission against the LNP rushing through their botched crime laws? More importantly, why did the Attorney-General feel the need to quietly disband the council while the rest of Queensland was looking at the eye of the storm?

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition is being deliberately misleading, based on the responses that were provided in question time.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Leader of the House, you are aware that if you believe someone has misled the House there is a process.

**Dr ROWAN:** And I will be writing to you in relation to that matter.

**Mr MILES:** That was not the only thing the Attorney-General was scrapping in secret. The Attorney-General has axed a two-year body of work by the Queensland Law Reform Commission. That work was reviewing how contested applications for mines should be decided. As the *Courier-Mail* reported today, this process was quietly axed while Tropical Cyclone Alfred thundered down the coast. If it was not the intention of the Attorney to pull the trigger on this report under the cloak of the cyclone, why, then, did it take stakeholders speaking out for Queenslanders to find out? This morning in this chamber the Attorney was at pains to say that she had actually made the decision much earlier. Again, why did it take stakeholders speaking out for Queenslanders to find out? It begs the question: what else did the Attorney-General scrap last week when we were all preparing for the cyclone?


It seems that is not the only calculated change the LNP sought to sneak through under the cover of the cyclone. In the housing sector, whistleblowers have revealed to the opposition that thousands of vulnerable Queensland renters are set to be turfed onto the street, that the LNP government is quietly cutting headleasing arrangements offered through the department of housing—that is mums and bubs, retirees, veterans and the vulnerable—at a time when our communities were seeking a safe space to shelter from the cyclone.

It did not take them long to return to form. The Premier is fond of saying that when governments give up on governing with integrity they give up on governing for you. Sneaking through these changes while the south-east is bunkered down, under the cover of a cyclone warning, does not scream integrity to me. It is clear that this is a calculated manoeuvre by the Attorney-General and the LNP to govern in secret. What else have they snuck through without the courage to come clean? Queenslanders did not vote for that. It is about time the Premier showed some of the integrity he is so fond of speaking about.

While I am on my feet, I want to place on record the support of my team for our friend and colleague the member for Macalister. As we heard this morning, Mel will be on some extended leave as she recovers from very major surgery—surgery to remove a sizeable tumour from her brain. Mel

found out about this tumour last year, but, incredibly, she kept showing up for her community every single day. Mel's resilience is something I personally admire and respect. She has been through a lot but never stops putting her community first. Right now, we want Mel to put herself first—to recover and get back to being the incredible mum, friend and community champion that we know she is. In the meantime, I say to the good people of Logan: please know that we are here to support you, just as you have been supporting Mel during this time.

### **South-East Queensland, Weather Events**

 **Hon. DC JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership) (2.10 pm): I associate myself with the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and wish the honourable member a speedy recovery.

I rise today to acknowledge the incredible efforts of the workers and volunteers who responded to Cyclone Alfred. Before, during and in the days since this extraordinary weather event, Energex and Ergon Energy teams have worked tirelessly alongside SES volunteers, emergency services personnel and the ADF to keep communities safe and connected. Even before the cyclone hit, Energex had pre-deployed mobile generators to support critical community infrastructure. Faced with the greatest loss of power in the state's history due to a natural disaster, a team of more than 2½ thousand Energex and Ergon workers exceeded their regular duties to help Queenslanders through a challenging time the likes of which many had never seen before in the south-east corner.


In all, more than 450,000 homes and businesses lost power at some point, caused by more than 1,700 fallen powerlines. It left a massive job for the crews tasked with restoring connections—workers like 21-year-old Bella, whom I met this week, working with the crew at Eatons Crossing Road in Eatons Hill to restore power there. Bella might be young, but this is already the fourth natural disaster she has responded to in her time with Ergon. She, along with many others, had come down from the Sunshine Coast to help Brisbane and the Gold Coast in particular in their time of need. Ergon and Energex teams are the embodiment of the Queensland spirit, stopping at nothing to support those in need, and I thank them for their tireless work.

Energex and Ergon crews endured wind and driving rain to get the power back on for Queenslanders. They made their way through floodwater and fallen trees and into devastated neighbourhoods. Many workers had no power of their own. One of the challenges the crews face at the moment is the rugged terrain that must be tackled around some of the places that remain out of power supply. The regions around Mount Tamborine, in the Gold Coast hinterland and in certain areas of the bay islands are very difficult to get to and are heavily forested. Ergon and Energex workers are doing everything to restore power there. Restoring electricity to 400,000 households and businesses since the beginning of the weather event is the largest and fastest restoration after disaster-impacted outages in Queensland's history. As I outlined earlier today, the remainder of outages are scheduled for completion by this Sunday.

One of the more remarkable stories to emerge was on Sunday night in Brisbane at the Nudgee substation. When it became clear that this key substation, which supplies power to more than 100,000 customers, was under threat and about to be submerged, Energex, the SES, RoadTek, police and council crews raced against the high tide to protect that valuable asset and prevent it from going down. About an hour away from the substation being flooded, crews and all emergency services coordinated brilliantly to put in barriers, place sandbags, clear drains and pump water. It was the best example imaginable of emergency crews, police and council working together to deliver an outcome. If we learned anything from the Ingham substation it was that once substations are down they are very difficult to replace quickly. Protecting that substation meant that another 100,000 people did not wake up without power on Monday morning.

Similarly on the Gold Coast, Energex assisted Powerlink at its Molendinar substation. Energex crews provided auxiliary generation to keep the substation operational, preventing an outage impacting potentially 30,000 people. Energex has also assisted telcos and schools to keep networks up and running. I can announce that, as at 2 pm, 90 per cent of outages have been restored. There are still 50,000 homes and businesses without power. We know how frustrating this is, but crews are working around the clock until every Queenslanders has their lights back on. They will not stop until the job is done.

### **Crisafulli LNP Government, Performance**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.15 pm): I begin by sending best wishes to Mel McMahon. Mel is a tough, passionate and committed member of this parliament. It is an honour to serve alongside her as a member of parliament for the great City of Logan. I know that all of us in this House will be wishing her all the very best as she goes through an important time of healing and recovery.

The member for Broadwater promised that as Premier he would be an agent of openness, transparency and accountability, but, when it comes to community safety, natural resource management and housing, the actions of the Crisafulli LNP government in recent days represent the complete opposite of those virtues. Instead, the Premier has cynically used the cover of Cyclone Alfred to put the dirty laundry out.

As Cyclone Alfred approached the Queensland coast, the government of the member for Broadwater quietly abolished the Independent Ministerial Advisory Council on reforming the criminal justice system and improving support for victims and victim-survivors of crime in this state, otherwise known as IMAC. This was the advisory council that represented victims of crime, for whom the member for Broadwater has continually feigned overwhelming concern. In the last week, the Premier's concern for victims of crime has gone blowing in the wind. I am not surprised that the member for Broadwater abolished IMAC and I am not surprised by the way he did it—under the cover of Cyclone Alfred—because the one thing the member for Broadwater cannot bear, cannot cop and cannot confront is criticism. We know that the Independent Ministerial Advisory Council had the courage to question the approach of the member for Broadwater to criminal justice reform. In its submission to the parliamentary inquiry IMAC said—

The Parliamentary Committee process is crucial for ensuring transparency, accountability—there are those words again—and public participation in the legislative process. IMAC went on to say—

It is the view of the IMAC that the fast-tracked process for developing this legislation has not allowed for an appropriate and evidence-based consideration of complex issues and any potential unintended consequences of the Bill.

Who would have thought there would be unintended consequences of the Making Queensland Safer Bill? I suspect members of IMAC did not foresee that providing frank and fearless advice would lead to their own abolition, but that is clearly what can happen under a government led by the member for Broadwater. When it comes to the Independent Ministerial Advisory Council, it is crystal clear that the Premier does not take kindly to frank and fearless advice. The Premier sent the message loud and clear—and don't the members of IMAC know it.

The abolition of IMAC was not the only undercover operation of the member for Broadwater last week. As Alfred approached, according to whistleblowers who contacted the state opposition, the government of the member for Broadwater started working on not renewing housing headleases across this state. This would mean thousands of vulnerable families—people who left family and domestic violence households—

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is being misleading. I will be writing to you about that matter as well.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Order! The House will come to order. I make the general observation that it is not necessary to rise on a point of order to make that point. The effect is that it disrupts the member on their feet.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I do not need the assistance of those on my left. I give a general warning to members in the House that while I am in the chair I will not tolerate frivolous points of order, particularly if they are designed to interrupt the member on their feet.


**Mr DICK:** We are not going to be silenced when standing up for people who need public housing in this state and nor should whistleblowers be silenced when they come forward to tell the opposition the truth about what the LNP government is doing in this state. Those people will be thrown out if the headleases are not renewed. They are vulnerable Queenslanders who deserve to have a roof over their head. We will stand up for them.

The member for Broadwater and his LNP colleagues have demonstrated, across the span of two governments now, that they absolutely disrespect public housing and the people who live in public housing. I know that as the member for Woodridge. It is a badge they wear with pride. There is a

complete lack of real commitment from this government to supporting the homeless and dealing with homelessness in this state. Thankfully, the actions of the member for Broadwater have lifted the veil and we have seen light shone on what these people did when a cyclone was bearing down on the state.

If the member for Broadwater truly believed abolishing IMAC and cutting thousands of public housing contracts was a good decision then why did they camouflage it when the cyclone was bearing down? Why didn't they stand up and say publicly what they were doing? These are actions of duplicity. The opposition will not be conned by them and the people of Queensland will not be conned by this Premier and his government.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. LJ GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (2.21 pm): The Crisafulli government promised there will be no daylight between the response and the recovery when it comes to ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred and we are delivering on that promise. We have offered immediate financial support and activated personal hardship grants that are available right across South-East Queensland. We have opened 11 community recovery hubs so far and there are more to come, including one in Burleigh Waters. The hubs provide face-to-face support for our communities. If you have suffered financially from the effects of ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred and been without power for five days or more, you are eligible for either \$150 or up to \$750 per family. If you need help with essentials such as medication or clothing, a grant of \$180 or up to \$900 for a family is available. Uninsured residents may also be eligible for income tested assistance to reconnect damaged services or for home repairs if their houses have become structurally damaged—for instance, if a tree fell on it as happened to a Currumbin Valley resident. You can also apply for a grant to help replace damaged essential household items such as whitegoods and bed linen. To anyone in my community who has been affected, my team is here to help you with those grants.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Member for McConnel.

**Mrs GERBER:** My office is open and my team and I are available to assist with the grant application process. It is not just individuals we are supporting through this recovery effort. If the grounds of local sport and recreation clubs have been damaged by the weather event, grants of up to \$5,000 are available to help clubs with the immediate clean-up. In my electorate, the Tallebudgera Pony Club suffered extensive damage. The horse arena has lost all sand. The arena really copped it during ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. However, their own community recovery effort is happening. If anyone is available, you can help them with their recovery on Saturday, 15 March at 1 pm.

As for education, 88 per cent of our schools are back, including six in my own electorate of Currumbin. However, in the electorate of Currumbin three schools were not able to open today. I am pleased to give the House an update on those schools. Tallebudgera State School had no power and fallen trees. QBuild are onsite today doing damage assessments, and I thank the Minister for Public Works.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

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

**Mrs GERBER:** Ingleside State School had no power and no water. This morning, Energex are at Ingleside State School and have provided a generator. Right now the principal is on-site doing a suitability assessment. Currumbin Community Special School had no power and fallen trees, but power is back on and QBuild is on-site helping with fallen trees. Currumbin Community Special School will be open tomorrow and we are hopeful that Ingleside State School and Tallebudgera State School will also be able to open their doors tomorrow. People can check the Queensland government closure website to see updates on schools.


While I am on my feet, I want to raise urgent concerns that my community have in relation to widespread and prolonged telecommunications failures in my electorate of Currumbin. I know the same issues have been raised in the electorate of the member for Mudgeeraba. This is not the first time our communities have been subjected to such communication blackouts. I assure residents of the southern Gold Coast that we have written to the federal minister to make sure that she is aware of the issues that are happening. This also happened in 2017, following Tropical Cyclone Debbie, when the backup generators failed and my community were subjected to prolonged outages for weeks on end. That is happening once again following ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. It is simply not good enough.

I table a copy of the letter that I have written to the federal telecommunications minister, urging her to take immediate action to strengthen telecommunications infrastructure against all weather events, including by ensuring all mobile towers have adequate backup supplies, improving redundancy in network systems to prevent widespread outages, strengthening telecommunication emergency response protocols and addressing longstanding coverage issues in the Currumbin and Tallebudgera valleys. These failures put my community at risk. I urge the federal telecommunications minister to take urgent action. This is not the first time, but it certainly should be the last time if that action is taken.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 11 March 2025, from the Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services, Hon. Laura Gerber, to the federal Minister for Communications, Hon. Michelle Rowland, regarding telecommunication failures in Currumbin.

Lastly, I thank the Energex crews who are working around the clock to restore power to the many homes in South-East Queensland that lost power. Those Energex crews have worked tirelessly. They have visited thousands and thousands of sites and repaired thousands and thousands of powerlines. The Energex crews have gone above and beyond to service our communities. On behalf of the Currumbin electorate, I thank them.

### **Member for Macalister; South-East Queensland, Weather Events**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (2.26 pm): Before I begin, I want to associate myself with the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in wishing the member for Macalister a very speedy recovery after some very extensive surgery. I have been lucky enough to know the member for Macalister for many years, even before we served in parliament together. As I have said to her many times since she received her diagnosis, she is one of the strongest women I know. She will absolutely get through this and be back here and in her community doing what she loves most, which is advocating for her community. I know we all wish her well.

No-one can deny that the natural disaster that South-East Queensland and northern New South Wales have faced over the past week has taken a toll. Still today, many in my community and beyond are without power. Some are without the ability to even make themselves a cup of tea or a warm meal. The ramifications of the destruction caused by gale force winds and flooding will require extensive clean-up and support measures such as ongoing counselling and hardship grants. There is no doubt that this will be an incredibly costly rebuild.

I make this absolutely clear: the funding that is required to support Queenslanders who have been affected by Cyclone Alfred is crucial. It is not something that the government can skimp on. It is not something that they can play politics with. It is something that they will need to deliver for the sake of Queenslanders. What worries me is the fact that, since his appointment, the Treasurer has made it a full-time job to play politics with Queensland's budget. We know that the LNP juiced up their entire budget update in an attempt to score cheap political points.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I take the interjections of the member for Mudgeeraba and minister. She and the Treasurer walked into their MYFR budget update with budget papers the cover of which said 'Labor's budget'. That shows how extensively they are playing politics with Queensland's budget.


It is not just the opposition saying that: S&P Global director Anthony Walker made it clear that the ratings agencies thought this was a political document. What does that mean for Queensland's budget and Queensland families in the wake of this natural disaster? It will cost so much money to rebuild our communities. What we know for certain is that they have played politics with Queensland's budget which means it will cost more to rebuild, and that means it will cost Queensland families more.

We know that bond markets and ratings agencies have reacted harshly to the LNP's playing politics with Queensland's budget. Queensland's borrowing costs have increased and, as a result, S&P Global changed Queensland's credit rating outlook from stable to negative. Those silly political games that those opposite are playing are costing Queenslanders an extra \$5.2 million in completely unnecessary borrowing costs. Every single dollar borrowed to fund disaster recovery will be more expensive. Rather than getting on with doing the job that Queenslanders elected them to do, they are playing petty politics with Queensland's budget. Queensland will be borrowing at a premium now to fund recovery because of the Treasurer's decision to not provide a fiscal plan. It demonstrates, yet again, how short-sighted those opposite really are and how fixated they are on playing political games, not governing for Queensland.

We know that Queensland families are worse off not just because of the increase to borrowing costs but because the LNP have no commitments around cost of living. There is absolutely nothing

from the LNP about supporting families in times of need—and some cost-of-living relief would be very timely indeed, having just come through another natural disaster. So many families in my community of Logan are telling me just how tough they are doing it and they really do need that cost-of-living support. They need support more than ever. They need those opposite to stop playing politics and actually deliver some cost-of-living relief to Queensland families.

### **Mudgeeraba Electorate, Cyclone Alfred**

 **Hon. RM BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training) (2.31 pm): I rise, first and foremost, to express my thanks, and the thanks of my electorate of Mudgeeraba, to all emergency services workers, including our hardworking SES, the ADF and our local rural fire brigades, for their response to Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to again visit our local Gold Coast rural fire command centre in Worongary and hear firsthand the extent of their response efforts. It was great to see locals with local knowledge leading the response, and I thank Nicholas Parry for his coordination on the ground, ably assisted by Brad Hauck from Mudgeeraba and Suzie Koenig from Clagiraba.

I am very proud of the incredible rural fire brigade volunteers across our electorate, including: Dan McGuire, Ray Cavanaugh and the Springbrook Rural Fire Brigade; Janice Sinclair and the Bonogin Rural Fire Brigade; David Lyons and the Gilston-Advancetown Rural Fire Brigade; Greg McKenzie and the Beechmont Rural Fire Brigade; Dean Cording and the Lower Beechmont Rural Fire Brigade; Brad Hauck and the Mudgeeraba Rural Fire Brigade; Ben Naday and the Tallebudgera Valley Rural Fire Brigade; and Philip Thompson, Peter Yaun and the Numinbah Rural Fire Brigade. Get the picture? I have a regional-rural area. We are all extremely grateful for their efforts on the front line.

As recovery work continues across the Mudgeeraba electorate, I spoke yesterday with crews from Energex and Ergon Energy who were working to restore power at Mudgeeraba Creek State School and thanked them for their efforts. These workers were from across Queensland, with some travelling from as far as North Queensland, Bowen, Charters Towers and Emerald to assist our local recovery efforts. We are grateful for their help in getting our community back on its feet as quickly as possible.

I saw firsthand the speed and efficiency of these dedicated crews when I was out in the electorate yesterday watching them remove fallen powerlines from an electricity pole which had snapped like a twig. I thank the Minister for Energy for urgently getting crews to a live powerline which was down on Beechmont Road. Within an hour it was fixed and residents from Lower Beechmont could drive home to the plateau rather than driving the long way from Canungra.

The sheer magnitude of the damage and the clean-up needed across the Mudgeeraba electorate cannot be overstated. Springbrook received in excess of an incredible 1,300 millimetres of rain. The Hinze Dam is overflowing. Small businesses across the electorate lost power and suburbs like Tallai and Worongary remain without electricity. Many of the usual spots were inundated with water, including the Austinville causeway. Members would know that throughout my time as the local member I have relentlessly advocated for upgrades to this causeway. I have now secured funding for those much needed upgrades, after years of neglect from the former government. Once works are completed, our community will no longer face isolation during heavy rains.


Across the electorate, communication towers were down and the rain did not stop. However, our community is resilient and well versed in such weather events. In Springbrook, Ray Cavanaugh, Kara Froggatt and the team at the Springbrook Mountain Community Association have their own disaster plan, localised for our community. With thanks to the Minister for Energy, we predeployed a big generator to the Springbrook community before it was cut off to provide power and communications, which made a significant difference to them.

Yesterday, I also visited Merrimac and Worongary, which remain without power, although Merrimac is slated to come back online today. It is, of course, a challenge for crews to access some parts of my electorate, particularly in the mountains and rural areas. I have remained in contact with local colleagues, including Councillor Dan Doran, in relation to the impact of this event on Robina, which was thankfully isolated from some of the worst damage. Like so many businesses and homes across the electorate, the Mudgeeraba electorate office was also affected, with water damage collapsing the ceiling. My team remain hard at work serving our community, albeit from a new and temporary location.

For locals who remain without power, I know how challenging these delays are but I thank you for your continued patience. Work has not stopped to restore services. Just in the last hour, power was restored to Railway Street, Swan Lane and Bell Place, which locals will know as the Mudgeeraba shopping centre and business precinct. These efforts will continue until all homes are reconnected.

In times such as these, we see the very best of our community. I have heard countless stories of locals helping out those in need, including the volunteers who fed locals at the Numinbah Valley School of Arts community hall and locals clearing roads with their own chainsaws where it was safe to do so or offering spare generators to their neighbours. Carl Schuetze at the Tallai General Store provided food whilst Tallai was without power, even though his own shop had no power. There was a helping hand from people like the Mudgeeraba Lions, the Springbrook-Mudgeeraba QCWA and the Mudgeeraba Uniting Church. The magnitude of this cyclone is not lost on the residents of my community, and it will take time to recover.

### Health System

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (2.36 pm): I associate myself with the comments made by the opposition leader and speakers on our side, and others as well, in relation to the member for Macalister and wish her all the best for the fight ahead. She will absolutely get there, I am sure. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge all the sufferers of lymphoedema. I am proud to wear their ribbon today, along with all my Labor colleagues, to show our support for those suffering from lymphoedema and acknowledge the challenges they are facing. It is an important area, one that perhaps has not had a lot of publicity, and I want to make sure I back those people in the health system who are suffering from that condition and wish them the best.

As the shadow minister for health, mental health and ambulance services, I would also like to place on the record my thanks and my deepest appreciation for all of the staff for their dedication and commitment to the Queensland community in response to Tropical Cyclone Alfred, especially the 2,000 staff who slept overnight at health facilities to make sure they were there and ready for people in case they could not have got there due to the conditions. It was an incredible commitment and I place on the record my thanks and the thanks, I am sure, of the Labor opposition for their dedication to their profession.

On 10 December, the Premier said in this House that there would be no health cuts—he is also known to say, ‘When I say something, I mean something’—yet what we have seen in health is cuts, and that is a fact. The workplace attraction incentive scheme was cut on 31 December. When I talk to health staff in Cairns, on the tablelands, in Hervey Bay, in Maryborough, on the Gold Coast, on the Sunshine Coast or in Toowoomba, they tell me that it will be even harder to attract health staff without this scheme that has already been cut by the health minister, who is unsuccessfully trying to interject on this speech. He should be ashamed of his cuts record.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Order! Members on all sides will cease their interjections.

**Mr BAILEY:** He has cut funding to transfer initiative nurses. He is cutting hours at nurse-led clinics. This minister is cutting, despite the assurances by the Premier that there would be no health cuts. He has put off the Townsville Hospital extension into the never-never. He has also cut funding to the perinatal unit in Townsville. It is a shameful record from a lazy and lethargic minister who is out of his depth.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Miller is not taking the injections. They are coming from both sides. Please tone it down so we can hear the member on his feet.

**Mr BAILEY:** This is a minister who refused to act on the proposed merger of the gynaecology and perinatal wings at RBWH until there was a media inquiry. That is how lethargic he is. But, he has enough energy to go to the Queensland Law Society’s president’s drinks, which is in another portfolio area. He is eyeing off the Attorney-General’s portfolio. In the first reshuffle he wants to get out of health and into another portfolio because he knows he is struggling.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** I note the amusing travails of the health minister in social media where he is going around the state claiming Labor achievements as somehow associated with the Crisafulli government. Let me read members the long list: the North Queensland Persistent Pain Management Service; Moranbah Hospital; Tara Hospital; the PA PET scanner; the free RSV vaccination extension; this year’s free flu jab; the Rockhampton mental health facility; the Cairns mental health facility; the new Toowoomba Hospital; the Mater Hospital Springfield; the Queensland Ambulance Service Clinical Hub—just to name a few. These are Labor achievements and he is going around trying to claim credit for them. It is embarrassing. I am really glad to see that the member for Rockhampton is speaking soon.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** We are back to interjections again. Member for Clayfield, you have had a good go. I understand that there has been a degree of provocation, but the member has not been taking your interjections.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.


**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That remark was disorderly and I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I withdraw.

**Mr BAILEY:** Not a single new bed has been funded by this government since they were elected. In Rockhampton they need a new emergency department, which Labor committed to. Rockhampton needs an emergency department expansion. I am glad to see that the member for Rockhampton is speaking soon. This government needs to get its act together and start funding new beds in this system instead of cutting them and then claiming Labor's achievements as somehow associated with them in an embarrassing effort by the minister.

In terms of blood supplies, we still have six of the eight categories listed as urgent. This minister needs to do more than take two months to get around to focusing on blood supplies. He needs to be promoting blood donations right across Queensland to help the blood bank help people in need.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events; Women

 **Hon. FS SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (Minister for Women and Women's Economic Security, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Multiculturalism) (2.42 pm): I thank the Premier for his leadership throughout the recent events surrounding Cyclone Alfred and ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. As we know, it was an extraordinary event that had a huge impact on many Queenslanders. It comes not long after our friends in North and Far North Queensland experienced extreme weather events. I also acknowledge the outstanding first responders in our communities and the people who are still doing it tough.

I wish to update the House on the efforts of the Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multiculturalism in terms of its preparation, response and recovery for these weather events. I, together with my department, have been engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse stakeholders and communities, providing support, connection and access to up-to-date information. The disaster preparation and response materials have been translated for the various culturally and linguistically diverse communities and shared with those community-based organisations so that the materials reached tens of thousands of people. There has been strong input from the very communities that these resources are seeking to serve.

Departmental officials arranged for key agencies such as the Police Service, the Red Cross and community recovery representatives to speak directly with culturally and linguistically diverse community leaders about the response and recovery arrangements. Our regional and stakeholder engagement teams have been in contact with community representatives to ensure that throughout these events they have the information they need to help keep community members safe.

I acknowledge our outstanding first responders, the men and women, who have done an amazing job during distressing times—at times when they may have been impacted and in need of support themselves. They were on the ground helping others. Safety is and has been our primary focus during Cyclone Alfred and its aftermath.

It is understandable that we have perhaps not taken the time we normally would for Queensland Women's Week and International Women's Day events. They had to be postponed or cancelled. As much as we love celebrating Queensland Women's Week and International Women's Day, the priority was the safety of Queenslanders during this severe weather event.

Some events were able to go ahead and they were wonderful celebrations of the achievements of women. The Deputy Premier and I proudly hosted nearly 200 women and men in Cairns for an International Women's Day reception, celebrating Far North Queensland women. I know the thousands of runners and walkers who were registered to participate in the Mater fun run were disappointed not to be able to participate. I look forward to attending and supporting women and girls in Queensland at the upcoming and rescheduled events this month where we recognise the advancement of women and some of the barriers that still need to be tackled to see women and girls continue to thrive and prosper in Queensland.



Although slightly delayed due to the weather, I am pleased to launch the *Women's Security and Wellbeing Report 2025*. I table this report.


*Tabled paper:* Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multiculturalism: Women's Economic Security and Wellbeing Report, March 2025.

This report aligns with the Crisafulli government's priorities in the Right Plan for Queensland's Future of safety where you live, health services when you need them, respect for your money, a place to call home and a government that works for you. For women, this will be achieved by fostering a more stable and supportive environment that allows for Queensland women and girls to be economically secure and to prosper.

Economic security is vital for all Queensland women as it underpins their ability to live with dignity, with independence, with stability and with safety. When women are economically secure they can better support their families, contribute to their communities and participate fully in the workforce. This benefits individual women and strengthens the broader economy and society.

The *Women's Economic Security and Wellbeing Report* highlights the real gaps and needs hindering women's economic security and wellbeing that have persisted for almost 10 years and underscores the imperative to shift the dial. It includes accelerated actions, but it will also inform the women's economic security strategy that we will be developing and consulting on with women and girls across Queensland.

### Member for Macalister; Independent Ministerial Advisory Council

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (2.48 pm): I start by also associating myself with the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition and other members about the member for Macalister. Knowing her, she will be saying, 'Stop talking about me. Get on with it,' so I will.

While Queenslanders stuck together to prepare for and recover from the natural disaster, the LNP were busy cutting—under the cloak of the cyclone. The Attorney-General was very busy on Tuesday and Wednesday. She started the day by axing the Independent Ministerial Advisory Council—a group that was designed to take advice on reforming the criminal justice system, improving support for victims and victim survivors, particularly in relation to youth crime. The Attorney-General sacked everyone without even the courtesy of meeting with all of those members. They had spent an awful lot of time formulating a plan that was provided to government. Instead of reading that plan and actually consulting with the committee, she decided to sack them all. These are people like: Susan Dennison, who is a highly regarded academic in criminology; Amie Carrington, the CEO of the Domestic Violence Action Centre; Chris Jones, who had hoped to use the insights and empathy from his experience of his close friend Lee Lovell; and Brett Thompson, the CEO of the Homicide Victims' Support Group. This is a group that Voice for Victims called for and the LNP has axed.

**Mrs Gerber** interjected.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the interjection from the member for Currumbin. She wants me to name all of the people they just sacked. That is what the member for Currumbin wants me to do. Well, I am not going to do that. The member should know the people they sacked.

**Mrs Gerber** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Order, member for Currumbin!

**Ms SCANLON:** The Attorney-General basically said to all of these experts, 'Thanks, but no thanks.' These were people who were independently chosen to provide their expertise who probably frustrated the government by providing frank and fearless advice, and because it did not suit those opposite they went, 'Ah, no, we actually don't want to listen to what you have to say.' Frankly, based on the Attorney-General's track record of passing through rushed legislation and botched laws, she is the very last person who should be axing panels that have experts and victim advocates on them.

Not content with getting rid of those experts, while Tropical Cyclone Alfred was approaching the Queensland coast the Attorney-General thought, 'Now is also a great time to meet with the independent Law Reform Commission and tell them to stop working on everything they have been focused on over the last two years as it relates to mining leases.' As the *Courier-Mail* reported and as the Leader of the Opposition outlined, a landmark review into how objections against new mines are dealt with has been quietly axed by the Attorney-General, just months before a report is due. A whole lot of time and money would have gone into developing those recommendations, yet those opposite have said, 'Ah, we're not interested.'

**Ms Boyd** interjected.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the interjection from the member for Pine Rivers. So much for respecting taxpayers' dollars! Even if the Attorney-General takes offence to the fact that we are saying she met with the QLRC during the week that the cyclone was approaching, the decision is still the same, and that is refusing to listen to experts—a theme of this LNP government that is developing. Somehow we are expected to believe that the brains trust of the members for Burdekin, Toowoomba South, Glass House and Kawana are meant to do a better job than the independent Queensland Law Reform Commission.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will tell you what I was doing on Tuesday. I went to the member for Sandgate's electorate to meet with rough sleepers, to make sure they were getting the support they needed.

**A government member:** Labor's housing crisis.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the member's interjection. You are not going to address the housing challenges by getting rid of housing, and that is exactly what the Premier has decided to do by appointing the person who wants to scrap housing in his electorate.


**Mrs Gerber** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the member for Currumbin under the standing orders.

**Ms SCANLON:** I was with the member for Sandgate talking to rough sleepers in her community and my community. We were talking to organisations that are providing shelter to people, frankly, because the government had provided effectively no advice to NGOs about what on earth they were supposed to do to prepare rough sleepers. Meanwhile, Peter Dutton was out there filling LNP coffers rather than filling up sandbags and helping rough sleepers. That is the LNP's priority.

*(Time expired)*

### **Fisher, Mr N; Webber, Mr J; Wyatt, Mr T**

 **Mrs KIRKLAND** (Rockhampton—LNP) (2.53 pm): On behalf of the electorate of Rockhampton and having experienced the stress of disaster recovery, I wish all of those going through the clean-up of ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred a speedy return to normalcy.

I rise today to address the significant lives of three Rockhampton men who shaped our community in numerous ways. Our community were disheartened on learning of the passing of Mr Neil Fisher in April 2024, Mr Jim Webber in November 2024 and, most recently, Mr Tom Wyatt in January 2025. These three men were of high significance and stature in our region not only because of their elected roles in local government but also because of the dedication and the love that they had for their community.


Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the life of Neil Fisher. Neil served as councillor for Rockhampton for 16 years, working across many roles and portfolios during his time including deputy mayor and acting mayor on numerous occasions. He served our community with unwavering commitment, driven by passion and for the betterment of all. One of his many notable achievements was his contribution to the Rockhampton Airport. He was steadfast in his pursuit to see it develop and improve. Neil was also famous for his weekly segment on *Seven News* sharing his gardening tips.

Next I would like to acknowledge the life of former mayor Jim Webber. Jim was a dedicated leader who leaves a lasting impact not only on those who knew him personally but also on the entire community he served. Jim was first elected to council at 29 years of age in 1970, serving for 38 years including three consecutive terms as mayor. Jim was devoted to infrastructure, community livability and securing local jobs. He was an advocate for one and all and cared for all those around him. Jim is also celebrated for his legacy of the Kershaw Gardens waterfalls, where thousands continue to take photographs for every occasion.

Last, but most definitely not least, I would like to acknowledge the life of Tom Wyatt, our local garden guru with the greenest of thumbs and gardening talkback on ABC Radio. Tom was a dedicated horticulturalist and curator for the local council for 34 years plus eight years as an elected councillor, driving the betterment of our many iconic green spaces around Rockhampton—the transformation of Kershaw Gardens from an old landfill site along with the Japanese Garden additions and contributions to the Rockhampton Zoo, where our chimps now thrive because of Tom's tenacity and, shall I say, creative problem solving. Tom's legacy will be seen in beauty by all who visit and live in Rockhampton, and that is a legacy I am sure he would have been proud to leave.

These three men left legacies we can only hope to live up to, and I am sure their names will live on forever engraved in the memories of Rockhampton and Central Queensland residents. I would like to send my heartfelt condolences to the families of these three great men as we give honour where honour is due, entering this memoir into *Hansard* for all time.

### Climate Change

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.56 pm): Last week in South-East Queensland was a tense time. It was a long wait for the cyclone to hit, especially for residents in low-lying coastal and flood-prone areas. I wish we could say that this was a once-in-a-century event but, having lived through the 2011 and 2022 floods, my community knows all too well that that just is not the case. In Maiwar we were incredibly lucky that the gale-force winds never arrived, but the damage right across the south-east—in particular on the Gold Coast, the bay islands and countless other places—has been intense, and the rains and flooding that followed have been devastating.

I have been so impressed with the way this community, and mine in particular, swung into gear to help each other. It has been a real silver lining in what has otherwise been a pretty wretched and infuriating time. It should not fall on individuals, families and tiny community organisations on shoestring budgets to patch up the gaps left by an ill-prepared government. Our communities might have rallied around each other, but it was no thanks to successive LNP and Labor governments that have fuelled extreme weather events by opening up new coal and gas projects and then failing to adequately prepare and adapt to predicted climate change scenarios. In Brisbane, not a single evacuation centre was considered safe to withstand a cyclone. When the RNA showgrounds eventually opened up, it had no food, no water, no cooking facilities or no bedding—bare-bones facilities.

We are not ready for the worsening impacts of climate change. Some people in this chamber are not even ready to genuinely engage with, let alone properly understand and act on, the science of climate change. Let me be clear: now is precisely the right time to talk about climate change. We know that the climate is warming as a result of human activity. We know that its effects will continue to hit Queensland hard in many and varied ways. We will be hit with increased flooding and storm surge events, sea-level rise, more intense cyclones and storms, heatwaves, ocean acidification, crop losses, longer droughts in arid areas, more bushfires and a rise in vector borne diseases. Bare supermarket shelves will steadily become the norm as supply chains are interrupted and crop losses increase grocery prices.

The cost of repairing and replacing infrastructure and homes will grow. Already some home owners are completely unable to insure their homes while countless others have seen premiums skyrocket to the point of being effectively unaffordable. Tropical cyclones have long been a part of life for many on the east coast of Queensland, but rising ocean temperatures mean that those cyclones will carry more moisture, they will remain stronger for longer, they will move more slowly and they will dump even more rain when they reach land.

The north-eastern Coral Sea, where Tropical Cyclone Alfred formed, experienced its fourth-hottest February and the hottest January on record. Higher sea levels due to climate change also mean more dangerous storm surges and coastal flooding. Already sea levels today are 20 centimetres higher than a century ago, and as ice caps melt and the oceans continue to warm and expand they are expected to rise by as much as 1.1 metre by the end of this century. For decades now scientists have warned us of the risk of cyclones intensifying and moving further south as the planet warms.

In densely populated South-East Queensland, a region without cyclone-proof infrastructure and housing, this issue is deadly serious. The prediction of climate impacts is complex and it is difficult, but thousands of scientists have collaborated over many decades to do just this. We have been on notice about these risks for decades. To continue to ignore these warnings is not just dangerous; it is deeply immoral. What we do here in Queensland really matters. It matters because Australia is the third biggest global exporter of fossil fuels. Multinational coal and gas corporations, who pay very little in tax in most cases, are fuelling the kind of weather South-East Queensland has just endured and that could have been so much worse, and they are doing it with the express support of LNP and Labor governments. Neither the LNP nor Labor have any plan to stop that. They have zero plan to stop digging up and shipping out the fossil fuels that are cooking the ocean, cooking the planet and cooking up ever bigger cyclones. It is shameful that not one other member in here—not one member of Labor or the LNP—can look Queenslanders in the eye while they continue to dig up coal and gas and tell them that they take their lives seriously, their safety seriously or—


*(Time expired)*

## QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 338, on motion of Mr Janetzki—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (3.02 pm): I rise to speak on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024. This is a bill that falls short and delivers a watered-down Productivity Commission that will not be truly independent. To that end, I support the shadow treasurer's amendments. The purpose of the Productivity Commission is to undertake independent and impartial research and make policy recommendations that improve economic productivity and efficiency. This must be done independently without interference from the government of the day.

In committee briefings, the Queensland Treasury said that the Queensland Productivity Commission would be designed to closely mirror the Australian Productivity Commission, but this is untrue. Under the LNP's legislation, any proposed research for publication by the commission must be approved by the Treasurer before the research can commence. The Treasurer can also amend the research proposal and the commission requires the Treasurer's approval before publishing its research. This political interference significantly weakens the credibility of the proposed Queensland Productivity Commission.

The LNP wants to politicise the Queensland Productivity Commission and turn it into its very own think tank. They want a body that tells them what they want to hear. The Australian Productivity Commission, on the other hand, does not take direction from the Australian government and therefore can make bold recommendations, even if they are politically inconvenient. Queensland's hollowed out Productivity Commission will not be able to do that. The Treasurer has already assigned his first task to the commission: review the construction and building industry. This shows that the commission has already been tasked with finding excuses to cut the conditions of working Queenslanders.

The LNP is using the new commission to set and implement their agenda of cuts. They are not committed to Queensland's productivity and economic growth. They are not committed to transparency or integrity. In introducing the new Productivity Commission they have learned the lessons of the Newman government era. They know that Queenslanders will never again stomach the aggressive bull-in-a-china-shop approach that Newman had to cutting and sacking public servants and public services, so this time they have to do it in such a way as to give the impression of objectivity and impartiality. They will say to Queenslanders, 'We need to cut this public service or axe this infrastructure project or sack those workers because the Queensland Productivity Commission recommended that we do so.' They hope that Queenslanders will swallow this without realising the recommendation comes from the Queensland Productivity Commission, which tells the LNP government what they want to hear.


When introducing this bill, the Treasurer said that productivity underwrites prosperity and that our standard of living is derived from how productive we are. One of the biggest drivers of productivity is transport connectivity. In places like Ipswich, transport connectivity supports Ipswich workers and freight distribution across the Ipswich area. Good transport connectivity has a direct relationship to people's standard of living. It ensures workers can get to work on time and be back home to spend quality time with their families. It ensures trucks can transport goods to warehouses, businesses and homes. If the LNP is so concerned about productivity, then why is transport connectivity in Ipswich such a low priority on their agenda?

One of the biggest bottlenecks in Ipswich can be found on the Cunningham Highway at the exit ramps at Swanbank and Ripley. Commuters coming home from work in the afternoons and evenings are queued on this highway's verge for up to 100 metres while cars and heavy vehicles race past them on the highway at 100 kilometres an hour. I wrote to the transport minister in January on whether the LNP government will commit on funding to upgrade these exit ramps on the Cunningham Highway. I did inform the minister that the Cunningham Highway is an important freight route and that this ongoing peak hour congestion and risk to motorists' safety jeopardises the productivity of our local and state economies.

I must mention that the LNP has also said not a lot about another transport commitment they made before the election: to invest \$4 million into a second river crossing for Ipswich. A second river crossing is something that has been needed for a long time. I have advocated for it for a long time. It

would help the productivity of our local economy. The LNP has been quiet on this proposed commitment since the election. I would like to think that the LNP government is fully committed to productivity for all parts of Queensland, including Ipswich seats, but I am not convinced.

A truly independent productivity commission would be objective and impartial in researching matters that would help improve productivity and economic growth in Queensland. This would be done in service of the public interest. It should not be done purely to service the LNP government's political agenda. This is why the shadow treasurer's amendments must be support and incorporated into this bill.

 **Hon. BA MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (3.07 pm): That last address tells Queenslanders everything they need to know. The member for Ipswich spent more time talking about the LNP than she did about the bill. She spent more time talking about the LNP's commitments to service her electorate than her 10-year record in this place. There have been 10 years of Labor failure in Ipswich because of incompetent members like those opposite.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Those opposite do not like it, but the reality is those opposite had 10 years to deliver for their communities and they failed. What did the former Palaszczuk and Miles Labor governments do about addressing the exits on the Cunningham Highway that the member for Ipswich now writes to me about? Nothing. Zero. Those opposite like to complain and make loud noises, but when they had the opportunity to deliver for their communities they failed. Contrast that with the LNP. We made very clear commitments to the people of Queensland. Our 100-day commitments were very clearly enunciated, and we have delivered on every single one of them, including—

**Mr Nicholls:** Including 50-cent fares.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I will take that interjection from the health minister: including the LNP's permanent 50-cent fares, a tremendous LNP initiative we are proud to champion on this side, an initiative those opposite—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): I do not suppose the member for Buderim needs my protection, but I am struggling to hear with all of the interjections coming from my left-hand side. Tone them down, please. This is the final general warning I will give. I will start warning members on both sides under the standing orders from now on.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I will finish my initial bit with this response: the LNP's permanent 50-cent fares is an initiative the LNP were proud to deliver within our first 100 days and something that Labor failed to do for 10 years. That tells you everything you need to know about the Labor Party.

Turning to the bill, I stand to address a matter of utmost importance for Queensland; that is, productivity, because it affects every single Queenslanders every single day. The lack of productivity caused by the bungling, incompetence and sweetheart deals of the former Labor government has caused considerable cost blowouts and delays to critical road and transport infrastructure and projects right across Queensland. In fact, I dare say that had those opposite been more focused on delivering for Queenslanders then some of the projects the member for Ipswich just spoke about may have been delivered by the former government. Instead, we have had a decade of inaction and failure and a budget that has blown out to the point where we have a ratings outlook downgrade. All of that is on the member for Woodridge and his failure to manage the budget adequately.

Projects are over budget and delayed thanks to the CFMEU and the former government's cosy relationship with the CFMEU. Let us have a look at one in particular: Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3. The most recent blowout on that project is \$330 million and a 12-month delay. Those opposite signed off on that in September, before they went into caretaker. They did not tell anyone, mind you; they thought they would bury that. Unfortunately for those opposite, Queenslanders gave their trust to the LNP and we have been able to be open with Queenslanders about the fact that those opposite spent \$330 million of taxpayers' money subsidising the CFMEU on Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3. That is the reality of the Labor Party's record.

Let us have a look at Cross River Rail. A former transport minister who will remain unnamed promised Queenslanders that Cross River Rail would be delivered within a budget of \$5.4 billion and that it would be completed by last year, by 2024.

**Mr O'Connor:** Was it someone careless with their emails?

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Someone who was a little careless with their emails at times. The Crisafulli government made a commitment that we would reveal the true cost of Cross River Rail, which is what we have done. The real cost, the true cost, is \$17 billion—on a project that they said would be \$5.4 billion. They said it would be completed by 2024, but I have been advised that it will likely not be finished until 2029. Why is Cross River Rail over budget and over time? It is because of sweetheart deals with the CFMEU.

Productivity on Cross River Rail has been through the floor for a long, long time. Last year, when those opposite were in power, more than 148 days on Cross River Rail were lost due to industrial action. That destroys productivity. Bear in mind, there are only about 300 work days in a year and we have lost about half of them due to industrial action on one of the biggest projects in the country and the biggest project in the state. That is Labor's record. It shows how they wilfully disregard taxpayers' dollars and their reckless abandonment whereby they simply strike sweetheart deals with their mates at the cost of Queenslanders.

The Crisafulli government, by contrast, have demonstrated that we are open for business and we are committed to restoring productivity. We are restoring productivity to get on with the job of delivering these road and transport infrastructure projects that Queenslanders need. The one thing that I agree with from the member for Ipswich's contribution is that Queenslanders do need better road and transport infrastructure than they got under the former Labor government. I absolutely agree that for 10 years Labor did not deliver for Queenslanders when it came to road and rail infrastructure.

Queenslanders are sick and tired of sitting in traffic because a road has not been upgraded or roadwork is going on for months or years longer than it should, simply because the former Labor government wanted to strike sweetheart deals with people like the CFMEU and their mates. We respect Queenslanders' hard-earned dollars and we respect taxpayers' dollars. We also respect their time. We want workers and tradies to be well paid—we absolutely want that—but we also want work to be delivered on time and on budget. Queenslanders deserve that.

Productivity in Queensland has sharply decreased since 2015. That is the record of those opposite. Productivity has decreased under them. Queenslanders demonstrated that they had lost trust in the former government and their ability to deliver projects on time and on budget. That is one of the reasons they entrusted the LNP with delivering good government—because those opposite could not do that and over time Queenslanders saw that.


Under the former government, productivity was a mere academic concept and, I would suggest, a political inconvenience. The reality is that productivity has real-world consequences for all Queenslanders, and the Treasurer adeptly described some of those consequences. Weak productivity growth led to lower economic growth, stagnant wages, higher unemployment and rising inflation. Had productivity growth remained at its pre-2018 average, Queensland's real per capita income would have been \$11,000 higher in 2023-24. The construction and the utilities sectors, in particular, suffered under Labor's mismanagement, experiencing little to no productivity growth in the last 30 years. The lack of productivity has cost Queenslanders in their back pocket and they remain wondering where the road and rail they so desperately need is.

The Queensland Productivity Commission Bill is a pivotal step in addressing these challenges. This is a bill that aims to re-establish the Queensland Productivity Commission—something that they killed over time because it suited them as it was politically inconvenient. The now Deputy Leader of the Opposition got rid of the Queensland Productivity Commission because it was politically inconvenient. Why did they get rid of the Queensland Productivity Commission? It is because they wanted to introduce sweetheart deals with the CFMEU, like BPIC. I am pretty sure the Productivity Commission would have had a view that that was not in the interests of productivity and delivering value to taxpayers for their hard-earned dollars.

One of the reasons we paused those BPIC provisions is that we knew they were destroying productivity on Queensland job sites. We are committed to restoring productivity because it costs home owners, renters and taxpayers every single day when the CFMEU and their sweetheart deal with the Labor Party destroys productivity. Treasury modelling has revealed that if BPICs continued in their former form Queenslanders would pay an additional seven per cent rent over the next five years and 22,000 homes would not be built in Queensland. We announced back in December that it would not apply to new projects and those that had not yet reached the procurement stage. We are investing considerable taxpayers' dollars in new infrastructure here in Queensland and we want to receive value for money for taxpayers.

Those opposite are beholden to the CFMEU because they owe their political existence to the CFMEU. The Leader of the Opposition is installed by the CFMEU and many of those opposite are funded by the CFMEU. That is why the sweetheart deals with the CFMEU have been cut. This bill will end those processes because this bill will ensure that productivity in all government processes is the focus for government. The first measure will be to look at the construction industry, because that is one of the key areas where productivity has been destroyed. We want to see workers well paid, we want to see good conditions and we want to see productivity. That is what Queenslanders deserve and this bill delivers that.

I look forward to seeing the recommendations of the first Productivity Commission review. Unlike those opposite, we will be transparent and open. I hear the scare campaign with respect to the shadow treasurer's amendments. All I can say is that their record was to kill the Productivity Commission and bury its records.

 **Ms MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (3.17 pm): It is clear that we are going to still be waiting for that \$4 million for the business case for the Ipswich second river crossing because it is clearly not coming.

I rise to make a contribution on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024. The bill aims to establish the Queensland Productivity Commission as an independent statutory body with the view that it will have operational independence from government. The decision to establish a productivity commission in Queensland is one the new government made clear leading into the state election. However, as we know, the devil is in the detail and there are some glaring concerns with what the LNP government is seeking to do with the new Productivity Commission, especially around its independence and functions.

Firstly, it is clear from the submissions received through the parliamentary inquiry that there are significantly varying views on what the functions of the commission should be and should not be. Some submitters sought a more expansive role beyond considerations of productivity. Others believed that the powers may be too broad, potentially veering into the work of other bodies, particularly the important place of the Queensland parliament and our roles as parliamentarians. Indeed, the established process of our parliamentary committees to consider legislation or regulations does raise the question of exactly what the commission's role would be and whether there is risk of overlap or usurping the parliament's roles and responsibilities.

There is also the other end of the spectrum, with one submitter asserting that the commission needed powers to enter, inspect, conduct and interview, and powers to require a person to answer questions at a hearing or conference—more of a royal commission rather than a productivity commission. I would maintain that the expectations of stakeholders around the functions of the Productivity Commission are mixed, and further guidance needs to be provided beyond 'having particular regard to productivity and economic growth and living standards in Queensland'.

Treasury submitted that in regards to the regulatory review function of the commission that it is intended to be similar to the key functions currently carried out by the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction. So, it does amuse me to see an office tasked with reducing red tape now being usurped with an entirely new statutory body created doing similar work. If that is not red tape, I am not sure what is.

In better understanding the functions of the Queensland Commission, as well as the member for Ipswich, I also looked more widely, especially at the roles and functions of the existing national Productivity Commission, and what is evident is that nationally there is at least some clear guidance from government. The Albanese federal government provided a statement of expectations to the commission in November 2023, the first time that this has been done in the national commission's 25-year history. The statement outlines the government's expectations of how the commission will renew and refocus its objectives by: taking into account the government's policy priorities; being responsive to changing economic environments; enhancing its relationships with all governments; bolstering external engagement and communication methods; and strengthening internal culture and capabilities and organisational governance arrangements.

There is also a statement of intent which is the national Productivity Commission's response to the government's statement of expectations and, importantly, both of these documents are public, they are published on the NPC's website, and they are detailed. At this point in time, the only thing we know about the Queensland Productivity Commission's role is that they will undertake one review into the construction and building industry and deliver an intergenerational equity report.

Interestingly, the national Productivity Commission released a research paper only last month in relation to housing construction productivity, and there are a couple of key points in this which I hope

the government is paying close attention to as it seeks its own review. I wish to quote directly from that report. It said—

We note that the BPIC was suspended in November 2024, and that the Queensland Productivity Commission will undertake a review of the construction sector, including industrial relations policies, which may shed more light on this issue.

The PC has not investigated this issue further in this review. However, to the extent that there are barriers to productivity from certain work practices in enterprise bargaining agreements, this should only directly affect a relatively small proportion of the residential construction sector, since usually only multistorey apartment complexes are unionised building sites (approximately one quarter of full-time equivalent employment in the residential building construction industry is in higher-density housing)...

They use estimates from the ABS for that information. It goes on—

... and of those only some work on multistorey developments.


One of the key things the national Productivity Commission identified as the solution to productivity in the construction industry is streamlining the operation of the entire planning system, something the Productivity Commission previously identified as a priority reform. It specifically references Queensland state facilitated development as a welcome development and the type of body designed to address some of the coordination and time frame issues that the Productivity Commission had identified in this review. This is the same state facilitated development that the Deputy Premier and Minister for Planning just railed against in question time today. It also references QBuild's Modern Methods of Construction program, with its previous aim under our government to see 600 modular homes built, something the LNP has said previously was too much. So, there is certainly plenty there for the new Productivity Commission to explore.

How independent will this review be? I am not sure what the LNP think 'independent' means, but it is clear the Queensland Productivity Commission will have no real independence.

The explanatory notes go into more detail on the role of the proposed commission: undertaking inquiries into economic and social issues, regulatory matters or legislation, as directed by the minister; undertake research into all of the above—again, as directed or approved by the minister; administer, monitor and review regulatory matters, as directed by the minister; and provide advice to the minister, as requested. Even when there is a reference to the commission undertaking self-initiated research, it must first seek the minister's approval, the minister may approve, amend or refuse the research proposal, and the only way the public will ever see this research, even if it is allowed to happen, is if the minister approves its publication. The minister is also able to get into the weeds and direct the type of public consultation the commission is able to undertake in its work.

So, the opposition rightly has grave concerns about the commission's ability to be independent, accountable and transparent. The work of the commission will literally be at the behest of one minister, and that is deeply concerning. The LNP government cannot create this commission as its own LNP think tank. They already have the Institute of Public Affairs and Sky News for that.

I support the shadow treasurer's amendments which are reasonable and which would greatly assist the Queensland Productivity Commission to actually be considered a credible institution in our state. Without the ability of the commission to undertake self-directed, independent research, all we will have is a lame-duck commission, and that is concerning, not only for them and for their ongoing reputation and work, but if this bill is allowed to proceed as written, it could be the beginning of the end for other independent government entities becoming the plaything of this LNP government.

 **Mrs YOUNG** (Redlands—LNP) (3.25 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024, a bill that not only is crucial for our state's prosperity but also one that will deliver real benefits to the people of Redlands. This bill delivers on the Crisafulli government's pledge to restore the Queensland Productivity Commission, a commitment we made to Queenslanders. For my community in Redlands, this bill is about ensuring every dollar of taxpayers' money works harder and goes further. It is about creating opportunities for local businesses to grow, cutting red tape that holds them back and driving smarter investment in the infrastructure and services our growing community needs. Productivity matters to Redlands.

Productivity might sound like an abstract concept, but for Redlanders, it directly impacts their everyday lives. When productivity is strong, our local businesses thrive, jobs are plentiful, wages rise and the cost of living falls. Under the previous government productivity stagnated. The Queensland Productivity Commission itself reported that productivity declined under Labor since 2015. What did Labor do in response? They abolished the commission, silencing the independent body that was meant to drive smarter and more efficient policy. They chose to hide critical economic analysis within government agencies behind closed doors and out of public view. That was a betrayal of transparency and a failure for communities like mine in Redlands.



The re-established Queensland Productivity Commission will be an independent statutory body with a clear mission: to tackle the toughest economic, social and regulatory challenges we face and provide transparent, evidence-based solutions. This is not just about boardrooms in Brisbane; it is about Redlands businesses, Redlands workers and Redlands families. As someone who has spent over a decade as a small business owner in Redlands, I know firsthand how excessive regulation and bureaucracy can strangle a business's ability to grow. This bill empowers the commission to link the charge in removing unnecessary red tape, allowing our local businesses to focus on what they do best: creating jobs and driving our local economy.

I also know the potential that is unlocked when government steps out of the way and allows businesses to do what they do best: create jobs and drive prosperity. When red tape is reduced, businesses can reinvest in their staff, expand their services and innovate to stay competitive. That means Redlands businesses—our tourism operators, our retail stores, our family owned trades—will have the freedom to grow and employ more locals and deliver better services to our community. This is not just about making life easier for business owners, it is about ensuring economic opportunity for every Redlander. When our local businesses succeed, our entire community benefits—more jobs, higher wages, stronger consumer confidence. It all starts with ensuring that business owners are not buried under government imposed barriers to success.


I am proud that the Crisafulli government is delivering a solution that business leaders across Redlands strongly support. In my discussions with Dan Golin, the President of the Southern Moreton Bay Islands Chamber of Commerce and a local business owner in the tourism and building industry, he emphasised that productivity will be crucial in sustaining the growth of the southern Moreton Bay Islands. They have experienced massive growth since COVID there. He made it clear that to support with expansion, we must cut through inefficiencies and deliver the vital infrastructure that the islands have been missing for the past decade.

In fact, the commission's first major inquiry will focus on productivity in the building and construction industry. This is vital for the Redlands. We are a growing community, but too many locals struggle to find affordable housing and too many builders face rising costs and crippling delays due to red tape and inefficiency. With an independent commission driving reforms in the construction sector, we can accelerate housing projects, reduce building costs and create more local jobs. That means more homes for Redlands families and more opportunities for Redlands tradespeople. As the past president of the Redlands Coast Chamber of Commerce, I have worked closely with local trades and construction professionals. I have seen how slow approvals and unpredictable regulatory changes impact their ability to quote projects, meet deadlines and stay in business. These are hardworking men and women who simply want the government to get out of their way so they can do their jobs, build more homes and provide for their families. This bill steps towards ensuring that happens. It is about restoring confidence to an industry that is essential for Queensland's future.

This bill is not just about today; it is also about tomorrow. The Queensland Productivity Commission will also produce an intergenerational equity report to help ensure our policies support prosperity, not only for us but also for future generations. For Redlands, this means smarter planning for population growth, better infrastructure investment and a focus on sustainable industries that protect our natural environment while growing our economy. It means ensuring my children and every child growing up in Redlands can build for their future, with opportunities for secure jobs and affordable homes. Too often I hear from young families who worry that their children will have to move away to find work or afford a home. That is not the future I want for Redlands. We need to create a community where opportunity grows alongside our population—a community where local businesses can provide long-term employment, a community where people of all ages, from apprentices to retirees, can thrive. This is why the Queensland Productivity Commission is so important. It will help to ensure the decisions we make today lead to a better tomorrow for Redlands and for all of Queensland.

Today the LNP is restoring the very institution Labor once championed because we believe Queenslanders deserve honest, evidence-based solutions. In conclusion, this bill represents the kind of leadership Queensland needs and Redlands deserves—leadership that listens, that acts and that delivers. It will drive growth, cut red tape and ensure we build the homes, roads and public services our growing Redlands community needs. It will restore transparency and accountability to policymaking, because Queenslanders deserve to know how their money is being spent and how their government plans to make their lives better. It will secure a stronger future for our children by ensuring we build a Queensland that is more productive, more prosperous and more prepared for the challenges ahead. I am proud to support this bill on behalf of the people of Redlands. I commend the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 to the House.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Marr): Members, there was a lot of chatter coming from the right while their own member of parliament was speaking. It is difficult to hear from across the chamber so if members need to have long conversations please take them outside.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (3.33 pm): If you were to look up in the dictionary the term 'lightweight', you would probably find the Crisafulli government's Productivity Commission Bill.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** That landed! Those opposite have foisted their right-wing plan for Queensland on Queenslanders. They trumpeted left, right and centre the importance of an independent productivity commission. They promised us a tiger and all we got with this bill was a tabby. They promised us a dragon and we have a skink. They promised an Alsatian and what we have is a Chihuahua of a bill. That is the fact of the matter. It is another broken promise from a government that had no intention of keeping their promises once they were elected. They had a plan to get elected; they have no plan to run Queensland. We have seen many broken promises, particularly in the health area, despite assurances from the Premier. We have seen cuts in terms of the workforce attraction incentive scheme, transfer initiative nurse funding and nurse-led clinics. We have seen a lot of broken promises.

**Mr POWELL:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance to the long title of the bill.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Marr): I have taken advice. You are pushing outside relevance, so be very careful continuing on.

**Mr BAILEY:** The point I am making here is that this is not the only promise this government has broken, but I will come back to the bill. This little lamb of a bill—that is what they are serving up here—is not very tender. You only have to look at part 4 of the bill to see that the commission is not independent. The Treasurer has total control over this so-called productivity commission. In fact, it will fail in its intentions because it does not have independence. We have a situation where a range of groups that would ordinarily be incredibly supportive of the conservative side of politics in Australia and in this state—the Australian Institute for Progress, hardly red-ragging socialists; Canegrowers; and the Business Chamber Queensland—have all been very pointed in their criticism of this bill. This bill is not being attacked by just the Labor Party; people who are usually from the conservative ranks of this state have attacked the government for this embarrassing bill. That is the fact of the matter. You only have to look at the committee proceedings to see that. Without that independence, what we will end up getting here is an LNP think tank because it is under the total control of the Treasurer, the member for Toowoomba South. It will not be able to do anything without his approval and without his support. It will be so easily manipulated.

Let's look at the federal model. The federal model has been out there for decades in terms of the Productivity Commission. I will be very frank: I do not agree with everything the federal Productivity Commission comes out with but they have full range. They come up with a whole range of ideas and policies and the government picks and chooses. Some they take; some they do not. Some they think are realistic; some they do not. But they serve a role because they have independence. This new government, which should have new ideas, is too scared to have an independent productivity commission so it has made it subservient to the treasurer of the day. I suspect it will become something that is manipulated by the Treasurer, and thereby the Premier, and it will become code for the cuts agenda that we know this government is so committed to. I mentioned some of those before. I will not go back there, Madam Deputy Speaker, in light of your guidance. It will become something manipulated by the government as code for cuts and code for control. It will give them cover to cut, sack and sell, which we know is the natural proclivity of the LNP in Queensland.

What also concerns me is the prospect that we will see a whole lot of LNP mates being stacked into this productivity commission. We have seen a whole range of appointments for mates by this government—whether it is the Under Treasurer, certain directors-general or the games panel. We have had a whole lot of LNP donors put on the games panel. We have seen jobs given to Michael Hart, Jeff Seeney and Andrew Cripps. It is a pretty long list. I suspect that this tame cat of an agency will be easily manipulated and will do whatever the government wants them to do on the day. It is vastly different to the federal model.

This is a weak bill by a weak government in their early days. Just think about that for a second. This is a new government that should have the vigour of a new government with new ideas. Whether I agree with them or not, I expect a new government to have the vigour of a new government, yet we have this tepid little lamb of a bill.

It will be interesting to see how it proceeds. I can assure honourable members this opposition will be following the progress of this so-called Productivity Commission very closely. We do wonder about the tactics of the new government when they put up the member for Buderim to speak in the Productivity Commission debate. I notice he did not go near the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line. I make the point to the chamber that you cannot have productivity if you do not have a project. That is what the government is lining up to do with the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line: scrap it altogether despite the fact that it is fully funded by both the current federal government and the current state government. You cannot have productivity if you have cut the program altogether. I will stand by the record of infrastructure investment in this state by the previous government any day of the week. Let's see how this current government goes in terms of keeping up with the demands of a growing population here in Queensland.


It is interesting to hear some of the speakers in this debate. It is kind of like the auditions have started for the vacancies in the cabinet once the first reshuffle comes and the inevitable two or three ministers get punted. There are a range of prepared speeches—

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Marr): Members to my right, please come to order.

**Mr BAILEY:** We saw a range of weak ministers flailing in question time today and you could see the backbenchers trying to angle in there. I will give them a little tip: if they just stick to that pre-prepared speech it will not do them much good, especially when they are so poorly drafted by an obviously inexperienced staff. It will be interesting to see those angling on the backbench because they know that with such weak ministers performing so poorly there will be opportunities for them well before the end of this term and probably well before halfway through this term, dare I say it.

While we support a Productivity Commission, we as the opposition believe that it should be an independent group. It should have the vigour and the potency of an independent productivity commission. That provides some difficulties for governments sometimes; you do not always agree with what they say. Any government that has gumption and courage will deal with that at the time. This government clearly does not have that ability this early in its first term. It is pretty sad. We will move amendments to improve this bill to actually give it some integrity and I will be supporting those amendments. If those opposite had any gumption, they would support those amendments too because, without them, this is but a little lamb of a bill.

 **Mrs POOLE** (Mundingburra—LNP) (3.42 pm): I rise to speak on behalf of the Mundingburra electorate on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. Sadly, I have a lack of animal references in my speech. I do apologise straight up.

Productivity is one of the key measures of an effective economy. Productivity leads to growth; it leads to higher wages, better living standards and an overall improved quality of life. This government, the Crisafulli government, values productivity and so this bill is set to reinstate a new and improved Queensland Productivity Commission.

The Queensland Productivity Commission is not a new concept; I think we have established that today. In fact, it was originally introduced by Labor in 2015. The now Leader of the Opposition said at the time that—

... the Queensland Productivity Commission will provide a vital service for the government and the state.

He also said—

It reflects this government's commitment to excellence in policymaking and its commitment to both public consultation and expert advice.

The member for Bancroft said—

We have to keep looking for productivity gains and see where they can be made, and that is why the Queensland Productivity Commission will be so important.

The former commission reviewed important matters such as electricity prices and service delivery in remote Indigenous communities. These inquiries provided recommendations from the public on these issues that after 10 years of a Labor government still remain issues. Clearly, these insights were not valued by the former Labor government as the member for Woodridge shut it down. However, our government, the Crisafulli government, values the consultation of Queenslanders and so the commission will be reinstated.


The core function of the commission will be to undertake reviews of complex economic, social and regulatory issues and provide advice and recommendations to the government. A working

Productivity Commission will allow us to achieve what we set out to do and what Queenslanders voted for. It will provide the government with recommendations from the public on the youth crime crisis, the health crisis, the housing crisis, the cost-of-living crisis and the position that the former Labor government has left our state in. The findings will provide insight to policy that puts downward pressure on prices, increases wages and raises profits for business and industry. It will allow our government to make strategic investment in training to address Queensland's critical skilled worker shortage. We will seek opportunities for productivity gains through efficient planning frameworks, for example, unlocking land and skilled labour to help address the housing crisis.

Sadly, Queensland has overtaken Victoria as the least productive state in the delivery of new projects. In Queensland it is expected to take 4½ years to construct a high-rise building in comparison to three years in Victoria. In a housing crisis this time is a luxury that we cannot afford. That is why the first order of business for the Productivity Commission will be a review of the Queensland building industry. Because we value the opinions of those in the industry we want to ensure that they are properly consulted so that their expert opinions provide insight to the policy.

This commission will be independent from the government and this independence will be enshrined in the bill. The resulting findings and recommendations provided to government will be independent. Those opposite will say that this is not the case, that this commission will give the Treasurer additional powers. However, that was actually the objective of their government, the former Labor government, when they abolished the Productivity Commission: for the work to continue 'inside government agencies'. This commission will be completely independent, ensuring transparency and accountability. We are a consultative government, one that listens to the needs of Queenslanders and acts accordingly. This commission will allow us to do that.

Queensland needs its own Productivity Commission to secure our future prosperity. We must become the most productive state, not the least, to recover from the inefficiencies accumulated over the past decade under a former Labor government. We want efficiency in industry, an increase in real wages and an overall improved quality of life for all Queenslanders. That is why this bill is so important and why the Queensland Productivity Commission will be reinstated. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.48 pm): Before I start speaking about the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill, I want to send out my best wishes to Mel McMahon, the member for Macalister, and take this opportunity to give a shout-out to two wonderful organisations in my electorate: the Salisbury Tzu Chi Brisbane Community Centre, the Buddhist compassion centre, which was open to receive people during our most recent weather event; and the Construction Training Centre in Salisbury which provided parking for people at Rocklea. I also acknowledge first responders such as Energex and Ergon who have been working around the clock to restore power to my community.

I turn now to the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. I support the amendments that are going to be moved by the shadow treasurer during consideration in detail. I often wonder who listens to the House when bills are introduced. Whilst I do have some appreciation and understanding that speeches often contain political spin, I am not convinced that the Treasurer of the state should be so flippant with his language when introducing legislation. The Treasurer, in his very first paragraph of the introduction to this bill, said—

The challenge for Queensland in the 21st century is clear. We cannot hope to maintain our high standard of living without turning around our declining productivity.


The question I had was: is Queensland productivity declining? I did an internet search, and guess what I found on the Queensland Treasury website? On 12 December 2023 it said that the Queensland economy grew 2.3 per cent in 2022-23 and that growth is forecast to strengthen to three per cent in both 2023-24 and 2024-25. My next question was: what is the economic forecast for Queensland? On 9 November the same site said that the answer was a strong position and that the 2024-25 state budget forecast Queensland's economic growth to strengthen to three per cent again in both 2023-24 and 2024-25 after rising 2.3 per cent in the previous year. My question to the Treasurer is: what has happened since 26 October 2024 for him to be talking down the Queensland economy?

I was further surprised while reading the *Weekend Australian* on 8 February to come across a headline that caught my eye: 'Treasurer accused of "juicing" the books'. It was a story about S&P Global, the ratings agency, accusing the Queensland government of exaggerating the state's position for political pointscoring. The global analyst said that the eye-opening figure was likely too high, with the agency still trying to establish the actual figure beyond the political narrative. The analyst went on to say that 'we don't think that Queensland will deliver' the figures that the government has outlined. Maybe that is what has happened since 26 October 2024: the Treasurer has juiced the figures.

After reading the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill, I have grave concerns about the independence and transparency of this Productivity Commission. Independence means being in control of what you do and how you do it. Transparency is the quality of being open to public scrutiny. It is very clear that the LNP government does not want the Productivity Commission to have either. The bill clearly shows that the government wants complete control of the Queensland Productivity Commission, with the Treasurer having to not only approve all research but also decide if the research can be published. There is also nothing in this bill that will require the reports produced by the Productivity Commission to be tabled in parliament. It appears to be a statutory body established to provide centralised policy and advice on any government business and inquire into any matter the LNP government may determine. This is not an organisation that is open to public scrutiny. There is no transparency in the bill. It is clearly being used by the LNP government, but the question is what for? My concern is that it will use the Queensland Productivity Commission to give it the answers it wants and then use that information to cut jobs and cut workers' rights, as the Newman government did in 2012.

This is not what the people of Queensland voted for. The Premier said that he would have an open and transparent government based on integrity. However, the actions by those opposite in rushing through bills without proper levels of consultation—like the mess they made of the youth crime bill—show that the last thing they want is transparency. And where was their integrity? The previous commission carried out inquiries like the 2019 inquiry into imprisonment and recidivism. This is what the Queensland Productivity Commission should be undertaking. The previous Labor government put in place laws that kept workers safe and ensured they had appropriate wages and conditions. Already we have seen some of those rights stripped away such as entry provisions for unions to come onsite to investigate safety issues, allowing employers to hide any issues before the union can get onsite to investigate.

I turn to some of the submissions that were made during consultation on the bill. The Business Chamber Queensland said that to achieve the objectives that bring about genuine reform it is critical that the Queensland Productivity Commission has independent insight into the Queensland business environment and economy to drive genuine independent research and advice. The Canegrowers Cairns Region on behalf of its members said that it would welcome the establishment of an independent review panel. The Institute of Public Affairs warned that the effectiveness of the Queensland Productivity Commission is potentially undermined by broad and vague drafting in the provisions outlining its main purpose and functions. This is what stakeholders want and expect from the Queensland Productivity Commission. Unfortunately, the Queensland Productivity Commission proposed by the LNP government is an organisation that is being established to provide centralised policy and legislative advice on any government business and to inquire into any matter the minister may determine and has very little to do with independence or evidence-based research.

 **Mr DILLON** (Gregory—LNP) (3.56 pm): Today I rise in strong support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024—a vital piece of legislation that will re-establish the Queensland Productivity Commission as the independent body dedicated to driving efficiency, innovation and sustainable economic growth across the great state of Queensland. The under-utilisation and eventual dissolution of the former productivity commission in 2021 left significant gaps in the former government's economic performance by restricting its ability to conduct independent research and analysis on persistent economic and productivity issues. In contrast, this bill confirms the Crisafulli LNP government's commitment to a fresh start for Queensland by reinstating a platform to deliver frank and fearless policy advice and recommendations to enhance the economic performance and productivity of Queensland. More importantly, however, this bill also ensures the interests of regional and remote Queensland will be represented, especially for regions like the Gregory electorate, which is a key contributor to our state's economy through the agricultural and coalmining sectors as well as the multitude of small businesses that support not only these industries but also the greater Gregory community.

**Mr Stevens** interjected.

**Mr DILLON:** I take that interjection: there are fantastic tourism initiatives growing under the great work of our new tourism minister here in the state of Queensland under a blueprint for the future of our economy. The Gregory electorate is home to some of Queensland's most hardworking, resourceful and resilient communities. Our agriculture, mining, tourism and small business vendors provide the backbone of our state's economy, ensuring Queensland remains a leader in agricultural production, resource exports and small business output. It is at this point that I seek the House's indulgence for a moment. A former speaker in this debate made some comments around farm animals that I am sure

the member for Gympie and Minister for Primary Industries smiled at, because there is no more productive sector in this state that is being held back by the former government's policies than the agriculture sector and the great work—

**Ms Boyd:** What have you changed?

**Mr DILLON:** We are changing; I take that interjection from the member for Pine Rivers. The great work that this government has done in its first four months to introduce a blueprint for the economy of Queensland's agriculture goes to the great work that this Productivity Commission will also be able to unlock.

I take also the comments from the member for Miller in his previous contribution to this debate around the sterling contribution of the member for Buderim, the Minister for Transport, and his contribution that lead to the greatest capacity constraint this state faces and that is the substandard transport network that we have inherited. I have referenced the desire of three ministers—I could reference the whole front bench—and the need for a productivity commission to unlock the growth capital and remove the capacity constraints we have inherited from the former government. These industries have long faced unnecessary regulatory burdens, economic uncertainty and a lack of targeted policy solutions. The re-establishment of the Productivity Commission by the Crisafulli LNP government will provide these critical sectors with independent, unbiased research and policy recommendations critical to their productivity and their profitability.

The Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 achieves three key objectives: firstly, the commission will be able to operate independently—irrespective of what those opposite are trying to make us believe—oblivious to political influence, to provide empirical evidence-based recommendations on a spectrum of economic and regulatory matters. With access to subject matter experts, industry leaders and policy specialists, we can trust that the commission's advice will be well informed and in the best interests of all Queenslanders, especially those in the Gregory electorate. Ensuring unbiased and empirically sound guidance will allow the commission to drive meaningful and sustainable reforms tailored to the unique and ever-evolving needs of Queensland's mining, agriculture and tourism sectors.

Secondly, one of the commission's primary roles will be to identify and propose solutions to unnecessary regulatory burdens that have hindered small business growth and innovation. Since the commission's absence we have seen increased concerns from many small businesses about bureaucratic inefficiency and overreach, especially in rural, remote and regional Queensland. By reinstating this critical function we will streamline regulations, attract additional investment to the state and create an environment where businesses, large and small, can thrive. Entrepreneurs and small business owners in Gregory and throughout Queensland will once again have a dedicated body working to reduce these unnecessary obstacles, allowing them to focus on future growth and development rather than the stagnation of navigating endless bureaucratic roadblocks.

Thirdly, the commission will be once again tasked with reviewing government programs and policies to ensure they deliver maximum value for Queenslanders. During its previous tenure, the commission successfully identified key areas for improvements in economic management, governance and strategies for upgrading service delivery. By reinstating this function we are taking a proactive step towards reducing waste, improving outcomes and ensuring that every dollar spent on infrastructure, transport and essential services in regional Queensland is utilised efficiently and effectively.

If one was thinking that some of this sounds somewhat vaguely familiar, they would be right. In 2015 the member for Bancroft said—

The Productivity Commission will provide independent economic and policy advice to the state with the goal of increasing productivity as well as improving the living standards of Queenslanders and driving economic growth.


We have heard it all before, yet when things have proven interesting for the CFMEU or their cousins—deals being done on the side—the commission was abolished; in the words of the former member for Redcliffe, its work to continue inside government agencies. As Queensland begins to recover from a sustained period of economic disruption we must seize every opportunity to strengthen our economy. The re-establishment of the Queensland Productivity Commission by the Crisafulli LNP government is a critical action that will enable Queensland to address the challenges of an evolving global economy, ensuring that we remain competitive in key industries such as mining and agriculture—two industries that are the lifeblood of Gregory. In an increasingly interconnected world, and an ever-evolving global economy, restoring the Queensland Productivity Commission will ensure that we remain at the forefront of economic stewardship and reform. Furthermore, this commission will once

again engage in meaningful consultation with industry and community stakeholders, ensuring that its recommendations reflect the needs and aspirations of all Queenslanders.

Unquestionable agency and transparency will be at the heart of its operations, ensuring accountability and rigour in every decision that it makes. By listening to a range of perspectives and considering a broad spectrum of expert advice, the commission will help shape policies that are fair, inclusive and forward thinking, especially for people in rural and regional Queensland. By the passing of this bill we are making a commitment to the long-term economic prosperity of Queensland and, in particular, our vital regional communities. We are sending a message to Australia and the world that Queensland is open for business, that we value evidence-based policy making and that we are dedicated to fostering a high-growth, high-productivity economy that benefits all.

The re-establishment of the Queensland Productivity Commission will become an undeniable influence within our broader economic strategy to consolidate the fresh start that the Crisafulli LNP government is already delivering for Queensland, providing valuable insights that will guide policy direction for years to come. We must recognise that economic success does not happen by accident; it requires sensible planning, strategic investment and the courage to embrace reform. By restoring the Queensland Productivity Commission that those opposite removed, we are ensuring that Queensland businesses, industries and communities, including in my electorate, have the support, tools and knowledge needed to prosper in an ever-changing world.

I urge all members of this place to support this bill. Let us take this decisive step together towards regaining the ability to drive a more efficient, dynamic and prosperous Queensland. The re-establishment of the Queensland Productivity Commission will ensure Queensland can navigate the challenges of an increasingly complex economic and regulatory landscape. On behalf of my electorate, the people of Gregory, I commend this bill to the House.

 **Hon. RM BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training) (4.06 pm): I rise in support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024, which is yet another example of the Crisafulli LNP government delivering a fresh start for Queenslanders in line with our plan at the election. In our 100-day plan we committed to introducing this very legislation to re-establish the Queensland Productivity Commission. The Queensland Productivity Commission was, of course, abolished by the member for Woodridge in 2021. What a legacy for the member for Woodridge. He took a valuable initiative that was providing, in the words of his boss, the member for Murrumba, 'a vital service for the government and the state' and cut it. He was out of his depth and out of ideas, but what else would Queenslanders expect from a Labor government that was characterised by crisis and chaos.

Under those opposite productivity went backwards, in particular in the building industry which was saddled with the CFMEU tax as part of a sweetheart deal with their union paymasters. This government has paused the Best Practice Industry Conditions: the CFMEU tax. Just as we promised, the first order of business for the Productivity Commission will be a regulatory review of the building industry. The restoration of the Queensland Productivity Commission will help to drive initiatives to ease cost-of-living pressures, deliver high-quality services for Queenslanders and build the housing infrastructure our state so desperately needs after a decade of neglect under Labor.

As a government we are working calmly and methodically to deliver a fresh start for Queensland, including by increasing capacity and productivity across the public sector, including our government owned corporations. Productivity is an important topic for all Queenslanders. As a government committed to treating Queensland taxpayer funds with respect, improved productivity will ensure value for taxpayers' money. Further, improved productivity through reducing red tape and regulatory burdens will reduce costs for both Queenslanders and Queensland businesses.

Regulatory reform is critical to improving productivity in this state. The statistics around the prevalence of red tape in Queensland are truly staggering. As of the last assessment—which was in 2022, so these numbers have inevitably only continued to worsen under Labor's chaos and crisis—Queensland had more than 120,000 regulatory restrictions in place. No wonder businesses could not get ahead under Labor. They were spending all their time and money trying to figure out what regulations they needed to comply with. Estimates from 2021, which have not been adjusted for inflation—which only make these figures even more shocking—reveal that Queensland businesses were saddled with compliance costs in the realm of \$3.5 billion to \$7 billion per year. More than that, it was estimated that the wider economic costs of burdensome regulations were likely to be at least double those figures under those opposite—at least double!

It is hardly surprising that Queensland Labor, which oversaw a litany of budget blowouts and black holes under the member for Woodridge, the member for Murrumba and the member for

Waterford, was responsible for such a proliferation in red tape, shackling Queensland productivity, workers and businesses. Those opposite have form in this space. Queenslanders will not soon forget the CFMEU tax, introduced by Labor, which cost Queensland taxpayers up to 30 per cent extra on major projects across the state because those opposite were beholden to their union puppetmasters. It is not as if Queensland Labor had the money to spare on those projects in the first instance, as we have now seen. Most projects were not properly funded or were subject to the most disgraceful cost blowouts in yet another example of the complete lack of regard the member for Woodridge and his Labor colleagues had for Queenslanders' hard-earned money.

Queenslanders will never forgive and never forget that those opposite saddled this state with an estimated \$218 billion in debt by 2028. Those opposite were willing to say and do anything to be re-elected, and thank goodness Queenslanders saw through that facade. In that vein, Queenslanders will not forget the project blowouts—not the total costs but the cost escalations—overseen by the member for Woodridge, the member for Murrumba, the member for Waterford and their Queensland Labor mates. By way of example: a \$11.6 billion cost blowout on Cross River Rail, a \$24.77 billion cost blowout on the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro scheme, a \$4.2 billion cost blowout on the Borumba Pumped Hydro project and a \$2.8 billion cost blowout on CopperString. That is only a small excerpt of the cost blowouts at the hands of Queensland Labor and just another example of their disgraceful disregard for the hard-earned money of each and every Queenslanders.

Conversely, Queenslanders have seen the Crisafulli LNP government take a calm and methodical approach as we begin the process of cleaning up Labor's mess: delivering budget improvements, respecting hard-earned taxpayer money and ensuring that funding is available for essential public services and infrastructure—unlike those opposite, who cannot govern themselves or Queensland. We are already seeing the benefits of this fresh approach, with renewed confidence from our international trade partners and investors who know that Queensland is now open for business and has at the helm a government that is dedicated to stability, transparency and growth that will ultimately deliver new opportunities for Queensland jobs and industries.

Given the significant impacts of the former Queensland Labor government's overzealous regulation, it should be no surprise that we have seen widespread support for the reintroduction of the Productivity Commissioner from businesses and organisations across the state. During the committee process, Canegrowers Cairns Region submitted—

The cane industry has been and continues to be impacted by red tape, regulations, and legislation. This has been extremely frustrating to sugar producers ...

The Australian Constructors Association welcomed the bill, noting—

As Queensland seeks to plan for its future and improve the living standards of Queenslanders, understanding the opportunities to improve productivity must be a priority. The re-establishment of the Commission, with the ability to conduct formal public inquiries, reviews and investigations into complex economic and social matters will contribute to this.

Organisations such as the Property Council of Australia and Master Builders Queensland also welcomed the restoration of the Productivity Commission. The Property Council of Australia observed—

As drafted, the legislation provides sufficient powers and structures for the QPC to undertake robust and independent analysis of economic and related issues impacting Queensland.


Master Builders Queensland indicated their support of the commission's focus on the building and construction industry, noting that it 'provides a solution to positively address our industry's decline in productivity for the benefit of Queensland's economy'.

I know that businesses and investors across Queensland will gain great confidence through this practical and sensible approach to regulation, removing unnecessary and burdensome regulations, refining existing regulations and improving regulation administration and enforcement. Restoring the Productivity Commission is not the end of our efforts to improve productivity in Queensland. We know that Queensland's economic and industry development is reliant on improvements to our state's productivity levels. Further, we know that increasing productivity will put downward pressure on prices for all Queenslanders, increase wages and raise profits for business and industry.

Within my portfolio, the Crisafulli LNP government is working to ensure strategic investments are made to support TAFE and other vocational training providers in order to address Queensland's critical skilled worker shortage as an early approach to improving Queensland's productivity. More generally under the Crisafulli LNP government Queensland is open for business, and the restoration of the Queensland Productivity Commission is another example of the practical initiatives that our government is championing to drive positive change in this state and fix the mess left by Queensland Labor. The passage of this bill is reflective of a government that is laser focused on delivering for all Queenslanders,



and the restoration of the Queensland Productivity Commission sees another LNP election commitment delivered. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (4.15 pm): As we have heard, the bill will re-establish the Queensland Productivity Commission, QPC, as an independent body to undertake inquiries into economic and social issues in Queensland as requested by the government. The QPC previously existed from 2015 to 2021 and I think it has been sorely missed. Both the previous and the new QPC are based on the Commonwealth Productivity Commission, whose predecessor was the Industries Assistance Commission that was established in 1974 to advise the government on tariff levels. It became dominated by economic rationalism and brought that approach when it transformed into the Productivity Commission in 1998, with a broader remit to look into all sorts of public policy issues. It still does so from an economic rationalist perspective but not a dogmatic one, supporting climate change action in a 1991 report and recommending creating the NDIS in a 2017 report.

We assume the QPC will bring a similar viewpoint to its work, which will be valuable to address important issues of public administration where a detailed analytical long-term review is needed and warranted. One identified issue is the development of our electricity sector, where information on what is possible or preferable seems to vary widely. Professional, expert and objective advice is needed in this and many other areas including why costs and timelines keep increasing, adding to our cost-of-living dilemmas.


The first review to be undertaken by the QPC will be into the building industry, which is vital, including the operation of the Best Practice Industry Conditions that have reportedly driven up business costs, making construction even more expensive. That was the very last thing we needed in an ongoing housing crisis. Recent figures released by the Commonwealth Productivity Commission show that just 1,223 social homes were built in the year to June 2024, which is less than half of what is needed annually to achieve the government's goal of 53,400 social and community homes by 2044. However, given that currently nearly 48,000 Queenslanders sit on the housing waitlist, the QPC will need to examine every aspect of how our building and construction industry can move forward. That would include the cost and supply of building materials, finance availability and the training and pipeline of trades to do the builds, as we need a quicker timeframe than 2044 to deliver homes for Queenslanders. No stone should be left unturned to ensure we can build the housing we need.

Another QPC review is needed into how to increase capacity within and capabilities of the Queensland public sector. As I have previously raised in this chamber, *Fault lines: an independent review into Australia's response to COVID-19* identified several issues, particularly the need for seeking broader advice, collaboration and transparency in the Public Service. The Coaldrake report identified a loss of capacity in the Public Service, compounded with a culture that was unwilling to consider unfashionable points of view and dominated by short-term political thinking. The report targeted creating a cultural shift to openness and a shared focus on identifying and dealing with the challenges Queensland faces. This requires deep thinking and analysis. I appreciate the work the Public Service Commission has already started.

Returning to the bill, stakeholders raised various issues about the exact detail of how the QPC will operate. Workplace lawyers submitted that the QPC may need greater powers to compel evidence, such as a coroner might have. In response, the department said that the QPC will have the power to compel evidence from state and local governments but not from the private sector as the Commonwealth Productivity Commission can do so, which to my knowledge has practically never happened.

The Queensland Council of Unions raised the fact that the power the bill gives to the minister to give QPC ministerial directions may allow the minister to dictate the contents of reports. However, Treasury advised that the clause, as drafted, would not allow directions on report content. A statement of reservation also raised that the QPC will not be independent; however, with it having mostly the same framework as the Commonwealth Productivity Commission it should act independently.

I want to thank the committee members and the secretariat for their work on the inquiry report and all who submitted and took the time to share their views. Moving into the future, it will be essential to have this agency working for the betterment of Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. SJ MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business) (4.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. Before I do, I echo the sentiment of members in the chamber who have expressed their well wishes to the member for Macalister. Like many members on this side of the chamber, I was not aware of the seriousness of her health issue until I read about it in the weekend's

press. I wish her all the very best and a very speedy recovery. Politics is a pretty tough game but, at the end of the day, I believe issues such as this transcend the political divide. I wish her all the very best.

In relation to the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill, as has been outlined by many speakers before me, this was an LNP commitment ahead of the 2024 state election. It was something that the then shadow treasurer, now proudly Treasurer, made sure was front and centre of his contribution in the lead-up to the campaign and now we have the bill before the House.

The core business of the commission, as has been pointed out, will be to conduct formal public reviews and investigations into complex economic and social issues, regulatory matters and legislation. This bill aligns with the red-tape reduction that Queensland's small and family businesses are dearly calling out for. I point out to the House that Queensland has one of the highest rates of new family and small businesses in the nation—almost half a million small and family businesses employ more than one million Queenslanders. I welcome our government's efforts to cut red tape and allow businesses to not merely survive but, indeed, thrive. The Minister for Housing has announced the red-tape reductions that his department is looking at achieving. The reductions are also there in the construction industry through the pausing of BPIC. It is long overdue.

The Queensland Productivity Commission was originally introduced, as has been noted by several speakers, by the then Labor government in 2015. In fact, it was in the first term of the Palaszczuk government. It was abolished, incredibly, by the member for Woodridge in 2021. When introduced by the then treasurer Curtis Pitt, it was said that the commission would be an independent economic advisory body with the broad objective of lifting productivity. Productivity is at the very heart of the bill and is in the title of the bill. The now Leader of the Opposition said the Queensland Productivity Commission 'will provide a vital service for the government and the state'. The former commission reviewed important matters such as electricity prices and service delivery in remote Indigenous communities and improved regulation—all very noble causes.

Productivity is not merely an academic concept. Weak productivity growth has significant consequences for Queensland's households, regardless of where they live in this vast and great state. The real-world effects of lower productivity are lower economic growth, lower wages, higher unemployment and higher inflation. A very damning point that was picked up was that, had productivity growth remained at its pre-2018 average over the subsequent period, it is estimated that Queensland's real per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher in the 2023-24 financial year. The construction and utilities industries in particular have experienced little or declining productivity growth over the past three decades. Who has been in power in this state for the majority of the last three decades? It was those who now find themselves in opposition. In fact, the economy has been growing by less than 17 per cent since 1994 compared to 64 per cent on the broader market sector, according to Treasury analysis of ABS datasets.

Cutting unnecessary red tape and regulation will reduce costs for Queensland businesses and consumers. I have told the House before that, just before the late, great former member for Chatsworth Bill Hewitt passed, he gave me a book of the acts of parliament for Queensland in 1974. It has a red leather cover, tatty no doubt, and is around 15 to 17 centimetres thick. It contains every single page of legislation for this state in 1974. I put it to you now that, if you were to put that 1974 volume, as tatty as that red leather cover is, at one end of the desk here and then printed out on the same GSM paper every piece of legislation and regulation confronting Queensland businesses today—whether they be small family businesses, SMEs or beyond—it would be greater than 15 to 17 centimetres. It would probably almost reach the end of this desk. That is a considerable length. That is the degree of complexity that has evolved over the years.

This Productivity Commission Bill is extremely important for the whole state of Queensland. I cannot believe that, back in 2021, the member for Woodridge came into this House and actually got rid of it. It almost defies belief. The reality is this: the commission will be headed by a full-time productivity commissioner, appointed by the Governor in Council. Depending on the commissioner's work program, up to three other full-time or part-time commissioners may be appointed.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I will take the interjection from the member for Lytton because I would like it noted on the record that the member for Lytton is probably very arguably one of the least qualified people in this chamber to actually utter something like that. I am just waiting for her to take offence. Here we go.

**Ms PEASE:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and I ask the member to withdraw.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I withdraw. The reality is: we need to make sure—

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Marr): Member for Chatsworth, take a seat for a moment. Member for Lytton, can you please keep it down. You are encouraging the behaviour and then you are asking for what they are saying to be withdrawn. If you do not want the response, please do not interject.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your protection. I really do appreciate it. I do appreciate your protection very much. One thing is for sure: some people lack intelligence but some of us at least have a sense of humour.

The reality is that this bill is long overdue. There are a couple of quotes that are worth memorising—in fact, in terms of rebuttal Labor have claimed that this commission would be accountable to no-one except the LNP Treasurer of Queensland, who would assume new powers through the Productivity Commission to enquire into any aspect of Queensland life. Let me point out clearly for those members opposite—a simple crash course in common sense—that proposed section 38(3) cannot be any clearer. It says that any direction given by the Treasurer ‘can not be about the content of any advice or recommendation given by the commission’. For the benefit again of those opposite, that is stated in proposed section 38(3).

The question is simply this: do we as a state need to drive productivity? The simple one-word answer is a resounding yes. Yes, we do. We now have in this state a situation where small and family businesses in particular and to a large degree have to pay about \$50,000 in compliance costs—nearly the equivalent of a full-time bookkeeper—to simply look after the red tape that is burdening and in fact drowning many small and family businesses in this state.


One of the interesting things to do—I know that everyone does it—is peruse inaugural speeches of members to see their backgrounds and whether they have any business experience. Every time a new member comes into this chamber I make a note to check their small and family business experience. We now know why, due to the efforts of people like the member for Greenslopes and the member of Lytton, amongst many others, their complete—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Marr): Members to my left will cease interjecting.

**Ms PEASE:** I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I take personal offence at the member for Chatsworth’s comments and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I withdraw. Madam Deputy Speaker, I again thank you for your ongoing protection. It is very much noted. It is interesting to note when you look at the CVs of those opposite that they lack business acumen. This is why we need the Productivity Commission reintroduced.

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (4.31 pm): It is an interesting experience to follow the member for Chatsworth. I remind the House that the member for Chatsworth was the LNP’s shadow transport minister. It was great to listen to him explain during his turgid lecture what productivity means and how to save money, but he was the one who called 50-cent public transport fares a con. I note for the benefit of the House that he has now done an almighty backflip and apparently now 50-cent public transport fares were their idea. When it comes to productivity in the LNP, it is all about politics and not productivity—exactly like this bill.

I rise to speak on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill, which establishes the Queensland Productivity Commission as a statutory body to conduct inquiries, reviews and research into economic, social and regulatory matters. Its stated aim is to improve productivity and economic performance in Queensland, but this is not the independent body that the LNP promised Queenslanders. It is more like an LNP think tank designed to serve the agenda of the LNP, not the people of Queensland.

The LNP claim that this bill mirrors the Australian Productivity Commission, yet that body can commence its own research without Treasurer approval. Under this legislation, the Queensland Productivity Commission’s proposed research for publication must be approved by the Treasurer, who can refuse or amend the proposals without limit and block publication. This commission answers only to the Treasurer, not Queenslanders. The LNP do not want independence; they just want a body that echoes their priorities, providing excuses to cut jobs and workers’ conditions.

The government’s opposition to transparency is clear. They failed to release cabinet documents within the 30-day review timeframe. When they were pressed on this by the media, their questions were ignored. The Treasurer cites the independent economic modelling from Treasury to pause BPIC yet

refuses to release this, despite a right-to-information request. If Treasury can already conduct such modelling, why create a commission with the same function and no greater independence? It still cannot commence public research without the Treasurer's approval. It is not more accountability; it is a move away from accountability.

The LNP's history fuels these concerns. We obviously remember that under Campbell Newman 40,000 Queenslanders lost their jobs under the guise of efficiency. Queenslanders fear that this bill is another tool for cuts. The LNP's productivity prioritises profits over people, not better wages or services, and when the Treasurer talks productivity he wastes parliament's time duplicating Treasury's role with less transparency.


Contrast this with Labor's record. We eased cost-of-living pressures on Queenslanders with our 50-cent public transport fares—something that the LNP's former shadow transport minister called a con. We halved Airtrain fares to support those working at the airport. As I said before, the LNP have now claimed credit for our 50-cent public transport fares initiative, despite neglecting commuters historically. We cannot forget that in 1988 the Borbidge LNP government locked Queensland into the unfair Airtrain deal, creating a private monopoly until 2036. As we know, Airtrain fares doubled under the current LNP government, with the current transport minister refusing to extend the 50 per cent discount that Labor had put in.

In health care, the LNP's priorities raise concerns amongst the community that Queenslanders' health could suffer due to the drive for efficiency. The health minister cancelled a contract for an eight-bed perinatal mental health unit in Townsville which was part of Labor's \$1.6 billion mental health plan. This vital service for expectant mothers—one in five of whom face depression or anxiety within 24 months of childbirth—is now delayed, with no clear timeframe. This is creating anxiety in the community under the guise of efficiency.

Privacy concerns also loom. The bill requires agencies to provide personal information to the commission without consent. The Law Society warns that the broad definition of 'related information' risks privacy breaches. The government must allow entities to refuse such requests when they unnecessarily infringe on privacy.

This bill is more about control than productivity. Queenslanders have seen the LNP's playbook. Productivity can be used to justify job cuts and sell-offs. Efficiency without independence from the LNP political party means that more working people pay the price.

What we need is genuine productivity—lifting wages, strengthening services and supporting growth—not an LNP think tank or more austerity. That is why I strongly support the shadow treasurer's foreshadowed amendments to this bill. The LNP promised an independent productivity commission, but this legislation delivers the opposite. The amendments remove the Treasurer's ability to interfere with the commission's self-initiated research, allowing it to commence and publish findings without approval. This is what independence demands. A government as opposed to transparency as the LNP will never allow truly independent findings to surface. The amendments also ensure that if the Treasurer issues written directions to the commission Queenslanders know exactly what he has instructed before research begins. Transparency and accountability must prevail. Without these changes, the commission remains a puppet of the Treasurer, not a servant of the people. The LNP must honour its election promise.

 **Hon. AJ STOKER** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (4.37 pm): If Queenslanders feel like their dollar does not go anywhere near as far as it once did, that is because they are right. Ever since 2019, the purchasing power of Queenslanders went backward by two per cent while the rest of the OECD countries had their purchasing power increased by 7.7 per cent. That is no surprise, because productivity in Queensland fell to the worst in the nation—the product of a decade of failing to create an environment that is worth investing in. To make matters worse, that is in the context of Australia's national productivity falling behind.

If this had been the pattern since 2019, people might be wondering the steps that Labor took to deal with it. It is a fair question. You might hope that they would cut regulation, that they would make construction more efficient, that they would clear regulatory barriers to opening up land for housing or that they would speed up the process for getting projects off the ground. I am sorry to say that they did not do any of those things. Instead, they abolished the independent productivity commission in 2021. Clearly, they were not looking for help from the experts to improve Queensland's productivity.

I do not pretend that that is the sole cause of Queensland's productivity plummet, but I can tell members that it sure did not help. They ran down this state's energy assets to the point that Callide C blew up, taking baseload energy offline and causing energy bills to rise. They have added layer upon


layer of regulation for every reason, and at times for no reason, to the point where people need a permit to get a bucket of water out of the ocean in this state, and they have Buckley's chance of getting permission to clear woody weeds off their property.

They have spent like drunken sailors, squandering record resource royalties with next to nothing to show for it and baking in debt of \$218 billion by 2028. Labor's poor financial discipline drove inflation. It made everything right down to the groceries in your trolley more expensive. It left every man, woman and child in Queensland with more than \$39,000 of Labor debt per head with no plan to repay it. Members might be wondering how that level of debt compares to other places. Well, it represents the steepest rise in per capita debt in the nation. It means that by the end of Labor's last budget cycle we will have the highest per capita debt in the nation, worse even than the basket case economically that is Victoria under Labor.

The LNP government has been left with a dreadful economic mess, such a mess that Standard & Poor's have downgraded Queensland's outlook—but we have a plan to turn it around. It will take time but it can be done. The key to doing so while maintaining the services on which Queenslanders rely and without raising their taxes is to improve the productivity of this state. That is why I am so passionate about delivering our independent Productivity Commission to make ever-improving economic conditions part of the DNA of this state.

It is not for any ideological reason. It is because it makes your dollar go further. It attracts investment to this state, bringing with it rewarding job opportunities and chances for businesses of all sizes to grow. It keeps a lid on inflation, which at present acts like an extra tax on you. In doing so, it makes ordinary Queenslanders more prosperous. You might be thinking: what does that even look like on the ground? What do we mean when we say 'productivity'? It looks like fewer government barriers to getting projects off the ground. It looks like government agencies that talk to one another so you do not have to duplicate forms or make multiple applications to get a single thing done. It looks like more efficiently using taxpayer dollars by delivering projects on time and on budget.

It means being flexible and practical with an eye to making Queensland an attractive place to do business. It means using data wisely to improve the customer experience, simplifying licensing systems, reducing the fees that it takes to get results out of government, and ensuring our government owned corporations run like clockwork and operate in a manner that is responsive to the needs of Queensland's customers. It means investing in the infrastructure that supports economic growth so that arterial roads, bridges and ports facilitate exports rather than being bottlenecks. I could keep going but, perhaps better, we will soon have a Productivity Commission with which we can work continuously to reduce the cost of living and attract even more opportunity to this fine state.

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (4.43 pm): I rise to speak on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. I thank the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee, led by the member for Coomera, and I thank the opposition members for Bancroft, Bundamba and Sandgate for their statement of reservation because that statement goes right to the heart of our concerns about this bill. If ever there was an example of how the LNP likes to dupe Queenslanders with words, if ever there was an example of how the LNP will do everything they can to make sure they do not get independent or expert advice so they do not have to listen to experts and they do not even want to talk about anything that might deviate from their agenda and cause problems for one of them—if ever there was an example, this is yet another one.

You could ask any Queenslander whether they thought the idea of a Productivity Commission is a good idea. We have certainly made it clear that we support the general principles of a Productivity Commission. You could not find a person—whether it is someone at the shops, a next-door neighbour or someone at a backyard barbecue—who would disagree that productivity is important and that a Productivity Commission that purports to do the things that the government talks about is important. We all want to be productive. We do not want to see unwanted effort or bureaucracy. We want to get rid of unnecessary red tape. Particularly in these straightened times, when so many people are doing it tough, people want extra assurance that the government is doing every single thing it can to be as effective and as productive as possible. The government is examining ways for this to be the case. In the Treasurer's second reading speech, he said—

By improving state regulation, there is a chance to improve public sector productivity and potentially free up resources to support the delivery of public services.

Of course this is what everybody wants. If you listen to some of the government members, you will hear so many motherhood statements. I think there has probably been a bit of ChatGPT going on this week with 'Can you write me a speech on what productivity means?' We have the member for

Redlands saying, 'In the Redlands productivity matters. It is just going to be an amazing world where the sun shines every day.' We have the member for Mundingburra saying, 'There is going to be an increased quality of life.' All the phrases they are using are all perfect—things that we can all aspire to. No-one could argue with them. They are principles every Queenslander wants to hear.

This is just the sort of rhetoric that the LNP uses to dupe Queenslanders. Like so many of their election commitments, so many of their policies, the devil is in the detail. It would be very hard to find anyone who thinks it is okay to set up a body called the Productivity Commission that has no independence, no accountability and no transparency. If I told the people at the shops, if I told the people at the community centre, if I told my next-door neighbours, if I said to someone at a backyard barbecue that the Productivity Commission the government is talking about setting up can only give advice if the minister agrees with it, Queenslanders have never heard anything about this. It cannot publish a report unless the minister says it is okay. It has no line of reporting or accountability to parliament. It must give the minister notice if it even wants to undertake research and the minister can even amend research. The legislation allows the minister to direct the commission to administer regulations and it cannot scrutinise anything unless the Treasurer says it is okay. As the statement of reservation says—

... there is nothing in the Bill to effectively establish independent action by the Commission, such as the ability to publish directions from the Treasurer.

It is only accountable to the LNP Treasurer of Queensland. As the shadow treasurer said in her speech, if there is an outcome that the Treasurer wants then he will get it.

Plenty of stakeholders submitting to the committee—groups like the Canegrowers association, the Australian Institute for Progress, Business Chamber Queensland, even the IPA, who, let's face it, are normally very much LNP friends—all strongly supported the establishment of a Productivity Commission. In fact, Heidi Cooper, from the Business Chamber, did an excellent interview with Steve Austin this morning with her, as usual, passionate advocacy for small businesses in Queensland.

All of those groups also spoke of the absolute need for the independence of the Productivity Commission. You have not heard about that from anybody. The Treasurer talked about all the support stakeholders were giving—he wanted to list them all and say all the stakeholders supported the idea—but he never even mentioned the fact that they are really concerned about the lack of independence. All over Australia we have other productivity commissions that specifically articulate independence. For example, the circular on the South Australian Productivity Commission states—

In order to support the independence of the Commission, the Premier will not direct the Commission regarding the conduct of its work except through written directions, which may be published by the Commission.

Our 2015 act explicitly stated that the commission was required to perform its functions with 'independence, rigour, responsiveness, transparency, equity and efficiency' and that these must not just be ideals; they must be enshrined in legislation.

The Commonwealth Productivity Commission, which was established under a Labor government, operates with full autonomy to initiate and publish its own research. That is why our amendments go specifically to these principles. If the government does not support these amendments, these principles of independence, transparency and accountability, then I would like to know why. If they do not support them, I hope they are going to clearly articulate that so we can explain to Queenslanders at community centres and backyard barbecues, to our neighbours and to people down at the shops.

If this was the only example of the government obliterating any opportunity to get independent or expert advice and using rhetoric, slick messaging and slogans for incredibly important policy matters that sound like they are going to address Queensland needs without providing details, that would be bad enough, but since this bill was introduced we have come to see that this approach is part of the standard LNP operating manual. What else have they done to stifle independent and expert advice? How about banning the discussion of abortion laws? This was terrible in itself, but it set the precedent for this parliament to ban debate on any other issue the Premier might find uncomfortable. They dismantled the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry, an independent committee that was a conduit for First Nations people across Queensland to share their experiences, but when it was first introduced in legislation they all praised it. The youth justice Adult Crime, Adult Time principle completely ignored experts who begged them to take their independent advice. They ignored them.


**Mr BOOTHMAN:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I do not believe this has anything to do with the long title of the bill.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Marr): I will just take some advice. I am going to let the member for Bulimba continue. You are talking about referring back to policy, but please remain relevant.

**Ms FARMER:** Thank you for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. With regard to the Making Queensland Safer Bill, they completely ignored the experts—and what a train wreck that has been! We talked about IMAC, the independent committee set up to advise the minister. It was something that Voice for Victims asked for. It was made up of victims with no political affiliation and with a variety of experiences who could independently advise government. What did this government do? They did not like it. They do not like independence; they only want people who will agree with their views. IMAC had the cheek to disagree with the Making Queensland Safer Bill.

It is very clear what this bill will be saying to Queenslanders today, let alone after the last five months of travesties, if those opposite do not accept our amendments. How could anyone not support the principles of independence, accountability and transparency? If they do not support our amendments it will be very clear to Queenslanders that they do not want to know. If you are a stakeholder, if you are an employee, and you dare to disagree with this government, your fate will be very clear.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Marr): I would like to remind all members on both sides of the House that if you are not in your seat you cannot comment across the room.

 **Mrs KIRKLAND** (Rockhampton—LNP) (4.53 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024. First established in 2015 by the former Labor government, the Productivity Commission had five referrals in its initial year, providing valuable insights. Commission referrals then slowed to less than two each year until 2021, when it was cut by Labor. The former treasurer said that the former commission was being abolished so that its work, which was once independent and rigorous, could continue inside government agencies. It is the very independence of the commission, accompanied by rigour, responsiveness, openness and effectiveness, that guides the commission. Under current arrangements, this work happens behind closed doors within government departments without an open, transparent process informed by public consultation—consultation that should come from the communities and industries that are impacted by the legislated regulations set by this government. In its submission on the QPC Bill, the Property Council of Australia stated—

... engagement with relevant stakeholders, industries and their representatives will be critical in ensuring economic and social issues impacting Queenslanders are well understood.

Good stewardship of the Queensland taxpayer dollar is expected, and Queenslanders deserve to have transparency on how that is being managed. In performing its functions, the bill states that the commission should have particular regard to productivity, economic growth and improving living standards in Queensland. Lower productivity equals lower economic growth, lower wages, higher unemployment and higher inflation. The re-established commission will help lift Queensland's productivity growth by identifying areas for improvement to policy and regulatory settings to support business activity and income growth. It will help provide improved government service and deliver on the government's housing and infrastructure priorities.

It is the Productivity Commission's role to report on ways to increase productivity as a monitor to bring accountability and ensure return on investment. Small and medium enterprises across this great state will tell you that they regularly do external reviews, mystery shoppers and independent audits because, as the saying goes, you cannot read the label from inside the jar. This was said to me in recent conversations around the Productivity Commission with the chair of the Capricornia Chamber of Commerce. What does reinstatement of the Productivity Commission mean for communities like Rockhampton and Gracemere? I would like to read a letter sent to me by a local businessman working within the construction industry. The letter states—

I am writing on behalf of my business and the broader Central Queensland business community to urge your support for reinstating the Queensland Productivity Commission.

As a local business, we see firsthand how excessive red tape, regulatory delays, and rising compliance costs are crippling productivity and slowing economic growth. The QPC played a vital role in identifying inefficiencies, cutting unnecessary regulation, and ensuring businesses could thrive, its abolition has left a dangerous gap in independent oversight.

Without the QPC, businesses are facing:

Excessive regulatory burdens that cost time and money without improving safety or environmental outcomes.

Delays in project approvals, especially for infrastructure and development, costing Queensland billions in lost opportunities.


Higher costs of compliance, making it harder for small and medium businesses to compete and expand.

The LNP has always championed economic growth, reducing red tape, and supporting local businesses. Reinstating the QPC would send a clear message that the government is committed to cutting unnecessary bureaucracy and ensuring policies work in practice, not just on paper.

The core function of the commission will be to undertake reviews of complex economic, social and regulatory issues and provide advice and recommendations to the government. In answer to the call from Queenslanders, the reformed Queensland Productivity Commission's task will be to identify opportunities to slash red tape and reduce unnecessary regulation. This will reduce costs for Queensland businesses and, of course, consumers. I would like to commend the work already done by our Minister for Housing in this space with the Building Reg Reno for our construction industry.

The work of the QPC includes seeking opportunities for productivity gains through efficient planning frameworks such as unlocking land and skilled labour to help address the housing crisis. A strategic approach to productivity is more important than ever, which means finding ways to enhance a modern and skilled workforce. Constituting the QPC as a statutory body ensures that the QPC will be independent from government, and this independence is actually enshrined in the bill. No longer will the work expected through this independent body be carried on behind closed doors within government departments.

The reinstated Queensland Productivity Commission's first task will be to conduct an inquiry into opportunities to enhance productivity in the building and construction industry which has been hampered by declining productivity growth. This is welcomed by regional areas of our great state, such as Rockhampton. Queensland needs its own independent Productivity Commission to secure our future environmental, economic and social prosperity. The recommendation from the committee report is that the bill be passed. On behalf of the people of Rockhampton and Gracemere, I too commend the bill.

 **Hon. MC de BRENNI** (Springwood—ALP) (5.00 pm): I rise to speak on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024. Put simply, this legislation as it stands before the House now sets out this Liberal National Party government's agenda to cut. The bill lays the groundwork for cuts to the Public Service, just like the LNP has done before in hospitals and in schools to the health and education institutions supporting this state's most vulnerable—like the 926 health workers who lost their jobs in the Metro South HHS the last time the LNP sat on that side of the House.

Further, it prepares government for the sale of publicly owned energy assets. It sets Queensland up for infrastructure cuts to our roads and our bridges—like the 1,900 Queenslanders in TMR who got roads and bridges built but who lost their jobs the last time the LNP sat on the government benches. This government describes good governance and regulation as red tape. It says 'less red tape' but what it really means is less governance.

Queenslanders remember it vividly: 12 years ago the Newman LNP government handed down its Independent Commission of Audit report. For those who do not remember, the Independent Commission of Audit was an investigation into the state's finances. The independent commission was led by Peter Costello, a former Liberal Party treasurer, a man who is most recently known for resigning from his job after journalist Liam Mendes complained of an assault—an allegation, granted, that Costello denies, despite the incident being caught on camera. Before being the last commissioner the LNP had to do their dirty work, he served as the federal treasurer in the Howard government for over a decade.

**Mr Lister:** And a damn good one too.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Whiting): Order! Member for Southern Downs, you have had a pretty good crack today but the day is getting long so keep it down.

**Mr de BRENNI:** The interjection from the member for Southern Downs indicates that he believes that Peter Costello was a good treasurer in a government made famous for cuts to the Public Service. That is what they were most famous for, member for Southern Downs. It was a government made famous for privatising public assets.

What Queenslanders remember him most for—and I bet the constituents of Southern Downs remember him for this too—is the havoc that he wreaked right across this state, including in the member's electorate, in his role as the commissioner in lead of that audit. That commission handed down 155 recommendations to fulfil the desires of the then LNP government. I want to touch on a few of those recommendations to remind the House because all Queenslanders should be concerned about where the LNP would go under this Productivity Commission as it is proposed. Queenslanders might remember recommendation 7, which said—

When market conditions are favourable, the Government divest its electricity generation assets.



I wonder if we will see that one again. How about this gem? Recommendation 8 stated—

Electricity distribution and transmission assets be divested ...

Back then the LNP wanted to privatise Queensland's energy assets. It was the LNP that drove CS Energy to deliver a \$74 million saving cut to ready it for sale. That is what those opposite did. Those actions were shown to drive up household power costs. They deliberately drove up household power prices by hundreds of dollars a quarter, costing Queenslanders dearly, just so they could get it ready for sale. Then there was the elimination of health services in recommendation 74, which stated—

The Government transition telephone support services from 13HEALTH to the National Health Call Centre Network, healthdirect.

That was a recommendation to cut a health service used by hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders, a recommendation to cut a 24/7 health service that received more than 60 per cent of its inquiries after-hours, a recommendation to cut a service that eased congestion in our hospital emergency departments and ensured people received the right level of care for their needs. Here is a recommendation that already shows history repeating itself. Recommendation 104 stated—

The Queensland Police Service rationalise and consolidate its existing capital stock ...

We have already had to call this LNP government out on their plan to close police beats in Queensland. We can just imagine the Minister for Police sitting around the Crisafulli cabinet table endorsing this bill but then jumping the gun and telling his agency that they could start shutting down police stations. That is why this Productivity Commission as proposed as beholden to the Treasurer just does not provide the independence that Queenslanders deserve—

**Mr Healy** interjected.

**Mr Purdie** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members for Cairns and Ninderry, you know the rule about arguing across the chamber.

**Mr de BRENNI:** That is why this Productivity Commission as proposed as beholden to the Treasurer does not provide the independence that Queenslanders deserve and expect from their government. There was recommendation 113 as well which stated—

The Government outsource the provision of medically authorised transports, especially in south-east Queensland, through a contestable market process.

I think Queenslanders live in the greatest state in the nation and that is for lots of reasons. We have the highest quality resources, our cattle herd is second to none, our beaches and our rainforests from the cape to Coolangatta are absolutely world class, our universities and our athletes top the list internationally—

**Mr McDonald:** And farmers.

**Mr de BRENNI:** And our farmers, I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. I remind this House that Queensland is the only state in mainland Australia with a free ambulance service. I remind the House that the member who is now in charge of the Queensland Ambulance Service is the member who wanted to privatise the Queensland Ambulance Service through its medically authorised transports. He sat around the cabinet table that endorsed the Treasurer's instrument to do the economic analysis through this Productivity Commission in the way that this Treasurer wants it done. He wanted to privatise a free and public service used by thousands of Queenslanders to access quality and often lifesaving treatment. I bet there was no consideration of recusing himself, despite his track record when it comes to economic commissions.

Queenslanders know that the way the Treasurer has inserted himself into this commission lays the groundwork for cuts. It lays the groundwork for cuts to the Public Service, it lays the groundwork for cuts to infrastructure and it lays the groundwork for privatisation. The way the Treasurer will exercise his control over this commission means it will not be independent. In saying that, I make no criticism of the Treasury officials who will provide advice or will be staffing it. It is just that they will not get an unencumbered run. In fact not once did the words 'independence', 'transparency' or 'accountability' feature in this bill, and I think and Queenslanders probably think that that speaks volumes.


Any of the work done by the commission is not required to be tabled in parliament—no transparency. It must only be published on the website after the Treasurer has three months to think about it. Before we even get to a final report, the commission can only release information that is authorised by this Treasurer. The minister can approve or refuse the commission doing research. The minister can amend their research proposal. He can demand advice with any timeframe and any

conditions. He can even determine who the commission seeks advice from and whom they speak to. It seems that this commission is anything but independent.

In the weeks gone by we have heard from experts across the board that the strategy used by the current Crisafulli LNP government has echoes of a strategy used by a certain someone whose name literally sends shivers down the spine of Queenslanders. In fact, John Quiggin, a professor from the University of Queensland, said—

You could have pretty much cut and pasted the report from 2012 to what we are seeing. Campbell Newman established Costello's commission of audit for exactly the same reasons that the current Treasurer is giving for setting up this Productivity Commission. We have seen this movie before. The script is the same.

This bill in its current form cannot be supported without the amendments that will be moved by the opposition.

 **Ms DOOLEY** (Redcliffe—LNP) (5.10 pm): I rise to speak in wholehearted support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024. Queenslanders lost trust in the former Labor government's ability to deliver on-time and on-budget projects. However, the LNP believes in respect for taxpayers' money. We took to the people of Queensland a policy platform which included 'respect for your money', and resoundingly Queenslanders voted for change. Queenslanders, including the people in my electorate of Redcliffe, want government to be accountable and transparent with the use of public funds. Queenslanders and the people of Redcliffe who are struggling with the ever-increasing cost of living want more and better services from their precious, hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Labor was in government at a time when revenue increased significantly, but where did the money go? Productivity means more jobs, more houses and more infrastructure. We are seeing now in Queensland households the consequences of Labor's mismanagement of public funds. We are seeing the direct result of that with raging inflation, cost-of-living pressures and blowout electricity costs. The real-world effects of lower productivity are lower economic growth, lower wages, higher unemployment and higher inflation. The people of Redcliffe tell me this at their doors, on the phones and through their emails.

Had productivity growth remained at the pre-2018 average over the subsequent period, it is estimated that Queensland's real per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher in 2023-24. The construction and utilities industries have experienced little or declining productivity growth over the past 30 years, growing by less than 17 per cent since 1994-95 compared to 64 per cent in the broader market sector, according to Treasury's analysis of ABS data. This lack of productivity is costing and hurting Queenslanders. I have had many construction businesses in my electorate of Redcliffe complain about the union sweetheart deals that lock them out of tendering for projects. The construction and utilities industries have experienced this decline in productivity for too long and we say, 'No more.' This bill will help get Queensland and those businesses in my electorate open for business again and ensure large infrastructure projects are delivered on time and on budget.


It has been reported that the cost of completion of Cross River Rail has blown out by \$17 billion and that it is expected to open in the year 2029, hopefully before the 2032 Olympics. Labor promised that Cross River Rail would be delivered at a cost of \$5.4 billion and completed last year. The Crisafulli government uncovered the true cost of the rail project, and we are hoping it is completed by 2029. This is a staggering cost and time blowout—over three times what it should have been. It is a cost that mum-and-dad Queenslanders and those living in Redcliffe who are already struggling with the cost of living have to pay. Imagine what that kind of money could have bought Queenslanders. Imagine the hospitals, the schools, the houses and the roads it could build.

I mention the Redcliffe expansion plan, which is set to deliver an additional 204 beds. I stand in support of this bill for my electorate. Sadly, we have seen a blowout in the cost of the state's hospital capacity expansion plan after the true cost of delivering critical projects was revealed. Labor's blowouts will push a nearly \$10 billion program to \$16 billion. The Crisafulli government is 100 per cent committed to the hospital expansion plan, which includes an additional 204 beds for my Redcliffe Hospital. The hospital capacity expansion plan will support building another three new hospitals and the Queensland Cancer Centre. The Crisafulli LNP government is committed to delivering these projects.

Let's talk about Cross River Rail. Average work days worked on Cross River Rail has been 2.7 days, thanks to the BPIC rules and the sweetheart deals done by those sitting opposite. This is staggering. If only Queenslanders truly understood the waste under the former Labor government. Labor spread funding across multiple budget pools to hide the real cost of Cross River Rail. Thanks go to our Treasurer for revealing the true costs.

Restoring the Productivity Commission will help supercharge Redcliffe's and Queensland's economy by cutting red and green tape, enhance investment and attract new businesses to our state. In an increasingly competitive market, both nationally and internationally, this bill will help put Queensland at the forefront of choice for investment and help create a more competitive and resilient economy.

The Queensland Productivity Commission Bill has the hallmarks of independence and accountability. This independence is vital to restore confidence from the Queensland public in government and in the spend of public funds. I stand in support of this bill for my electorate of Redcliffe and for Queenslanders, and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr G KELLY** (Mirani—LNP) (5.17 pm): On behalf of the electorate of Mirani, I am very proud to speak on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. Queensland is the lucky state. We are blessed with a beautiful natural environment, plenty of natural wealth in our minerals and agricultural capacities and a good climate. We are a state of opportunities and a place where people have the chance to be anything they want to be. However, that is all at risk if we do not make sure that we, as a government, create an environment that allows people and business to thrive. That is why the LNP committed to bring back the Productivity Commission: to make sure we are not needlessly hindering people from producing for our state or our nation.

Despite the natural resources that we have been blessed with, we are lagging behind. In 2023-24 we were the middle of the pack in Australian states for gross state product per capita, falling behind New South Wales and Western Australia. When the territories are included, both the ACT and Northern Territory are higher in gross state product per capita.

Queensland has the potential to be the most prosperous state in Australia and, to do that, we need to be looking at ways to increase our productivity. This can be achieved in many ways—through encouraging innovation or by making it easier to do business with Queensland. That is what this bill comes down to: re-establishing the productivity commission that was unfortunately wrapped up in 2021 so that we can have independent analysis into the ways we can improve our productivity. We are facing increasing costs in almost every aspect of our lives. Rather than providing short-term sugar hits that provide temporary relief, the way forward should be looking at how we can make things here in Queensland in the best way. By increasing Queensland's productivity we will be bringing down long-term costs because if our productivity growth stagnates, we will start to see prices rise. If we do not increase our productivity, we risk demand outstripping supply. Anybody with a basic understanding of economics can tell you that as demand increases without supply meeting it, the result would be increased prices to manage that.


Queenslanders have enjoyed a good quality of life but it could be better. If Queensland had maintained its pre-2018 average productivity growth, our per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher than the last financial year. This is not an amount to sneeze at. It could have helped Queenslanders get that housing deposit, seen a better ability to cope with our rapidly increasing power prices and helped many who are struggling to get by today. Queensland is facing a housing shortage. We need more housing to support our population but we also need the infrastructure that goes along with it—the roads, the power and water connections and the public amenities that make a place livable. All of this comes back to the construction industry. So much of our growth is reliant on this.

We need the construction industry to build the factories for new manufacturing. We need the construction industry to build the places for retailers to operate. We need the construction industry to build the hospitals, the police stations, the community halls and the sports facilities that our communities desperately need but they are all facing rising costs. With the construction industry only having a 17 per cent increase in productivity since 1994-95 compared to 64 per cent in the broader market sector, this lack of productivity pushes up the cost of construction. It pushes up the cost of the facilities that our communities need. These increased costs see taxpayers paying more, it sees communities miss out on limited funds and priorities and it sees communities forgotten.

The lack of productivity we have seen in the construction industry is hurting Queenslanders. The LNP is delivering on our commitment to restore the Queensland Productivity Commission with this bill. This is vital to bringing down costs and to helping Queenslanders to do what they do best—providing for themselves, their families and one another. An independent commission will have the ability to undertake reviews of complex economic, social and regulatory issues and provide advice and recommendations to the government. This is incredibly important because it allows the government to have new ideas with proper considered analysis about how we can be doing things better, where we can improve and stop holding our state back through needless red tape. The more time it takes for

someone has to fill in forms and compliance obligations, the less time they have to do the work they want to be doing. By reducing the red tape that restricts business, we can bring down the cost of producing, and increase our productivity rather than restricting it.

Queensland should remain a land of opportunity and continue to attract investment to our state. This is a step forward towards that. Queensland voted for real change—rather than thought bubbles around a second energy retailer to compete with the already government-owned Ergon. A productivity commission will see proper considered ways forward to increase Queensland's productivity. This will put downward pressure on prices and see us push forward to continue to be the best state in Australia.

 **Hon. FS SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (Minister for Women and Women's Economic Security, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Multiculturalism) (5.24 pm): I never thought I would hear people singing the virtues of red tape and how big government would somehow unlock prosperity, safety and wellbeing for the community. This is Labor's excuse for a decade of racking up the debt and putting a burden on those who are the job creators in Queensland—our small businesses and industries—those who are necessary to work in partnership with the people to unlock prosperity.

Big government creates smaller people—not opportunity. We want to see a government that unlocks prosperity to enable our economy to thrive. That means not burdening people with the latest and greatest in red tape that has no connection to ensuring people have an ability to thrive and grow their local economies and live their lives. That is why I strongly support the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill that my colleague, the Treasurer, has put forward. It was a commitment of the Crisafulli government that we would ensure we would look for ways to partner with people, with small business, with larger businesses and with the community to unlock the prosperity of Queensland because Queenslanders deserve to own their future. They will not own their future if you have a mob like the Labor Party who thinks only government knows best by racking up the debt, ripping those tax dollars out of people's pockets and ensuring they do not cast an eye on ensuring those dollars are spent well and effectively to deliver critical services.

We do believe in the role of government to deliver critical frontline services and to partner with communities and business to unlock that prosperity but we do not believe that big government is the answer to all the issues in our community when they rob the dollars out of people's hard-earned pay packets and ignore the fact that they have a right to say how those dollars are spent and that they should be spent well.

We saw an incredible situation this morning in question time where the rabble that is the Labor opposition got up and talked about somehow having nothing to do with the debt that has been racked up under a decade of Labor. We now see every man, woman and child in Queensland with \$40,000 worth of debt. If people thought the HECS debt was hefty, wait until they find out about the Queensland Labor Party debt which is an issue that has to be managed. Lord knows why they have such an abhorrence of dealing with the lack of productivity that comes with ignoring that people's dollars that should be spent well, effectively and always with an eye to doing things better. But it explains why they were such a rabble and such a mess and why we saw a situation where not only was debt racked up without creating more jobs and prosperity but, in fact, they also ignored critical frontline services. We have seen it across all the key indicators.

Queenslanders voted for change with respect to housing, health, law and order, our legal system and crime. Cost of living does matter to Queenslanders. They know what it is like if you are not careful with how your dollars are spent. We value what they want to see—their dollars spent well. This Queensland Productivity Commission, which I have heard Labor members rubbish, is really an indication of why they do not like to see an eye cast on spending dollars more effectively.

I was somewhat bemused when I heard them talking: 'If you are going to have a Productivity Commission it should do this and that and should be structured in a certain way.' They were the Labor Party who abolished the productivity commission in Queensland and they want to dictate how this one operates. They say, 'Oh, do we really need it?', yet they are the ones who abolished it. There was nothing independent about what they did. They just abolished it, sucked it within the bowels of government and basically buried it and ignored the need for always ensuring dollars were spent well with an eye on always ensuring there was great delivery and care in the way that taxpayers' money was spent.

They have no shame, they have no idea. They have no care for the way taxpayers' dollars should be spent. It is incredible to think that with \$218 billion worth of debt in Queensland, they still don't get that we need to ensure that every dollar that is spent—be it on interest repayments or on ensuring


infrastructure is built—should be built with an eye to getting value for money because it matters to everyday Queenslanders who make that assessment on their own household budget.

One of the first orders of business of this Productivity Commission will be a full review with regard to the building industry and some of the red tape and barriers to unlocking more housing and construction in Queensland. What a great objective to put before a productivity commission. I believe—and it is a policy that, as part of the former shadow cabinet, I was party to going into the election—this is really important, because we have seen a situation where housing productivity has taken a dive; we have seen record numbers of people unable to afford their own home; we have seen spiralling homelessness that broke out under the former Labor government, yet they do not want to deal with productivity in the housing industry. If we really are serious about getting people off the streets and into housing, seeing more houses being built as well as seeing people able to afford their own home, we have to deal with productivity in the housing industry. However, there is still this blindness in the Labor Party: ‘Nothing to see here.’ There used to be the crane index in Queensland. It is an absolute shame that there is now a tent index, so to speak. Record numbers of people have been living in tents, and that happened under the Labor Party that was operating in Queensland for over 10 years. The lack of productivity and attention to the whole pipeline of works to deliver more timely housing not only in the social housing sector but also in the general market was ignored by Labor, which wanted to keep adding extra costs, and that should not be forgotten. If we are going to have the best solution going forward it is about ensuring we work with those who have the ability to unlock the housing, and productivity is key to doing that.

More than one thing will be the answer in respect of the red-tape reform that needs to occur, but it has to occur if people are going to have a roof over their head rather than a canvas or polyester tent and women living in cars who then have to seek shelter for those cars during weather events. That should never have happened in Queensland. The fact it has happened in this country and this state in the way it has comes back to this issue we are talking about today. Productivity matters if you care about putting a roof over someone’s head. Productivity matters if you care about someone being able to afford health care and education for themselves and their family. Productivity matters if women are to have economic security, whether in relation to the gap in pay or economic opportunity.

When governments burden women without paying attention to the debt and the lack of effectiveness of the dollars they spend, they really do not care about some of the most vulnerable. Some of the most vulnerable are spread across electorates throughout Queensland. Some people will be able to have a voice and advocate for themselves, but a lot will just wait for government to get off their back and enable them to live their life, enable them to get the job and, very importantly, enable them to afford that roof over their head. That is why this bill matters so much. Honestly, it is time we addressed the issues that have locked people out of the safety and security of their own home—the safety and security of being able to afford to live, to pay their way for their children and the many activities that allow them to have full participation in a range of activities and for women to know they have the dignity of self-determination because they can afford to put food on the table or clothes on their back and can go and get that job.

I strongly support this bill. I support the push and the need for us to respect people’s dollars, to respect productivity as a word that respects and understands what everyday Queenslanders are going through rather than having yet another excuse for Labor’s failed experiment of never caring about how they spend taxpayers’ dollars.

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (5.34 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024. This bill before the House represents two things. The first thing it represents is an LNP broken promise, because they said they would set up an independent Queensland Productivity Commission and this is far from independent. The second thing it points out is that this is part of a strategy to cut in Queensland, to undermine working conditions and to undermine the protections available to many Queenslanders. Quite rightly, the shadow treasurer has circulated some amendments. These amendments not only establish independence for the Queensland Productivity Commission as proposed but also provide important protections—important protections for workers and important protections for Queenslanders. When you have the proposed model put forward by this Treasurer, which seeks to manipulate a process around using the cloak of so-called productivity gains to implement an ideological agenda of those opposite, you know that this is a confected strategy, a facade, for them to pursue their ideology.

We know that this proposal has deliberately ensured the Treasurer will have the ability to influence how the Productivity Commission goes about its work. The Treasurer will be able to direct the Productivity Commission as to what they can research and what they can look into and can limit their

publication. That is far from the model that was established by Labor in 2015, a model that they actually supported. Honourable members would be interested to see—

**A government member:** The one that Labor axed.

**Mr RYAN:** The model that Labor put in place in 2015 was supported by those opposite. I refer to the member for Surfers Paradise, who said they would not be opposing it. Their only criticism was about creating another bureaucracy, but I think we can eliminate that because they are creating a new bureaucracy in establishing this non-independent Queensland Productivity Commission.

We also saw the former member for Broadwater, a lovely person, Verity Barton—we used to love listening to Verity's contributions—get up and say some very interesting things. Of course, Verity would still be here if it were not for the current member for Broadwater undermining her and ensuring she was chased out of this parliament. The former member for Broadwater, Verity Barton, said that they would not oppose it. They supported the independent model, but Verity also said that it was important that the independent economic advisory body would be able to lift productivity, improve living standards and drive economic growth. She also said—these are Verity's own words—

It is also important to note that the Productivity Commission will also have a mandate to initiate its own research and analysis.

What has changed, because the model put forward by this government and this Treasurer deliberately omits that, even though in 2015 it was one of the things that their speaker said was important to note?

There is a good reason to pursue productivity but there is a proper process for going about it. Ensuring independence of advice and independence of action is important, because when you do not have those things it opens up the process to manipulation. It opens it up to ideological priorities influencing the process. We often hear from them, 'Get rid of the regulation. Get rid of the red tape,' but sometimes there is good reason for red tape. Sometimes there is good reason for regulation. For instance, there is good reason we have red tape around knife sale restrictions—good reason. There is good reason we have red tape around food standards—good reason. There are good reasons we have red tape around safe workplaces and workplace health and safety—good reasons. For those opposite to come in and suggest that we get rid of the red tape and get rid of the regulation undermines the importance and the priority that Queenslanders put on some of those protections.


During this debate it was almost like some of those opposite were channelling the US President—'Pass this bill and everything's better. Everything's going to be great. It's fine.' I thought they were almost going to get to the point of saying that as it is almost St Paddy's day the little leprechauns are going to come out with the pots of gold and say, 'You've passed the bill. Everything's better. Here's the pot of gold from the leprechaun,' but of course what we see is that this is just a front. It is an LNP think tank. It is no different to what they put in place under the Newman government when so many of those opposite sat around the cabinet table and endorsed the process when they established the Costello commission of inquiry. It is no different. They will use their so-called arguments around cutting red tape and cutting regulation and apparently boosting productivity and everything will be better once this bill passes—all of those things—as a facade to cut the very things that Queenslanders value and put priority on.

Let us look at some of the things that were recommended during their last attempt of using an LNP think tank—an LNP facade—for chasing productivity. We have already heard from some speakers on our side about some of those recommendations from the Costello commission of inquiry to divest energy assets to ensure that the energy generation businesses—those opposite would have liked this one—be required to achieve higher rates of return. That means charging Queenslanders more for electricity. When it comes to public transport, there was a recommendation that city passenger rail services be opened up to contestability, privatising the passenger rail system. There was a recommendation for the competitive tendering for long distance and tourism passenger rail. Those opposite like to talk about dams, so how about this for a recommendation: any future bulk water storage facilities to be developed by the private sector, privatising water assets. Another recommendation was to privatise QFleet, QBuild and RoadTek.

When it comes to public hospitals, those opposite would really like these ones. I used to hear the then Newman government talk a lot about contestability in public hospitals. There was talk about public hospital services progressively expanding contestable markets, and that means privatisation. That is what it says—the private provision of clinical services and the private provision of clinical support services such as pathology, radiology and pharmacy. Those opposite also said that they wanted to introduce some contestability—aka privatisation—when it comes to community health services.

Those opposite would like these recommendations too: that competition be introduced into the TAFE sector and that asset ownership be separated from TAFE. We saw them do it. They shut down TAFE campuses. They sold off TAFE campuses. When it came to the Queensland Police Service, and this one was particularly confronting for many police officers, we saw a recommendation with regard to introducing competitive market tendering processes for mobile traffic camera services—outsourcing that work—traffic control services, including wide-load escorts, and court support. Those opposite would also like that recommendation with regard to the operation of watch houses—that was recommended—introducing private prisons.

This is what happens when we allow the LNP to establish a process about chasing so-called productivity gains. When you manipulate the process and you remove the independence, you get recommendations like that—recommendations that hurt Queenslanders, that do not represent the priorities of Queenslanders. If it is such a priority for those opposite and they assure us that these things will not happen, what is the problem with accepting the shadow treasurer's amendments around independence? What is the problem with honouring your election commitment around an independent Queensland Productivity Commission and accepting the shadow treasurer's amendments? If they were true to their word and they wanted to keep their election commitments and they are true to their word when they say that they are not going to do any of those things, then accept the amendments from the shadow treasurer. If not, we know there is a secret agenda and they are coming to get Queenslanders.

 **Mr BAILLIE** (Townsville—LNP) (5.44 pm): Queenslanders voted for a fresh start. The former Queensland productivity commission was introduced by Labor in 2015 and, despite having four matters referred to it in 2015 alone, from 2016 to 2021 it had a total of seven further matters referred to it—seven matters over six years. The former productivity commission was not given the opportunity to be productive. In 2021 Labor abolished the former productivity commission and advised that its work would continue inside government agencies, depriving Queensland of the independent analysis and investigatory powers essential for maintaining accountability and transparency across key sectors within our economy.


The real-world effects of lower productivity are lower economic growth, lower wages, higher unemployment and higher inflation, and Queenslanders have suffered due to a lack of productivity. We have seen the countless projects blow out as construction costs continue to skyrocket. Queenslanders have come to expect government-led projects in particular will cost more than budgeted and will take longer than committed. Our state cannot afford to continue down the path charted by the former Labor government. Productivity underwrites prosperity and we must return it to Queensland to drive down costs across industry and around the kitchen table. If we do not reverse the productivity purge in Queensland, it is businesses and families in my electorate of Townsville and right across Queensland who will pay the price. Bringing back the Queensland Productivity Commission also aligns with our commitment to respect Queenslanders' money and ease cost-of-living pressures.

The Crisafulli government is proud to deliver on a key election commitment to bring back the Queensland Productivity Commission as a direct response to a slowdown in productivity and the need for regulatory reform in critical sectors like the construction and building industry. Restoring the Queensland Productivity Commission will make a significant impact across the construction sector and benefit small, medium and large businesses alike. This is an issue close to my heart and it is particularly important for my constituents in Townsville.

Before being elected as the member for Townsville, I worked as an electrical contractor, serving both commercial and domestic customers. I have seen firsthand the impact that a lack of productivity has on individual projects as well as the wider industry. Low productivity on a building site does not just blow out timelines and increase costs; it pushes every contractor working on the project under financial strain. As productivity decreases, hours required to deliver the contracted works increases which pushes up wages required to get the job done. Job delays due to low productivity on site means the carpenters, plumbers, plasterers, tilers, painters and all of the other trades, including the ever-reliable electricians, bear the burden of increased costs as work drags on or grinds to a halt. The flow-on effect can leave contractors with no choice but to let employees go, meaning fewer people working which leads to less work being done. The bigger the job the bigger the delays and the bigger the impact on our building and construction contractors.

Queensland can no longer afford to have our building sites bogged down with onerous reporting requirements and increased compliance costs. Red tape has stifled growth and cost jobs. This is why the Queensland Productivity Commission's first order of business will be a comprehensive review of the construction and building industry. The Queensland Productivity Commission will provide independent advice on economic and regulatory matters, including cutting red tape, reducing reporting,

and licensing and compliance costs, while improving efficiencies and maintaining safe working conditions. The result? A skilled and thriving industry ready to meet the needs of a growing Queensland. I am proud to deliver on this election commitment. The Queensland Productivity Commission is good for trade contractors, it is good for the construction industry, it is good for Townsville and it is great for Queensland.

 **Hon. ST O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Youth) (5.49 pm): I rise in strong support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 because after a decade of Labor it has never been harder for Queenslanders to have a roof over their head. The former government left us with a building and construction industry weighed down with unnecessary and overburdening red tape. This legislation will restore an independent economic advisory body to drive growth, improve efficiency and deliver better outcomes for all Queenslanders.

The Queensland Productivity Commission was first introduced a decade ago with the clear goal of providing independent, evidence-based advice to government on critical economic, social and regulatory issues. However, despite the valuable insights this body provided, in 2021 the commission was abolished by Labor, effectively shutting down independent scrutiny of the policies affecting Queensland's economic future. This bill reinstates the Queensland Productivity Commission as an independent statutory body, ensuring our state has a dedicated institution to identify and drive desperately needed productivity reforms.

It is an understatement to say that our state is facing economic challenges. Our productivity has stalled, and that means that costs are rising in our construction sector. That means housing supply has not kept up with growth. The Productivity Commission will be an important mechanism to get our economy working again. Their first task will be to conduct an inquiry into productivity in our building and construction industry. No other industry is as important to housing affordability, to job creation and to economic growth as our building industry. Productivity is the foundation of prosperity. When productivity slows, wages stagnate, costs rise and economic growth suffers. Queensland Treasury analysis of ABS data shows that over the last 20 years productivity in the construction and utilities sectors has grown by only 17 per cent, compared to 64 per cent in the broader economy. Had productivity growth remained at these historic levels, Queensland's real per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher in 2023-24. These numbers represent lost wages, higher costs and missed opportunities for Queensland families and businesses.

Under the former Labor government the Queensland Productivity Commission was dismantled in favour of internal, secretive processes. They did not like the message so they got rid of the messenger. It meant that for years our state has not had rigorous independent scrutiny of economic policy. This bill will allow the Treasurer to direct the QPC to undertake inquiries, reviews and investigations or to request advice or research. The independent commission will also be able to initiate its own research and analysis into economic and social issues, regulatory matters and/or legislation. This bill fixes the mistake of Labor and ensures Queensland once again has an independent body dedicated to driving productivity and evidence-based policy.

If there is one sector that desperately needs reform it is our building and construction industry. Queensland and our nation are facing a housing supply crisis. Last month the Australian Government Productivity Commission released a report titled *Housing construction productivity: can we fix it?* The findings were alarming. The number of dwellings completed per hour worked by housing construction workers has fallen by 53 per cent over the last 30 years. Labour productivity in house construction has declined by 25 per cent since 2001. In contrast, over the same time labour productivity in the broader economy has grown by nearly 50 per cent. These statistics make it clear that we are building fewer homes and we are building them less efficiently than ever before, which is driving up costs and making housing increasingly unaffordable.

Why is this happening? Partly it is because under Labor Queensland construction sites became the least productive in the nation. At least two days of productivity were lost each week—delays which left Queenslanders without homes in our growing state and without the infrastructure we desperately need. A key driver of this was Labor's sweetheart deal with the CFMEU: the Best Practice Industry Conditions, BPICs. Treasury modelling has revealed BPICs would have resulted in rents rising an extra seven per cent over the next five years and 22,000 fewer homes being built. This was a handbrake on housing supply. Worse still, analysis from my department shows that just 204 of the 176,000 licensed contractors and subbies in Queensland were certified under the BPIC prequalification framework—just 0.12 per cent of the industry. The former Labor government and the CFMEU shut the door on tens of thousands of small and family businesses, particularly in regional Queensland. That is why my first act




as minister was to suspend BPICs pending the outcome of the Productivity Commission's building and construction review.

We are focused on unlocking housing supply because every Queenslander deserves a place to call home. The regulatory burden on our builders is massive. Developers face a maze of planning, zoning and environmental infrastructure approvals, with major projects often taking 10 years or more to clear all regulatory hurdles. The National Construction Code alone has grown to over 2,000 pages, resulting in huge complexities for builders.

If we want to increase housing supply, we have to make it easier to build new homes. The work the Productivity Commission will undertake will deliver a higher level path forward to get our building industry to where it needs to be. Queensland cannot afford to wait until they deliver their findings. That is why we are delivering our Building Reg Reno. For the first time in a very long time, government in this state is reducing red tape and lowering costs for our construction industry. We are determined to make the QBCC more customer focused as well. Queensland's construction workforce is struggling with chronic skills shortages, apprenticeship commencements are down, licensing requirements are inconsistent across the nation and migration pathways for skilled workers are limited. The commission will explore ways to expand the construction workforce, to harmonise licensing requirements and to remove barriers to skilled migration coming to Queensland.

This bill is not just about identifying problems; it is also about solutions. The Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 is essential to our state's future. By reinstating an independent productivity commission we are ensuring Queensland's economy is driven by evidence-based policy, not political convenience. By tackling inefficiencies in construction policies we will increase housing supply to give more Queenslanders a place to call home. By cutting red tape and removing barriers to economic growth we will deliver higher wages, lower prices and stronger industries. This bill addresses Labor's failures of the past, it tackles the challenges of the present and it plans for the future. It is practical, it is necessary, it is long overdue and I commend it to the House.

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (5.56 pm): I welcome the Treasurer's introduction of this bill last year and commend him on delivering this election commitment. Before I go into the details of that bill, I would like to place on record my appreciation of the great work of the frontline workers, volunteers, local disaster management group and all of those who have assisted in the recovery efforts in the Lockyer Valley floods. Over the last week we have certainly seen a lot of rain. It has been very heartening to go into Laidley and see our community respond in such a united fashion. When I went into the back of the Queensland National Hotel there were 12 Blue Dogs cricketers and Laidley Lions footballers helping in the clean-up. There were a number of generators and Gerni and Spitwater machines being used by people who had brought them in. They did a conga line up the street helping each of the businesses as they went along. As a former officer in charge of police in that community I know it well. It is a very resilient community. Once again, the recovery from Tropical Cyclone Alfred has shown the quality of that community. I look forward to getting back out there and helping them again very soon.

I thank the Premier for his interest in the Lockyer community, I thank the Minister for Primary Industries, the Minister for Disaster Recovery and the member for Burdekin for their assistance and interest in our community. I can assure them that we will be continuing to fight for additional resilience in relation to the Laidley flood mitigation that was announced before the election as well as the closure of the Warrego Highway at Glenore Grove. I have already had conversations with the Premier and Treasurer and certainly my other colleagues to the west to make sure that that vital piece of infrastructure is fixed.

Turning to the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill, I have been amused by members of the opposition criticising the bill. I remind them that in 2015 they introduced the Productivity Commission. Over subsequent years there was very little work that went to the Productivity Commission and they took it back within the department so that people did not know what was going on.

In talking to this bill, those opposite have said that the commission will lose its independence. The Treasurer has quite clearly said, as per our commitment in 2022 and then 2023, that one of the first orders of business would be to establish an independent productivity commission, which is what this bill does. I welcome having an independent commission that will consider the issues facing Queenslanders. I also welcome the fact that the first order of business will be about the building industry. Given the housing crisis that we are in, I draw a comparison between the former Labor government and our government. We have made commitments around housing supply. The \$2 billion

to \$3 billion Housing Investment Fund was established but did not deliver one new house. We have made a commitment to deliver new housing.

**Ms Scanlon** interjected.

**Mr McDONALD:** I take the interjection and the reference to different properties being acquired by the former Labor government. That simply took stock out of the rental market and did not contribute any additional housing. We are committed to getting Queenslanders back into homes. We are in a housing crisis that we are going to fix and this is one of the orders of business that will do that. I believe it is quite rude for those opposite to criticise any effort to build additional housing supply and return a level of productivity.

Shortly I will turn to a couple of facts that the Auditor-General's office has outlined, but first I bring the House's attention to the industry support for this bill. From the Property Council of Australia, Queensland Executive Director Jess Caire, stated—

As drafted, the legislation provides sufficient powers and structures for the QPC to undertake robust and independent analysis of economic and related issues impacting Queensland.

Paul Bidwell, from Master Builders Queensland, welcomed the introduction of the Productivity Commissioner because the building industry and master builders are facing so many crazy controls that they need removed. As I said in my maiden speech in this place many years ago, good governments get out of the way of people and let them get on with business. People will inspire you.


The Auditor-General has looked at a number of issues around productivity. The former state development committee inquired into the Gabba redevelopment. The former auditor-general talked about a cost of \$1 billion and where that figure might have come from. I think he referred to it as being from a media release. As we discovered very shortly after, the true cost was projected to be \$2 billion, but that probably came from a calculation done on the back of an envelope. In more recent times, following a review that was asked for by the former government but not listened to, the cost of the Gabba redevelopment was going to be \$3.2 billion or \$3.4 billion. Look at that for productivity! Each one of those billion dollars is \$1,000 million. It is just astronomical. Those opposite are now criticising the new government and our fresh start as we establish a body that can deliver independent advice so that government can make good decisions.

The Auditor-General also referred to 11 different projects across the state that have increased in cost from 11 per cent up to 30 per cent. That aligns with the experience of private enterprise that faced some of the new enterprise bargaining agreements that were put in place under the former government through BPIC. I am proud to be a part of this new government and I look forward to the solutions that we will provide in that space.

I speak to builders, electricians and other people involved in the housing industry in my electorate. They tell me that among the biggest challenges for them are government regulations and the red tape that they face. Over a number of decades, that challenge has increased insurmountably. They have to employ people to manage all of that red tape and the additional stifling of their productivity. I welcome our government's commitment. It was a commitment we first made in 2022 and then reaffirmed in 2023. Good governments do what they say they will do. This is another one of our first-100-day promises. I am very proud to be part of the Crisafulli government and to support the Treasurer in the introduction of this bill.

I want to make sure that Queenslanders know that we will be a calm and conservative government and that they should not be listening to the lies of those opposite—the mistruths; I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker—who are trying to spread fear in the community. This is a calm government. In comparison, we only have to look at the crises that we saw under those opposite, whether it be the health crisis, the housing crisis, the cost-of-living crisis or the youth crime and crime crises that they were in charge of and left as a legacy. I am proud to be part of a government that has a plan to address each of those issues, including this commitment to seeing productivity returned to Queenslanders.

From talking to people in my community, I know they feel it is very refreshing to see the sort of calm leadership that we saw through the recent terrible storms. I have assured them that that is the sort of calm governance that we will demonstrate over the coming years. We look forward to continuing to see that support from the Queensland and, in particular, the Lockyer and Somerset communities in the years ahead.

 **Hon. AJ PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (6.06 pm): I rise to speak on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024. This bill meets the LNP's commitment to establish

the Productivity Commission as an independent statutory body, formalising its operational independence from government. The commission will undertake inquiries or research into economic and social issues, regulatory matters or legislation, as directed by the minister. It will also administer, monitor and review regulatory matters and provide advice where requested.

It is clear that the previous Labor government did not want to know the impact of its decisions. Labor governments wasted money, made decisions that adversely impacted regional communities and businesses, and increased regulatory burdens solely to address their political agendas. Productivity was low on the list of the priorities. When the Queensland Productivity Commission was originally established in 2015, the then treasurer, Curtis Pitt, told the parliament that it would have the broad objective of lifting Queensland's productivity. I welcomed it and my support has not wavered. Speaking on the bill at the time, I cautioned that its success would be dependent on the government allowing it to provide fully independent advice that was properly resourced, that the Labor government did not fall back on its preference for appointments based on union affiliation, and that the government provided timely responses to recommendations. I told the parliament—

This cannot and must not be yet another body set up to conduct reviews and inquiries for them to be put back on the shelf or to be another excuse for inaction.

Unfortunately, over time Labor governments stripped the commission of any relevance. In 2020, the commission released a report that showed that since 2015 productivity had declined in Queensland. The Palaszczuk government were running a government where revenue had increased significantly so the question was: where did the money go? They did not want to know that productivity had declined. They did not want to be asked what happened to the revenue. Rather than dealing with the uncomfortable truth, the Labor government's solution was to shut down the messenger. The previous treasurer, the member for Woodridge, abolished the commission because the truth was inconvenient, it was awkward and it did not fit their narrative.

Productivity growth is one of the most significant factors for the long-term economic prosperity of this state. It is also a central and crucial factor in determining our standard of living. Had productivity growth remained at its pre-2018 average over the subsequent period, it is estimated that Queensland's real per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher in 2023-24.

The LNP promised at last year's election to restore the commission. This bill is yet another commitment being delivered. The commission will identify opportunity and bolster our state's economy. As my colleague the Treasurer, the member for Toowoomba South, said—

After a decade of stagnation ... Queensland can't afford to kick the can down the road any longer on productivity, which is why the Crisafulli Government has acted.

A wide range of issues needs to be investigated by a newly formed Queensland Productivity Commission. The Institute of Public Affairs submitted to the committee that many regulations placed on industries in Queensland, particularly in the regions, are having dire economic and social impacts on the communities which rely on them. It said—

These regulations are often imposed on the basis of findings or assertions put forward by scientific institutions, that lack quality assurance and scientific integrity.

Furthermore, it submitted—

Bad science leads to bad policy, which imposes significant economic costs on Queenslanders.

Before last year's election, the LNP committed that a reinstated productivity commission would review the fisheries structural adjustment packages, focusing on the fairness and transparency of these adjustment packages, and subsequently take the necessary actions to right or remediate identified issues. We also committed to asking the Productivity Commission to assess the implementation of the outstanding measures in the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027. I have written to the Treasurer to request that the imminently re-established commission consider these matters.

The Crisafulli government has an ambitious target to increase primary industries output to \$30 billion by 2030. Primary industries are the backbone of our economy. They underpin everything that this state does. They are what many of our rural and regional communities are built on the back of. Restoring the commission is not the end; it is one of the first steps. Canegrowers Cairns Region welcomes the re-establishment of the Queensland Productivity Commission. It said in its submission to the committee—

The cane industry has been and continues to be impacted by red tape, regulations, and legislation. This has been extremely frustrating to sugar producers in our region particularly when much of this is not replicated or supported by evidence based science.

...

Over the past decade we have seen advancements in the sciences. With productivity, profitability and environmental stewardship remaining front and foremost we see now as the ideal time to back things up with evidence based science overseen by an independent statutory body.

Canegrowers Queensland also welcomed the reinstatement of the Queensland Productivity Commission and offered suggestions of further areas for investigation. Its submission said the commission should have—

... scope to investigate issues that the agriculture sector and in particular the sugar and bioenergy industry believe are having a material impact on our productivity ...

...

... to conduct an assessment of Queensland's ... preparedness to respond to biosecurity incursions of new agricultural pests and diseases, and the economic and social implications.

Productivity underwrites prosperity and we must return it to Queensland to drive down costs across industry and around the kitchen table. Critically, it funds the revenue required to administer key government services. The Institute of Public Affairs submitted to the committee that, as of 2022, Queensland was the state most burdened by red tape, with 121,356 regulatory restrictions in state law. Delivering productivity growth is critical to delivering our commitments to ease cost-of-living pressures, delivering high-quality public services with better outcomes, building the infrastructure and housing we need and identifying opportunities to slash red tape and reduce unnecessary regulation. I welcome and support the bill.



**Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (6.13 pm): Finally we have a government not only delivering on election commitments but also doing an incredibly important thing for this state. It certainly makes a change, or maybe even a fresh start, for Queensland. Productivity might not be seen as important to some, but what does it actually mean? It is productivity that has delivered Australia its significant wealth, prosperity and the many luxuries that we get to enjoy. Without significant productivity in our state, we achieve next to nothing. If we cannot dig coal out of the ground in a productive way, there will be no coalmine and, in turn, no coal royalties. If we cannot fatten cattle productively, there will be no beef industry. If we cannot build roads productively, we might still get a road but it will take far too long and cost Queensland mum and dads—our taxpayers—far too much money. That is what we saw for the last 10 years under the former Labor government: productivity going down the gurgler and taxpayers coughing up to pay for it.

I am proud to stand here today and speak on this bill, the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024. This was a key election commitment the Crisafulli LNP government made as a tool to help get Queensland back on track after a decade of Labor's failures. It was Labor who abolished the previous productivity commission in 2021. Why did they get rid of it? It was because they did not like it having the ability to point out the significant list of Labor's policies and ministerial failures that were holding Queensland back. They did not like the commission criticising them, so they cut it. That is right: another Labor cut. As such, Queenslanders have been left without an independent analysis and investigatory powers for four long years, allowing organisations like the CFMEU to dictate policy and the construction industry to become incredibly unproductive.

Restoring the productivity commission will help secure the future prosperity of Queensland. Even the now Leader of the Opposition and other Labor members have previously agreed on the importance of the productivity commission. The member for Murrumba said in 2015 that the then productivity commission bill—

... reflects this government's commitment to excellence in policymaking and its commitment to both public consultation and expert advice.

I find that statement very funny, because I certainly did not see many of those points being made when he was the premier. I do strongly agree that this bill supports excellence in policymaking and also the LNP's commitment to re-establishing Queensland's economic growth and prosperity. It was a shame that the now Leader of the Opposition was then part of the government that proceeded to cut this service.

Productivity is the key to advancing Queensland and making it the powerhouse state that it should be. The Queensland Productivity Commissioner and his or her team will ensure the commission is independent, responsive, open and effective. Further to this, inquiries will be conducted in an open and transparent manner. Despite the mistruths told by those opposite, this bill formalises the

commission's independence from government, puts in place a corporate framework and will help restore the faith of Queenslanders in government, something they have not had for a very long time.

As previously mentioned, the first order of business for the Queensland Productivity Commission will be to conduct an inquiry into Queensland's building and construction industry, which continues to decline in productivity and growth. This is welcomed by the Master Builders Queensland, which in its submission referred to national labour productivity in the construction industry as being 18.1 per cent lower in the 2022-23 financial year than in the 2013-14 financial year. It also refers to union tactics and the need to offer protection to stakeholders in this process.

Last year, the CFMEU regularly made news headlines, with scandal after scandal and numerous dodgy dealings. Who are the CFMEU? They are the puppetmasters of many of those opposite, of course. We have seen many of the bullying tactics of the CFMEU being widely reported over recent years. I will be honest: why would a tradie in Queensland want to work for a small business and have to actually do something in a day? Instead, they could have been at a so-called BPIC site and sat around when conditions got evenly slightly uncomfortable—temperatures that are quite normal in Queensland, for instance—or because they do not particularly like their boss that day. They would also get paid significantly more than comparable jobs elsewhere, which sounds great—it is also a lot more than our hardworking nurses and teachers. Frankly, it created a false taxpayer-funded market, which we have seen all too often from the previous Labor government. I thank the Crisafulli LNP government for pausing BPIC because it was only holding Queensland back.

What are the local implications of a decade of chaos and crisis from Labor resulting in productivity going backwards? The Mundubbera-Durong Road has about 11 kilometres of single-lane bitumen. Widening these sections is my top priority for the electorate of Callide. It is incredibly important to the thousands in the communities of Mundubbera and Durong who rely on it. It is an access route between the Darling Downs and the North Burnett. During the election campaign I was with the member for Nanango, the now Attorney-General, talking about the importance of this road. The sections of the road that need upgrading are actually in the electorate of Nanango, but that road is an important link for communities in the electorate of Callide. The member for Nanango is as committed to fighting for this upgrade as I am.

One would think it would not cost too much to dual lane 11 kilometres of road. However, high level cost estimates suggest that it would currently cost in excess of \$50 million to upgrade this road. Short of a significant new industry or mineral deposit being discovered, it is hard to get that road upgrade to stack up at that price. Meanwhile, a productive construction sector in the civil space would help this project to stack up. Frankly, that cost is ludicrous. When talking to locals about the Mundubbera-Durong Road no-one can fathom why it would cost so much. That is the result of a decade of chaos and crisis and failures of the former Labor government.

I have already been talking to the minister about this issue and this project because every day I am in this House I will fight for the people and communities of Callide that keep this state going and provide food and fibre for our region and provide much prosperity through our mining industry.

Further, this road upgrade would also significantly improve productivity for producers in the North Burnett, providing much needed road train access to these communities. Road train access to the North Burnett would be a game changer for those communities. It would significantly decrease freight costs and, in turn, help those people in the south-east who get to eat some of the great produce and some of the great citrus, blueberries and grapes that come out of the North Burnett. It would decrease freight costs and, in turn, help ease the cost of living. Improving productivity in the state will help us build things more cost-effectively and that, in turn, will have a flow-on effect that helps the hip pocket of Queensland consumers, which is incredibly important at this time. This road upgrade is well overdue and I will not stop fighting until we see it upgraded.


Another significant upgrade that is well overdue and would contribute to productivity in Queensland is the upgrade needed of the Gladstone port access road. The former Labor government had \$100 million sitting on the table since 2019 that the former coalition government allocated. Since 2019 they had \$100 million sitting on the table to upgrade access to the Gladstone port. That is nearly six years because it was April 2019. Six years on, we have not seen any work done. That is due to the failures of the Labor government.

What we have seen with projects in Central Queensland is that they cannot offload at the port and send things up the road. They have to use the container handlers at the port and then they have to use a barge to take it elsewhere so it can be loaded onto a truck and sent around the long way. That is bad for productivity and bad for Queensland. The former Labor government were given \$100 million

to fix the problem and they did nothing. That is a disgrace. The member for Gladstone, who is the local member, sat around the cabinet table and was part of the decision-making. We have not seen any construction. We have many failures from the former Labor government.

Increasing productivity in Queensland will, in turn, put downward pressure on prices, increase wages and raise profits for businesses and industry. This commission is incredibly important. I commend this bill to the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Whiting): Member for Callide, you talked about what the member for Murrumba said in the 2015 debate. The member for Murrumba at that time was me. The Leader of the Opposition was the member for Mount Coot-tha at that time. You might want to look at correcting that later, if needs be.

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (6.24 pm): I rise to make my contribution on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 brought to this House by my good friend from Toowoomba South. I want to remind people of the main purpose of the bill. The main purpose of this bill is to establish the Queensland Productivity Commission to undertake inquiries and research and to provide independent advice to the minister in relation to economic and social issues, regulatory matters or legislation, having particular regard to productivity, economic growth and improving living standards in Queensland.

Why on earth anybody would not think that is a good idea, I am not sure. I am sure those opposite thought it was a good idea. Why are we here now? We are here now because in 2021 those opposite abolished such a body because they felt it was not important. The Crisafulli LNP government promised the people of Queensland that we would respect their money. That is exactly what the Productivity Commission is about. It is about making sure that the people of Queensland get value for their tax dollar.

We have heard lots of commentary about the construction industry and utility bills going up, and various other things. We have heard about productivity stagnating and even going backwards under the previous government. We have heard commentary about red and green tape and how compliance costs are driving costs up.

People might ask themselves: why is that? We heard members talk about working conditions and how productivity might affect working conditions. Let me say that paying tax at an ever increasing rate because the Labor Party squandered people's money and having an interest bill that has to be met every year is going to affect their working conditions, principally their take-home pay. People go to work for their take-home pay and their take-home pay is going down because this government squandered money. Therefore, tax has to go up. Then they borrow money and we are left with an interest bill of \$9.9 billion and increasing.

That is 9.9 thousand million dollars. When we get our pay receipt and it shows the tax we have paid, when we buy something and GST goes on, when we pay stamp duty or pay any other government charge, we have to ask ourselves: why does the government need that money? Is it because we have beautiful infrastructure that outstrips everybody else's in a Western democracy on planet earth? Is it because our services are the best available in a Western democracy on planet earth? The reality is that that tax is going up, that interest bill is going up and services are declining.

One only has to ask people in the south-west and Toowoomba about this. We see services declining. Infrastructure is declining. The hospital we needed was \$2.1 billion. The hospital that has been committed to by the previous government was \$1.3 billion. Our interest bill is \$9.9 billion. We could build the hospital multiple times. Because those opposite did not respect people's money and because productivity stagnated that money is not there.


Ultimately, what that means is that there is some intergenerational theft going on. Guess who gets to pay that bill? It will be the next generation. I am lucky; I am approaching an age where in the next decade I will reach retirement. This debt left by the Labor government will exist long after that. My children and maybe their children will still be trying to pay off some of the service delivery, that has been declining and was put in place by the Labor government.

That is intergenerational theft. That is taking money from the future to spend now because of a lack of productivity and incompetent administration by those opposite. That is exactly what we have seen with multiple projects across the state. Budgets have blown out. Timelines have blown out. Service delivery was not happening. We have had all the crises across Queensland under the Labor government.

We promised to respect people's money. We promised to respect their tax dollar. That is why we need the Productivity Commission. That is why the Treasurer wants the Productivity Commission. That is why we will be looking at doing an intergenerational equity report. What is fair for us now out of our tax spend and what is fair for the future is very important.

We cannot keep going down the path that the former Labor government had us on. They were living in la-la land when they were making promises that were unfunded and had not been prepared for. They did not know the timelines. What we do know is that we are going to need more children in Queensland because if we do not we are going to have to increase the amount of tax that an individual pays. If people are not sure then just ask themselves: are we better off now than when we were when the Labor government was first elected?

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

 **Mr WATTS:** Before the break I was talking about the Crisafulli LNP government's promise to respect Queenslanders' money. The Productivity Commission is fundamentally important to make sure that when we do collect tax it is not just treated as revenue. It has actually come out of somebody's pocket so we can deliver services and build infrastructure. That is why we have a government and that is why we pay tax.


When a government is unproductive and when it does things to cause industry to be unproductive—I will not go into BPIC because I know that our deputy will cover off on that, but when the construction industry, whether it is building a bridge or a hospital or whatever, becomes unproductive and inefficient—we have to tax people more. That is what the Labor government was doing to the tune of—I mentioned it before the break—\$9.9 billion in interest. The people of Queensland get nothing for that \$9.9 billion—that is, \$9,900 million. It is just the interest on what has already been spent.

This government, the LNP government, will respect your money. The former Labor government, under various leadership, squandered that money with total disregard, yet they come in here and say, 'Oh, you know, it is about working conditions.' Like I said, the key working condition is: what is in your take-home pay packet? That is why you went to work. Those members opposite will take that and make sure you can buy less with it. That is Labor's philosophy: 'We will tax you more. We will spend it wastefully. We will be unproductive, and we will deliver you declining services and declining infrastructure.' That is what Labor was doing.

The reason we are establishing a productivity commission in Queensland is to be able to do the serious research—to look at where the red and green tape is. Where is the compliance that is unnecessary? Where are the hidden costs that are being put on business, on housing and on everything that the people of Queensland try to do? Where are those hidden costs? Where can we make some productivity gains? How can we improve things so that our services are what people are expecting them to be when they pay their tax and so that we have the infrastructure that is needed for the future?

I spoke a little bit about intergenerational equity. I know there is a report coming on that. When we build infrastructure to last 25 years, fair enough, you can carry some of that forward because people will benefit from it for the next 25 years. What you cannot do is spend beyond your means repeatedly—year after year after year—while your interest is increasing, because that is stealing from a future generation. That is stealing their tax dollars for services that they will never receive because that service has already been delivered to somebody else and they did not have enough money in the bank to pay for it.

The reason productivity is important to the LNP is that we want to respect taxpayers' money. We want to spend it effectively, efficiently and productively so that we can be the Queensland that everybody wants us to be when they pay their tax.

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (7.34 pm): During the last parliamentary sitting week the LNP abolished two Labor taxes. This week we are re-establishing a productivity commission in Queensland—a productivity commission abolished by the Labor Party, by a bad government that introduced taxes and introduced less efficiencies on construction sites and less productivity on construction sites. I would say to honourable members that—if they watched the performance of the honourable opposition members this morning they would know—I do not think productivity is too great on that side. I would say to the honourable Treasurer that, when he looks at referrals, perhaps he ought to refer the honourable opposition to the Productivity Commission because, God knows, they need a little help. They need a little help with productivity. They need a little help with strategy. They just need a little help getting to work. I saw this morning—

**Mr Janetzki:** Most resourced opposition.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take that interjection: they are one of the most resourced oppositions in the history of Queensland. When one of the ministers was asked a question this morning with respect to councils, I could not help but think, as I contributed this morning, that the relationship between the former Labor government and local government was not a good one. It was not just with local government; it was with everyone. It was with builders and developers but not the CFMEU. They had a great relationship with the CFMEU—and I will get to that. I would not talk about productivity in the House without talking about the CFMEU. They had a bad relationship with everyone—with the building sector, with everybody.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take that interjection—the resources sector. They put red tape, green tape and government tape on everything they touched. That is why former treasurer Dick abolished the Productivity Commission: they were producing reports that—

**Mr Watts:** Couldn't handle the truth.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection: he could not handle the truth. I have heard too many sayings today—too many 'finger lickin' good' sayings today. He could not handle the truth. What did he do? Rather than take the Productivity Commission advice about productivity in government, efficiency in government and how to do things better for Queensland taxpayers, he just got rid of them. He just abolished them. He got a report. He did not like it. He did not like what they were recommending. He did not come into parliament and say, 'This is why the government are not doing X, so we will choose Y or Z.' No, he just abolished it. He abolished the very body I think they set up. They did! I think they set up the Productivity Commission to look at productivity. It did its job. It produced reports. They did not like it because they are one of the most unproductive rabbles I have seen in this House for so long. What did they do? They just abolished it. They did not want to hear them. They did not want to talk efficiencies.

What have we seen since the abolition of that body? We have seen red tape go up for business, green tape go up for business and government tape go up for business. We have seen the CFMEU own construction sites in Queensland. We have seen the CFMEU own the former Labor government for 10 years. Why? It is because every single member on the Labor Party side of the House owed their existence in this place to the dodgy CFMEU. They did what the CFMEU wanted. They did not do what the CFMEU did not want them to do. They passed legislation in this House putting the CFMEU on a pedestal of government policy. When the policies changed, the donations flowed from the CFMEU. That is how the Labor Party operated in Queensland.

We are going to fix it. We are going to get productivity back onto construction sites. It is inexcusable in any environment to have productivity down on some construction sites in Queensland 2½ days a week—2½ days of lost productivity. Members on the Labor side do not understand why the costs add up, the projects are delayed and the budget blows out on every single project. When we won the election in October and we looked at the Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro scheme—upwards of \$37 billion—what did we do? We got rid of it because it was a waste of money, it was a waste of time and it was a hoax. It was a hydro hoax that those opposite tried to force on the people particularly in regional and rural Queensland. We exposed the hoax and we fixed it by not proceeding with it.

**Mr Janetzki:** You're a fixer.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am a fixer; I take the interjection. I enjoyed being Treasurer for three days and energy minister for three days in the first Crisafulli government. You have seen the Treasurer release the statistics on blowouts on a lot of projects in the energy sector. I have done it with the Olympic and Paralympic Games. We are up-front with the people of Queensland. We are showing the blowouts on all of the construction programs and projects the Labor Party promised. They were just promises; they could never be delivered.

**Mr Minnikin:** Hollow!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** They were hollow promises. They could never be delivered because they did not budget for them. They did not plan them. The only thing they did was glossy brochures and announcements. Oh my God, they loved their announcements! I remember going to Griffith University when the opposition leader, as the minister responsible at the time, announced a housing project. There were going to be hundreds of units for people in crisis accommodation and so forth. They did not do anything. It did not proceed. I went back to the site time and time again: they still had government wrap around the site as if they were about to commence construction on this site. Nothing was going to happen. They announced they were not proceeding with it, but they left the tape up because they love



tape. Red tape, green tape, government tape—they left the tape up. They love tape. They do not govern. They are terrible at governing. They did not want a productivity commission because time and time again it would have exposed again how bad the Labor Party was. That is why they abolished it.

I am very proud to be in the Crisafulli government reintroducing the Productivity Commission. We are not scared of productivity reports. If the Productivity Commission produces reports that make it more efficient and cheaper for Queensland to deliver projects, bring it on! I listened to the contributions from those opposite when the debate started. They were all whingeing. They might support it, but they are going to have some amendments. The only skerrick of a reason they have for saying they will support elements of this bill is because they know they have been found out. They are in the pockets of the CFMEU and they have been caught out.


When we talk about housing, it is supply, supply, supply. So many projects were held up in government bureaucracy under the Labor Party. As planning minister, I am releasing housing supply. When it comes to my office I have it signed within 48 hours, it is back in the department and we have announced it like we just did in Toowoomba North the other day. These things were sitting on former minister Scanlon's desk for a year. She could not make a decision. We are making decisions. I thought I was only going to talk for a couple of minutes tonight, but I have taken many interjections. I promised the Treasurer—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Protect me, Mr Deputy Speaker. Protect me from my own! I promised the Treasurer I would only talk for a couple of minutes. I know he is sitting there anticipating the delivery of his conclusion.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** He says I am being unproductive with this speech. He wants to set up the Productivity Commission. I cannot but use my last one minute and 10 seconds to talk about the grubby, bullying, thuggish CFMEU which, incidentally, is in the media again today fighting with each other about an alleged racist rapper/singer and all sorts of things. I have been talking in this chamber about the CFMEU and the lack of productivity when the CFMEU gets involved every single year. I have been the minister for industrial relations and the shadow minister for industrial relations for about 15 years in this place, and I have talked and banged on about the CFMEU. Guess what? Now Queenslanders have a government listening to them and acting. That is why we abolished and suspended BPIC, aka the CFMEU Labor building tax. I look forward to the honourable Treasurer sending the first referral—of the building industry—to the Productivity Commission to finally get the CFMEU under control. We know the Labor Party, including the Labor shadow treasurer, is in the pockets of the CFMEU. She stayed silent. She sees bullying on construction sites; she refuses to say anything about it. We will not accept bullying and CFMEU intimidation on construction sites. We believe that every worker should go to work safely and return to their families. That is why we want the Productivity Commission reinstated.

 **Hon. DC JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership) (7.44 pm), in reply: Mr Deputy Speaker, let's be productive now and pass the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. I thank those members who have provided their support for the bill, including the Deputy Premier. I am privileged to be the Treasurer who restores an independent Productivity Commission to Queensland.

The role of the Productivity Commission will be integral to leading policy development that drives better outcomes for Queenslanders because productivity underwrites prosperity, and we must return it to Queensland to drive down costs across industry and around the kitchen table. After a decade of stagnation under Labor Queensland cannot afford to kick the can down the road any longer on productivity, which is why the Crisafulli government has acted.

The debate before the House on this bill highlights the opposition's efforts to undermine and downplay the independence of the commission. Let me be clear: the commission will be independent. The government will not have the capacity to direct the commission on the contents of its advice, findings or recommendations. The commission will provide independent advice to government, but its success will be dependent on that advice being focussed on priority issues that help inform the government's consideration of key policy issues that are important to Queenslanders. Therefore, the commission will not have the power to initiate public inquiries independent of government direction; however, it will have the power to put proposals to government to undertake its own self-generated analysis of the issues at hand.

Constituting the Queensland Productivity Commission as a statutory body ensures that the Productivity Commission will be independent from government, and this independence will be enshrined in legislation. Any changes to the roles, functions and institutional features of the entity will require the amendment of legislation and therefore be open to parliamentary scrutiny.

In my opening remarks, I emphasised the importance of productivity as the main driver of living standards and highlighted the poor productivity performance in Queensland over the last several years. The Crisafulli government is committed to taking the actions needed to lift Queensland's productivity, support business activity and drive income growth, enhance government services, and ensure the delivery of our government's housing and infrastructure priorities. This bill is an important part of that commitment.

I now want to turn to some of the contributions that have been made during the debate. Several members have spoken today about the importance of productivity to the Queensland economy. Members on this side of the House have highlighted how the lack of productivity under 10 years of Labor is limiting our economy, holding back our powerhouse industries and hurting households. They have detailed how the state needs its own Productivity Commission to secure our future prosperity. We need to cut unnecessary regulatory imposts, encourage creativity and innovation, and build a highly skilled Public Service to deliver more and better services. Members have told us about how they want to restore the Productivity Commission because it is long overdue to restore respect for taxpayers' money in Queensland, drive down the cost of living, improve housing affordability, and ensure access to reliable and affordable services. Colleagues have highlighted the work the Productivity Commission will undertake, and I thank them for it.

It is important to remember that the first brief and referral to the Productivity Commission is to conduct a comprehensive review of the building and construction industry. The commission will also deliver Queensland's first intergenerational equity report, outlining key issues that Queenslanders experience across the generations and consequently develop long-term solutions. The Productivity Commission's independence is crucial to its effectiveness and the provision of independent advice plays an important role in effective policymaking. The commission will be a critical tool in ensuring that Queensland remains a place of opportunity, growth and prosperity.

While it is obvious that this Productivity Commission will benefit all Queenslanders, opposition members have tried to criticise it, mainly out of ignorance. I think today in particular about the contributions of the member for Pine Rivers and the member for Aspley. I had almost forgotten they were ministers of the Crown in the former government, they were both so ineffective.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kempton): Members to my left, I know it is probably quite important but could you keep the chatter down, please.

**Mr JANETZKI:** They failed to be productive in their portfolios at the time. To be honest, the only contribution I remember the member for Aspley ever making was to sign off on cost blowout after cost blowout—the very antithesis of the kind of productivity we want to restore to Queensland.

I refer to the contribution to the debate from the member for Waterford, the shadow treasurer. I really need to ask the shadow treasurer whether she in fact put a search into ChatGPT to come up with her Productivity Commission speech. After regurgitating what appeared to be an AI summary of productivity, the shadow treasurer seemed to fall back on a year 9 economics class in what she had to say about productivity in Queensland. It sounded suspiciously like a ChatGPT search result. I am just going to pull out a couple of quotes, because I had to go and read the speech after I listened to the shadow treasurer speak. She said—

... we know that the Productivity Commission will be controlled entirely by the Treasurer, who will have the power to dictate what it investigates and what research it undertakes and, just as importantly, what it does not.

She said—

... the bill does not allow the commission to independently conduct published research without the approval of the minister and, further, allows the minister to amend the research proposal.

Like the year 9 economics class that the shadow treasurer appeared not to have listened to, she has fundamentally misunderstood the bill and what it seeks to achieve. The bill clearly states that the Queensland Productivity Commission will be able to undertake research into economic and social issues, regulatory matters or legislation on its own initiative. That is something ChatGPT could not tell the shadow treasurer. That is something ChatGPT could not deliver. She did not put it in the search.

**Dr Rowan** interjected.

**Mr JANETZKI:** It did not read the bill. For the shadow treasurer's benefit, the research or analysis and any report produced by the Productivity Commission based on that research or analysis will still be undertaken and prepared independently. Importantly, the research or analysis cannot be about the content of any advice or recommendation given by the commission. On another point of confusion for the shadow treasurer, she stated—

Unlike the federal Productivity Commission, there is no requirement for this body to table reports in parliament—none—and any work the commission initiates on its own can only be published with the Treasurer's approval and there is absolutely no parliamentary oversight.

What ChatGPT could have told the shadow treasurer but has clearly not is what is stated in the bill—that is, that the QPC would be required to publish an inquiry report on its website as soon as practicable following receipt of the minister's response to that report, thus enabling public scrutiny of said report. The shadow treasurer really needs to do a bit more than plug in a ChatGPT search and expect what comes out the other end to constitute enough subject matter to one day be treasurer of Queensland. The shadow treasurer cannot just plug in ChatGPT searches and expect the kind of analysis that ought to be brought to the serious role that she now holds.

This is the same as what was required under the previous Queensland Productivity Commission. There is no requirement for QPC reports to be tabled under this bill. This is exactly the same as under the previous Labor government's Queensland Productivity Commission Act from 2015, which also did not require QPC reports or the government responses to be tabled in parliament. The bill only requires the Queensland Productivity Commission to seek the Treasurer's approval for self-initiated research it intends to publish. Once the research proposal is approved, the Treasurer's approval is not required for the QPC to publish the resulting report.

**Ms Fentiman** interjected.

**Mr JANETZKI:** You are going to have to do better, shadow treasurer.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, I will not have shouting at each other across the floor, please.

**Mr JANETZKI:** The member for McConnel posed a question. She asked—

If they are going to be doing exactly the same work as the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction, why do they need to be transferred out of Treasury?

That was the member for McConnel. It is a simple answer. The QPC has broader functions than the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction, including conducting public inquiries, which is not part of the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction's work. The new Productivity Commission, just like its predecessor, will have powers to require information from government agencies in order to conduct inquiries and research. These are powers that the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction does not have.

The reason for moving the Productivity Commission outside of Treasury is also simple. Our government was committed to making the commission independent and moving it back outside government agencies after the former Labor government moved it there to bring it under their political control. The member for McConnel rightly pointed out that clause 38(3) of the bill says that the Treasurer cannot dictate to the Productivity Commission what they write. Thank goodness for that. The member for McConnel also said—

They want to put a clause in the legislation which almost says, 'If you write a report—guess what?—you are free to write it.'

That is exactly right, member for McConnel. I could not have said it better myself.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr JANETZKI:** I take the interjection from the member for McConnel. Maybe the member for McConnel should be the shadow treasurer, because we know that the member for McConnel would not need a ChatGPT search; she could probably draw on her Harvard days studying. She could probably draw on her Harvard experiences rather than ChatGPT, like the shadow treasurer has tonight. I thank the member for McConnel for completely agreeing with our position, because the provision that the member for McConnel referred to clearly demonstrates the independence of the Queensland Productivity Commission's advice.

Importantly, the research or analysis and any report produced by the Queensland Productivity Commission based on that research or analysis will still be undertaken and prepared independently. Any direction by the Treasurer cannot be about the content of any advice or recommendation made by the commission. This is a common approach, and the former government's legislation had a similar

provision when it established the former Queensland Productivity Commission in 2015—back when they at least pretended to care about productivity, households and the cost of living.

The member for Bancroft also said that the QPC could replace or shunt aside some of the work of a parliamentary committee. I can reassure the member that the work of the Queensland Productivity Commission has no impact on the responsibilities or role of parliamentary committees, which are determined by standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly made under the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. The bill does not in any way override the standing orders. The member for Bancroft also seemed very concerned about the time it would take for the Productivity Commission to release its inquiry reports. He said—

All the commission needs to do is publish it on a website three months after the Treasurer has sat on that report.

Let me again reassure the member that the bill requires that the minister must respond to inquiry reports within three months of receiving a report from the Productivity Commission and that the Productivity Commission must publish the report on the Productivity Commission's website following receipt of the minister's response. This contrasts with the previous Queensland Productivity Commission Act, established by the former Labor government, which allowed the minister six months to respond to a report. Surely that is a dreadful prospect for the member for Bancroft. Once they receive the minister's report, the Productivity Commission is then required to publish the report on their website, which is the same as the requirement under the Queensland Productivity Commission Act. In a final bid to provide some peace of mind and assurance for the member for Bancroft, I will remind him of his words in 2015 when he said—

The Productivity Commission will provide independent economic and policy advice to the state with the goal of increasing productivity as well as improving the living standards of Queenslanders and driving economic growth.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr JANETZKI:** No. He said—

We have to keep looking for productivity gains and see where they can be made, and that is why the Queensland Productivity Commission will be so important.

I have checked, member for Bancroft. Don't worry: they were the honourable member's words. The member for Bulimba shared that view back in 2015 when she said—

I think we all agreed that it was important to establish an independent economic advisory body ...

That was the member for Bulimba. It is great to see support from the member for Bulimba. The Leader of the Opposition also seemed to agree back in 2015. He said—

... the Queensland Productivity Commission will provide a vital service for the government and the state.

I also should note the words of former treasurer Curtis Pitt, who in fact instituted the Productivity Commission back in 2015 and who believed in it. He said—

... governments should seek new productivity gains in order to protect economic growth and living standards. The Queensland Productivity Commission is intended to be a key mechanism in that respect.

But it was too productive. In the first year or two there were seven reviews, then four reviews, and over time the replacement treasurer to Curtis Pitt starved the Productivity Commission out of its existence. It was Jackie. It was Jackie Trad. It was Jackie that starved the Productivity Commission out of its existence over the years. In fact, in 2020, the Productivity Commission released the review into regulatory gains. In 2021, they released a review into regulatory reform, which was the final review. It is telling that the final review of the Productivity Commission, as previously constituted under the Labor government, was a review into regulatory reform. That review found that regulatory imposts on Queensland businesses topped at the upper end \$7 billion per annum—\$7 billion per annum on business expenses. That was the last review. They heard that and the other reviews that were coming through and they were like, 'Enough! Enough! We can't bear any more of this truth. We have to shut this down and bring it back under the control of the member for Woodridge.' That is what they did. They firstly starved it of its existence and then when they got the final review, they were like, 'Oh, can't handle this. There is too much truth for us.' That review found that the impost to business was up to \$7 billion per year. There were 72,400 pages of regulatory burden across the state. There was an explosion in regulatory reform.

The former government starved the Productivity Commission, as we see it today, of its existence. It is telling that during the course of this debate over the last sitting week and this sitting week that the former treasurer never even spoke. He never even spoke. He rolled it back into the bureaucracy in 2021, in a larger bill, and today he has not even bothered to speak. We know what they think about the

Productivity Commission. We watched them. We watched them starve it out of existence. We watched them ignore its recommendations. We watched them not just ignore the recommendations, but run from them. They ran from them.

I have to comment on the member for Miller. I was reading the statement of reservation. The opposition members of the committee said the Productivity Commission will be like a hammer in my hands. The member for Miller was not paying attention. He has been reading night-time fairy tales or something because he is talking about Chihuahuas and tamed cats and little lambs. What are you talking about, member for Miller? What are you talking about on the Productivity Commission Bill? Seriously!

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr JANETZKI:** I will take the interjection. You are not on Twitter anymore, member for Miller. What are you talking about? Whatever flight of fancy the member for Miller was on, those opposite, in the statement of reservation, said the Productivity Commission would be like a hammer in my hands. They said 'as a hammer to inquire into any aspect of Queensland life'. After everything I have had to say about the independence, the dedication to rigour and the solutions that we need to deliver—better cost of living, better infrastructure delivery and better housing delivery for our state—after everything that I have said, those opposite said, 'It will be a hammer in the hands of the Treasurer, controlled by the Treasurer, doing as the Treasurer commands.'

Let me say that if those opposite want to say that this commission will be a hammer, let it be a hammer that builds homes for the people that those opposite left homeless, that those opposite left sleeping in cars, in tents and under bridges. Let it. Let it be the hammer that builds infrastructure on time and on budget. Let it be that hammer after those opposite squandered their decade in office. If those opposite want to say that I will use this commission as a hammer, let it be the hammer which will put the final nail in the coffin of Labor's culture of project mismanagement and cost overruns.

Let me say this: I will take a hammer that builds housing, infrastructure and service delivery over a hammer and sickle. I will take that hammer any day of the week. I commend the bill to the House.

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


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 36, as read, agreed to.

Clause 37—

 **Ms FENTIMAN:** (8.06 pm): I move amendment No. 1 circulated in my name and table the explanatory notes to my amendments and statement of compatibility with human rights.

**1. Clause 37 (Undertaking research on commission's initiative)**

Page 20, line 15 to page 21, line 17—

*omit, insert—*

- (2) Before publishing the results of the research, the commission must advise the chief executive it will publish the results of the research.

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024, explanatory notes to Hon. Shannon Fentiman's amendments.

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Shannon Fentiman's amendments.

In his second reading, the Treasurer gleefully read quotes of opposition members speaking on the Productivity Act from 2015, as though it was some kind of gotcha moment. But in 2015, of course, MPs were speaking on a significantly different Productivity Commission, one that had independence, independence that has been called for by stakeholders, including the Business Chamber of Queensland, Australian Institute for Progress and the Queensland Canegrowers.

The Treasurer insists that he cannot change the contents of the findings of the Productivity Commission, but he absolutely can change the content of the findings by changing the question and the scope of research. There is no better example than the recent decision of the Premier to include new stadiums in the scope of the Olympic review, despite promising Queenslanders countless times there would be no new stadium. This is why we need an independent commission. The amendments that I am moving remove the requirement for the commission to seek approval from the Treasurer to publish research.

The Treasurer just before said that of course the Productivity Commission can undertake its own research, but it would seem that if the Productivity Commission ever wanted to publish that research, then they need to get approval first. That is where the Treasurer can amend the scope of the research proposal, or simply refuse that the Productivity Commission commence that research. The amendments that I am moving would give the Productivity Commission the opportunity to undertake its own research independently and publish that research and analysis.

What are those opposite so afraid of? Why would they not want their brand new Productivity Commission to be able to undertake its own research and report on it just like the federal Productivity Commission can? We do not need an LNP think tank; we need an independent productivity commission, and that is what these amendments do.

**Mr JANETZKI:** The government will be opposing the opposition's amendments. I think it the height of audacity that those that abolished the Productivity Commission have now amazingly become the experts. They have a hide! When it was abolished in 2021, everyone over there who was there at the time voted for it to be abolished. The member for Miller voted for it to be abolished. Everyone over there voted for it to be abolished—all of you. And now you are all the experts? Spare me.

We are not going to take any advice from those opposite, who oversaw a decade of declining productivity and starved the Productivity Commission out of existence. They now have the hide, temerity and audacity to come in here and try to tell the government how it should structure its productivity commission. I cannot be any clearer for the shadow treasurer. Section 38(3) of the bill cannot be any clearer that any direction given by the Treasurer cannot be about the content of any advice or recommendation given by the commission. I call that independence, pure and simple.

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

**AYES, 35:**

**ALP, 34—**Asif, Bailey, Bourne, Boyd, Bush, Butcher, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Grace, Healy, Howard, J. Kelly, King, Linard, Martin, McCallum, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Mullen, Nightingale, O'Shea, Pease, Pugh, Russo, Ryan, Scanlon, Smith, Sullivan, Whiting.

**Grn, 1—**Berkman.

**NOES, 51:**

**LNP, 51—**Baillie, Barounis, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crandon, Crisafulli, Dalton, Dillon, Doolan, Dooley, Field, Frecklington, Gerber, Head, Hutton, Hunt, B. James, T. James, Janetzki, G. Kelly, Kempton, Kirkland, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lee, Lister, Mander, Marr, McDonald, Mickelberg, Minnikin, Molhoek, Morton, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Poole, Powell, Purdie, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Stoker, Watts, Vorster, Young.

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Ms Fentiman) negated.

Division: Question put—That clause 37, as read, stand part of the bill.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Ring the bells for one minute.

**AYES, 51:**

**LNP, 51—**Baillie, Barounis, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crandon, Crisafulli, Dalton, Dillon, Doolan, Dooley, Field, Frecklington, Gerber, Head, Hutton, Hunt, B. James, T. James, Janetzki, G. Kelly, Kempton, Kirkland, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lee, Lister, Mander, Marr, McDonald, Mickelberg, Minnikin, Molhoek, Morton, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Poole, Powell, Purdie, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Stoker, Watts, Vorster, Young.

**NOES, 34:**

**ALP, 34—**Asif, Bailey, Bourne, Boyd, Bush, Butcher, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Grace, Healy, Howard, J. Kelly, King, Linard, Martin, McCallum, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Mullen, Nightingale, O'Shea, Pease, Pugh, Russo, Ryan, Scanlon, Smith, Sullivan, Whiting.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 37, as read, agreed to.

Clause 38—



**Ms FENTIMAN (8.18 pm):** I move amendment No. 2 circulated in my name—

**2. Clause 38 (Ministerial directions)**

Page 22, lines 8 and 9—

*omit, insert—*

- (b) publish a copy of the direction on the commission's website as soon as practicable after the direction is given but before the commission first takes any action under the direction.

This amendment also adds a timeline of publication for any written direction given by the Treasurer to the commission. This increases transparency. It allows Queenslanders to see exactly what the Treasurer has requested of the commission before the research commences. The government must be up-front with Queenslanders about the scope and the prescribed assumptions of any research they are requesting. Again, I am not sure why a government that prides itself on accountability would have any problem with a direction about research being published. I urge those opposite, if they are so committed to an independent Productivity Commission, to support publishing directions. It is part of what stakeholders, through the committee process, have been asking for. What do those opposite have to hide? Why do not they want their directions published? I urge them to support the amendment.

**Mr JANETZKI:** I am sorry to disappoint the shadow treasurer but we will be opposing the amendment. The shadow treasurer's contribution to the Productivity Commission Bill debate sounded like something spat out by ChatGPT. I am disappointed that the shadow treasurer, who was once an attorney-general, would not have understood that the Acts Interpretation Act covers this very eventuality. The Acts Interpretation Act states that if no timeframe is stated in a piece of legislation it is deemed to have the timeframe of 'as soon as possible'.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I refer to standing order 149 in relation to clauses under consideration in detail. Debate on the clauses needs to be relevant to the specific clause. The shadow treasurer's amendment No. 2 goes to the publishing of directions on the commission's website as soon as practicable. I ask you to draw him back to relevance.

**Mr JANETZKI:** The Manager of Opposition Business has confirmed why the shadow treasurer should not have wasted the House's time and been more productive when he says 'as soon as practicable', because the Acts Interpretation Act says 'as soon as possible'. We do not even need this amendment. I would have thought a former attorney-general would have a better understanding of the law. Enough is enough. Let's get this bill passed and get productivity returned to Queensland.

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

**AYES, 34:**

**ALP, 34—**Asif, Bailey, Bourne, Boyd, Bush, Butcher, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Grace, Healy, Howard, J. Kelly, King, Linard, Martin, McCallum, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Mullen, Nightingale, O'Shea, Pease, Pugh, Russo, Ryan, Scanlon, Smith, Sullivan, Whiting.

**NOES, 51:**

**LNP, 51—**Baillie, Barounis, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crandon, Crisafulli, Dalton, Dillon, Doolan, Dooley, Field, Frecklington, Gerber, Head, Hutton, Hunt, B. James, T. James, Janetzki, G. Kelly, Kempton, Kirkland, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lee, Lister, Mander, Marr, McDonald, Mickelberg, Minnikin, Molhoek, Morton, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Poole, Powell, Purdie, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Stoker, Watts, Vorster, Young.

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Ms Fentiman) negatived.

Division: Question put—That clause 38, as read, stand part of the bill.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Ring the bells for one minute.

**AYES, 51:**

**LNP, 51—**Baillie, Barounis, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crandon, Crisafulli, Dalton, Dillon, Doolan, Dooley, Field, Frecklington, Gerber, Head, Hutton, Hunt, B. James, T. James, Janetzki, G. Kelly, Kempton, Kirkland, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lee, Lister, Mander, Marr, McDonald, Mickelberg, Minnikin, Molhoek, Morton, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Poole, Powell, Purdie, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Stoker, Watts, Vorster, Young.

**NOES, 34:**

**ALP, 34—**Asif, Bailey, Bourne, Boyd, Bush, Butcher, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Grace, Healy, Howard, J. Kelly, King, Linard, Martin, McCallum, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Mullen, Nightingale, O'Shea, Pease, Pugh, Russo, Ryan, Scanlon, Smith, Sullivan, Whiting.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 38, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 39 to 49, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 1, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading



**Mr JANETZKI** (8.29 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

**Mr SPEAKER:** Ring the bells for one minute.

**AYES, 51:**

**LNP, 51**—Baillie, Barounis, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Camm, Crandon, Crisafulli, Dalton, Dillon, Doolan, Dooley, Field, Frecklington, Gerber, Head, Hutton, Hunt, B. James, T. James, Janetzki, G. Kelly, Kempton, Kirkland, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lee, Lister, Mander, Marr, McDonald, Mickelberg, Minnikin, Molhoek, Morton, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Poole, Powell, Purdie, Rowan, Simpson, Stevens, Stoker, Watts, Vorster, Young.


**NOES, 34:**

**ALP, 34**—Asif, Bailey, Bourne, Boyd, Bush, Butcher, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Grace, Healy, Howard, J. Kelly, King, Linard, Martin, McCallum, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Mullen, Nightingale, O'Shea, Pease, Pugh, Russo, Ryan, Scanlon, Smith, Sullivan, Whiting.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a third time.

### Long Title

 **Hon. DC JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership) (8.31 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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


Motion agreed to.

## APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL

### APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL

Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2023-2024) Bill resumed from 10 December 2024 (see p. 225) and Appropriation (Supplementary 2023-2024) Bill resumed from 10 December 2024 (see p. 227).

### Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

 **Hon. DC JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership) (8.32 pm): I move—

That the bills be now read a second time.

The purpose of these bills that have been cognated tonight is to provide for additional supplementary appropriations for unforeseen expenditure that occurred in the 2023-24 financial year under the previous government. Although these matters relate to decisions of the former government which impacted the 2023-24 financial year, there is still a formal legislative requirement for this amount to receive formal appropriation by parliament via these bills before the House. Although these matters relate to the year past, this parliament must deal with them.

The \$9 billion in unforeseen expenditure for 2023-24 represented 11.6 per cent of the original appropriation. I repeat: it was 11.6 per cent of the original appropriation. That is a record unforeseen expenditure. The previous highest in the last 10 years was in 2016-17 when it was 4.76 per cent of the original appropriation. Let's think that through for a moment in terms of what that means. That means that those opposite could not run a budget in government and it was that bad that it was 11.6 per cent over the original appropriation. That is how bad those opposite had been running the budget. It is an impossibility. It is an implausibility. In the next 28 minutes I am going to spend some time going through how we ended up here. Because it is an appropriation bill—

**Mr Mander:** It would take longer than that.

**Mr JANETZKI:** I would take a whole hour if I could, member for Everton, but I get 28 minutes, so I am going to run through how those opposite so badly mismanaged the budget for so long that it culminated in these unforeseen expenditure bills that this House is debating tonight. It is crucial to good government that there is proper scrutiny applied to the allocation of the public's money. It is even more



important when we have had three terms of a Labor government that was so fiscally irresponsible and relentless in its efforts to keep the truth from Queenslanders. We on this side of the chamber welcome scrutiny and transparency because we have the best interests of the Queensland people at heart—not just the political interests of ourselves, like those opposite did for so very long.

The very reason these unforeseen expenditure bills are being considered now in March, ahead of June's appropriation bills, is because of financial accountability measures undertaken by the last Liberal National Party government in Queensland. It was the Labor government under former treasurer Andrew Fraser that would only introduce the supplementary appropriation bills with the following year's budget appropriation bills. It was a decision of the last Liberal National Party government that that was a convenient way to hide poor financial management, which is something that Labor governments over time have become very accustomed to every time they are in power. The decision was made to change it, and the supplementary appropriation bills are debated in this House and given due scrutiny and consideration prior to the next year's budget appropriation bills.

These appropriation bills in this cognate debate are a stark demonstration of the fiscal vandalism of the former Labor government—they really are—much of which was hidden before the election but which we have calmly and methodically investigated and shared with the Queensland people since the election. This bill in particular relates to decisions made by the previous government, including unforeseen expenditure of \$1.128 billion, and is the final component. Those opposite could not even get it right in one supplementary appropriation bill; this is the third supplementary appropriation bill relating to FY 2023-24. As I said, this is the third supplementary appropriation bill, so they did not just blow the budget by 11.6 per cent over what was originally appropriated; they had to come back three times. This bill, with this final amount, is the last sorry chapter of 10 years of the fiscal vandalism of those opposite. It is the last sorry chapter of those opposite and their fiscal vandalism.

Regarding the 2023-24 financial year, as I said, unforeseen expenditure has already been approved on two occasions. Other parts of that record overspend included \$2.267 billion contained in the Cheaper Power (Supplementary Appropriation) Act 2024 and the unforeseen expenditure of \$6.154 billion contained in the Appropriation Act 2024. This record \$9 billion unforeseen expenditure—this 11.6 per cent over the original appropriation of those opposite in their final budget—comes as no surprise as the former Labor government had lost control of the budget and its spending, and everybody knew it. We knew it because we started to see it through the 10 years of the Palaszczuk-Miles government but in particular in the last year, and we saw it in its last budget—the 2023-24 budget, the budget where I had said that, notwithstanding record taxes, record borrowing and record spending, we still had record numbers of people living in cars and on the streets—

**Mr Bennett:** Under the bridges.

**Mr JANETZKI:** Under the bridges; I take the interjection from the member for Burnett. Notwithstanding the record taxes, borrowing and spending, we had record numbers of victims of crime of 289,657. Notwithstanding the record taxing, borrowing and spending, we had record numbers of the sick and the vulnerable waiting on ramps, with 45 per cent ramping—the worst in the country. Notwithstanding in that budget we had those numbers, at the time the debt was projected to go from \$72 billion to \$172 billion across the forwards, although the former treasurer did let it slip out in April of last year that it would probably get to \$188 billion. He quickly put that away, so it was \$172 billion—and I will come back to how those opposite deceived the people of Queensland. I will come back to that in my contribution, but it went from \$72 billion to \$172 billion in that budget. The interest costs went to \$7.73 billion at the end of the forwards. That is what was in that budget and what was known. Notwithstanding all of that record taxing, spending and borrowing, we had those record numbers of homeless, people waiting on the ramp and victims of crime. We know that.

It is obvious that those of us now on this side of the House were raising concerns when in opposition. We were saying that it was a concern, but it was not just us. Who can ever forget the *Financial Review's* last assessment of those opposite in their last budget? It called it a clown show. That is the *Financial Review*. The *Financial Review* called the last budget of those opposite a clown show. Standard & Poor's commented that there was waning fiscal discipline that was eroding the buffer on Queensland's rating, and I will come to our rating and our outlook shortly.

It was obvious to anybody observing that those opposite had already lost control of the budget in 2023-24. If we needed any further example of the ways in which those opposite had lost control all we needed to do was observe the Labor Party during the election campaign. Their desperation to be re-elected drove their economic decision-making. Who can forget Labor's state-owned service stations that would have driven out the competition of the smaller independents. That was not supported by

anyone, but those opposite thought it would be a great idea. They put forward state owned medical practices; another unexplained policy of those opposite. Then there was state delivered school lunches and another state run energy retailer.

**A government member:** Hammer and sickle.

**Mr JANETZKI:** Hammer and sickle! At one stage those opposite had committed to borrow \$33 billion in three weeks alone of the campaign. That is how desperate those opposite were. That is how disrespectful those opposite were of the Queensland taxpayer dollar and that is why we have repeatedly said, and we have already shown, that we will return respect to the hard-earned taxpayer dollar. In that budget there were cost-of-living measures that were never funded in the forwards. It took this side of the House to fully fund 50 cent fares. Those opposite did not do it. It was not in the budget. It did not exist.

**Mrs Frecklington:** What about the community legal services?

**Mr JANETZKI:** I will take the interjection from the Attorney-General. Since May 2023 the shadow treasurer has sat through CBRC meetings for every single one of these decisions: the \$33 billion in borrowings in three weeks of the campaign. The shadow treasurer was there for every decision that was made.

**A government member:** Cheering them on.

**Mr JANETZKI:** I will take the interjection: cheering them on. 'Let's not fully fund 50 cent fares, let's borrow \$33 billion for state owned medical practices, energy retailers and school lunches'. That is the legacy of the shadow treasurer from CBRC that she carries with her now.

It goes back further than that. We have just finished the Productivity Commission debate. In that debate I referred to Curtis Pitt, a former treasurer and member for Mulgrave, who introduced the Productivity Commission back in 2015. He was the treasurer for the first couple of years of the Palaszczuk government until Jackie Trad took care of Curtis. The former member for Mulgrave loaded up the GOCs with plenty of debt, but it really started to go downhill when the former member for South Brisbane, Jackie Trad, became treasurer of Queensland. The debt had blown out from \$72 billion to \$102 billion before COVID had even hit. We saw that treasurer, the former member for South Brisbane, rain down taxes on the property sector. There were a couple of budgets in a row where the former member for Mulgrave had taken steps in respect of loading up GOCs with debt, then the next treasurer who came in, the former member for South Brisbane, loaded up the property industry. She wanted to shut down the resources sector, the resources sector that underpins our prosperity and future growth, that pays for the services that Queenslanders deserve. They launched war on the property sector with taxes.

Then we come to the former treasurer, the member for Woodridge. Who can forget when he first took over as treasurer he did not know the debt number. He did not care.

**Mrs Frecklington:** Dead as a tool.

**Mr JANETZKI:** I will take the Attorney-General's interjection: dead as a tool. He did not know the debt number. There we have it in a nutshell. He promised 26 times before the 2020 election that there would be no new or increased taxes. What happened—new taxes that hurt renters and the interjurisdictional land tax that would have put up rents in the middle of a housing crisis. He was the treasurer who allowed the patients tax that put upward pressure on emergency departments, put upward pressure on the cost of seeing the family doctor, put upward pressure on bulk-billing and made it more difficult for the sick and the vulnerable to go and see the doctor. That is why it was so pleasing that last sitting week we abolished that tax. Those opposite lift taxes, we get rid of them. We cut taxes, those opposite do not.

Who can forget that the former treasurer, the member for Woodridge, did not just break tax promises and lift taxes, he squandered the precious taxpayer resources of this state. He squandered \$70 billion of revenue that he had not forecast. He collected \$70 billion of revenue he had not forecast in his first budget in 2020 and by 2024 that \$70 billion had gone. What did Queensland have to show for it: the record number of homeless that I have referred to, the patients tax that he allowed to flourish, the record number of victims of crime—

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr JANETZKI:** A generation of failure! That is the legacy of the 10 years of those opposite. When we formed government in November we very calmly and methodically started to investigate what those opposite had undertaken for the 10 years. In my initial Treasury briefing they warned of a heightened

risk of structural deficits and surging debt levels. That was from the long 10 years of Labor government. We did start calmly and methodically working our way through the fiscal deficit of those opposite. In relation to the capex that we have taken out and investigated and brought to the public awareness, where do we start?

**Ms Bates:** It's a long list.

**Mr JANETZKI:** It is a very long list; I take the interjection of the finance minister. Honourable members will remember that the Pioneer-Burdekin project started at \$7 billion and then went to \$12 billion. Those opposite hid that from the Queensland people. They went to an election having hidden the real cost of that project, which was \$36.8 billion.

**A government member:** Disgraceful!

**Mr JANETZKI:** It is a disgrace that they would hide such a blowout from the Queensland people. I will not even go into what it meant for their Energy and Jobs Plan, which just fell apart from that moment. That project would have been a drag on the Queensland balance sheet for a generation. For those opposite to hide that figure from the Queensland people is a disgrace.

The cost of CopperString started at \$1.8 billion in 2020, went to \$5 billion and then \$6.2 billion. Before the election, those opposite knew that the costs had blown out again. The member for Springwood certainly knew, although the then treasurer claims that he did not know. He answered a question on notice from the member for Traeger and said that the figure was \$6.2 billion, but the member for Springwood knew that it was \$9 billion. From 2020 until before the election it went from \$1.8 billion to \$9 billion and they never told anyone.

**Mr Bennett:** Paradise Dam is \$4.4 billion now.

**Mr JANETZKI:** The Paradise Dam project is another one—\$4.4 billion. They knew it but they never told anyone. They were more interested in the glossy brochures and the big announcements than in the delivery of any infrastructure or services for Queenslanders. That is all they ever cared about. Borumba Dam went from \$14 billion before the election to now \$18 billion. That is another figure that they hid from the Queensland people. With all of these capital expenditure projects, those opposite knew and they hid it from the Queensland people. It is shameful.

Of course, I have not spent much time talking about operational expenses. Child Safety was \$461 million short. Those opposite were going to let the most vulnerable and at-risk kids in residential care out onto the streets in March. They had not funded it in the budget. Child Safety looks after our most vulnerable and at-risk kids, but those opposite had not funded it and they knew it.

In November, I raised the prospect that we would not just have an outlook downgrade but that it was highly likely that we would have a rating downgrade as well, simply because of the fiscal vandalism of those opposite and what they had undertaken for so many years. I warned about it. What did the January MYFER, Labor's last budget update, tell us? Knowing what we know now, it is clear that the Queensland people were deceived by those opposite. The evidence is in this bill. The \$9 billion in unforeseen expenditure is evidence enough. However, what Labor's last budget update highlighted was that the debt figure of \$172 billion in last year's budget, which had risen to \$188 billion when the former treasurer let it slip, was actually \$218 billion. That is \$40,000 per capita for every man, woman and child in Queensland. That is \$9.9 billion at the end of the forwards in interest costs.

With the Queensland budget, you get to spend only \$80-odd billion in round terms every year. When one-third goes on health, one-quarter goes on schools and you have not built any roads, dams or bridges as yet, that tells you the interest burden that those opposite have left on the Queensland taxpayer. They have been held responsible because they lost government, but I will never let them forget. We on this side of the House should never let those opposite forget what they did to the Queensland budget. The MYFER, Labor's last budget update, revealed the depth of their debt, deficit and deception.

We have said that we are going to target budget improvements because the Queensland people deserve it. The bill that we have just passed sends a clear message about what we want to achieve. In 2021, I first started talking about productivity in response to what I saw as those opposite not spending the taxpayer dollar with the respect that it deserves. The former treasurer, the member for Woodridge, collected \$70 billion more than he had forecast in his first budget in 2020. He collected that by the end of last year. Despite that \$70 billion more than he forecast, services have declined. I was extraordinarily interested in how they would deliver value for money from that extra \$70 billion that the former treasurer collected, but I did not see it. I saw declining services, not improving services. I saw wastefulness. The Wellcamp quarantine facility cost \$223 million.

**A government member:** We don't even own it.

**Mr JANETZKI:** That is correct; we do not own it. I am not sure whether the shadow treasurer was in the CBRC for that one but—crikey—probably not at the time. They are all complicit. Everyone who sat with that government's cabinet is complicit. That was \$223 million wasted. I remember before the election, after the change of leadership when they moved Annastacia Palaszczuk on, a couple of jets were moving in convoy, costing \$126,000. On this side of the House we will not forget these little things. Let us not forget their wastefulness.

**Mr de BRENNI:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I refer to standing order 236 in relation to relevance. The bills that are being debated before the House refer to appropriations in the 2023-24 year and the Treasurer has strayed well outside that period. I ask you to draw him back to the relevance of the bill, which is the appropriations in 2023-24.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr O'Shea):** Treasurer, obviously with appropriation bills a very broad scope applies. However, could you please limit your comments to the period of 2023-24.

**Ms Bates:** I am pretty sure that's when they were in the jets. When were they in the jets? Was that 2024?

**Mr JANETZKI:** That was in the middle of it so I am going to keep talking about the jets. I think the former police minister, the member for Morayfield, might have been on one of those jets, flying in convoy.

**Ms Boyd** interjected.

**Mr JANETZKI:** It is an appropriation, member for Pine Rivers, for 2023-24. That shows the wastefulness of those opposite, as does Wellcamp. In the year of 2023-24 we had those examples. I remember that there was a trip to art galleries by the arts minister at the time, costing \$126,000. They spent \$170,000 on jets flying in convoy. The little things start to add up.

I have run through the big capital expenditure projects, the big operating expenses, the capital project blowouts, the cost overruns and the unfunded commitments for service delivery that they never intended to deliver. Labor's last budget update made perfectly clear their wastefulness: the \$218 billion debt, meaning a debt of \$40,000 per capita for every man, woman and child, which is the highest for any state in the country. It revealed the depth of their debt, deficit and deception. This is the final sorry chapter in the economic mismanagement of those opposite. It is a very sorry history.

However, I want to talk briefly about the steps that we have taken already. Firstly, we have said we will not progress with the Pioneer-Burdekin project. We will not progress with that \$36.8 billion project that started at \$7 billion and went to \$12 billion. What did they hide before the election? What did we discover after the election? The figure is actually \$36.8 billion.

We have said that we are not going to progress with hydrogen investments to the tune of equity and grant contributions to what was a speculative investment. We welcome the private sector to come and invest in Queensland. We want to send that clear message. The Queensland taxpayer dollar is precious and we made the sound decision not to invest further in equity or grant contributions in that regard, and we have paused BPIC.

It is convenient for us to talk about productivity tonight because the Deputy Premier went through this. The first referral to the Productivity Commission, which was re-established in Queensland only 30 minutes ago, will be a review into the building and construction industry because we know that there would be a \$17 billion cost over the next five years to the Queensland budget which would increase rents by seven per cent.

Debate, on motion of Mr Janetzki, adjourned.

## ADJOURNMENT



**Dr ROWAN (Moggill—LNP)** (Leader of the House) (9.01 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

### Starlight Children's Foundation



**Hon. DE FARMER (Bulimba—ALP)** (9.01 pm): Tonight, I will talk about the Starlight foundation and the swim-a-thon that both the member for Yeerongpilly and I did to raise money for this amazing foundation. I will also talk about the incredible generosity of my community in supporting me to do this.

The Starlight foundation is such a good cause: it helps sick kids. It was such a pleasure to do something I love, which is swimming, to help raise money for this charity and also raise awareness of what it does.


I want to shine a light on the Starlight foundation and the amazing work that it does. A lot of members would know that it started out by granting wishes for kids who were really sick. It still continues to do that and there are many beautiful stories about kids who found some happiness in some fairly bleak times because of the work of this organisation. There are other things that the Starlight team do: they visit kids in hospitals; they work with kids who live in really remote rural communities who have a lot of trouble accessing health care and feel a lot of stress and anxiety; and they run a fantastic mental health program for teenagers, which is both an in-hospital and an online program. They have made an incredible difference, and there are testimonials from those young people whom they have helped.

Through its annual swim-a-thon, which I think has only been going for a couple of years now, over \$3 million was raised. It was ordinary people swimming as much as they could in the month of February. The member for Yeerongpilly, who is the shadow minister for health, was extra interested in this event. We had such a fantastic time egging each other on and making sure we were reaching our targets.

Aside from the individuals who made great contributions, there were some in my community who were always asking me how I was going, whether I had reached my target and whether I was going to do a little bit more, and they were also asking me about the Starlight foundation. I thank, in particular, the Camp Hill Crocs for letting me do my last 500 metres at their swim night. One of the mums Lauren and I did it together. They made lots of donations and cheered me on every time I turned around.

The Morningside Flyers Swim Club wanted to do that as well. All my buddies at the Rackley adult swim club, especially all the boys from lane 1 whom I swim with, cheered me on every single time. People like Deanne Vassallo and Tim Regan from the Crocs did so much to support me but so did every person in our community. Go Bulimba! Go the Starlight foundation!

### **Adams, Mr S; Hawthorne, Mr S**

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.05 pm): I want to pay tribute to one of the best educators I have known in my time as the member for Kawana: Steve Adams, the principal of Talara Primary College. After a long and distinguished career as an educator, leader and school principal, Steve is taking extended leave to prioritise his health.

Steve has been working at Talara Primary College for over 23 years and has seen over 4,000 students go through Talara in his time there. Steve is a well-known leader in the Kawana community, and his extensive community involvement and fundraising have been incredibly beneficial to Talara Primary College and the broader community. Whether it is the discos, trivia nights or various other events, Steve always works closely with the P&C, gets dressed up, gets me dressed up—as crazy as we can be—and the events are always a great success.

He is passionate about quality education in the Queensland public education system. He is constantly advocating for quality public education and ensuring that all students who go through Talara Primary College have access to first-class education. He is an ear for others and provides excellent support to other teachers and colleagues. He is an advocate for encouraging parents to participate in their child's education. He will be sorely missed by students, colleagues, teachers and the wider community. Steve will be finishing up at Talara Primary College on the last day of term 2—4 April 2025. Steve, I have loved working with you for the 16 years that I have been the member for Kawana and you have been the leader at Talara Primary College. I will miss you at Talara Primary College.


I also want to acknowledge and pay tribute to a Sunshine Coast legend who recently passed away. Syd Hawthorne passed away on 1 March 2025. Syd was the owner of Plastec Australia, a family owned business with its head office in the Kawana electorate. Plastec is one of Australia's largest plumbing manufacturers and distributors, with large distribution warehouses in Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia, New South Wales and overseas.

Syd is a first-generation Australian, migrating in 1981 from Northern Ireland with nothing but the clothes on his back. When he first arrived in Australia, he sold donuts out of his van to get by, already showing his entrepreneurial spirit which he would carry throughout his life. As Syd's plumbing licence was not recognised in Australia at the time, he decided to redo his teaching qualifications and taught students plumbing at TAFE. Syd also built houses and townhouses. His first design in 1992 was the quick clip. Plastec now sells 30 million quick clips per year. He helped develop over 2,500 unique and innovative products over 33 years at Plastec. He worked with STEPS, a not-for-profit focused on

employment solutions for Australians with disabilities and also offering mental health support. He employed over 150 long-term staff.

His son Andrew describes him as an innovative and a generous person. He would always help out. He loved the Sunshine Coast and was determined to keep his business and his staff on the Sunshine Coast. I want to pay tribute to Syd—a businessman, a local and someone I could hardly ever understand with his Irish accent, but I believed in him. He was a legend. Rest in peace, Syd Hawthorne.

### Ripley Valley, School Bus Services

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (9.08 pm): The Ripley Valley is a beautiful part of our community. It is one of the most rapidly growing parts of our community because it is such a wonderful place to live. With that growth comes more demands on essential services. We need more school buses in the Ripley Valley for students who are at both Ripley Valley State School and Ripley Valley State Secondary School. Students are currently waiting up to an hour and a half for their school bus to take them home. We have teachers who, after a long day in the classroom, are having to stay back for another couple of hours to look after kids. When the buses do arrive they end up being unsafe because they are overcrowded. I have heard stories from parents and students who live only around four or five kilometres away from school and it is taking them over two hours to get home. It is simply not good enough.


With the support of the community, I want to pay tribute to our school communities, the P&Cs and people like Sarah Yarham. We have launched a petition calling for these urgently needed improved services for our local schoolchildren. Unfortunately the requests for these extra school buses have up until now fallen on deaf ears. I know that representations have been made to the responsible bus company. That stops now. We will take this all the way to the minister responsible to make sure that we get the service improvements that our local kids deserve. It is not good enough for them to have to sit around for over an hour and a half and—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Whiting): Order, members to my right!

**Mr McCALLUM:** I take the interjections from the LNP members over there who are whingeing about and arguing against improvements to local school bus services in Bundamba. That is exactly the kind of attitude that we would expect from this government. They do not really care. I am asking all locals to go on to my website, sign our petition and support improved local bus services for our children.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Mr FIELD** (Capalaba—LNP) (9.11 pm): I rise tonight as many Queenslanders are still reeling from the impacts of ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred, and they will be for some time—high winds; heavy rainfall; life-threatening flash flooding; homes, businesses and community organisations damaged or inundated with floodwater, as well as extended losses of power to hundreds of thousands of homes across South-East Queensland. My electorate of Capalaba and neighbouring electorates in the Redlands were not sheltered from the impact of Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Hundreds of my constituents still remain without power, but it is in times such as these that we can come together as Queenslanders. I am particularly proud of the strong sense of community spirit across my electorate.

In the days preceding the system, I spent time at the Capalaba sandbagging station. It was tremendously heartening to see the residents preparing sandbags for each other, particularly for the elderly and unwell, to safeguard their homes. The response from emergency services is truly to be commended, with Queensland police, fire, Ambulance Service crews and SES volunteer crews all out across the Redland region.

Likewise, I cannot express my thanks enough to those volunteer organisations and businesses like the Redland Community Centre, STAR transport, the Rock Church at Capalaba. There are too many others to mention, but they are much appreciated for their efforts. The hard work and dedication of all of these brave people is greatly appreciated and undoubtedly reduced the impact on our community.

While Tropical Cyclone Alfred and its effects begin to dissipate, the next stage—recovery—is already underway, providing relief to those affected. One of the most widespread challenges that presented itself was the prolonged power outages that residents experienced. I would like to thank everybody in Capalaba for their patience as Energex continues the herculean task of reconnecting power to their homes. These men and women are working around the clock for those residents still


impacted by loss of power. Please be assured that I am working with local Energex teams to have you reconnected as quickly as possible.

On Sunday I opened my office to the residents of Capalaba who did not have power so they could charge their devices. My office met with well over 100 residents who were in need over Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. It was remarkable to see the positivity that everybody expressed, despite the uncertainty and the stressful circumstances.

Our local teachers have also been working hard to make their schools safe for the return of students. As a token of appreciation, I stopped at the Hilliard State School with lunch for the staff to keep the morale high during their clean-up.

I am immensely proud of the way that Queenslanders have dealt with this crisis by coming together and doing the right thing by their families and their neighbours.

### **Vickery, Mr G, AO**


 **Dr O'SHEA** (South Brisbane—ALP) (9.14 pm): With the recent effects of Tropical Cyclone Alfred, I want to thank the volunteers who have worked tirelessly in my electorate of South Brisbane looking after the most vulnerable in my community. I would particularly like to thank the volunteers who provided shelter, meals and support for the homeless at Emmanuel City Mission and Micah Projects.

In celebrating the work of volunteers at this time, I would like to share with this House the extraordinary achievement of Greg Vickery AO, a member of my community of South Brisbane who has volunteered with the Red Cross for over 50 years. Greg is the first Queenslander and only the fifth Australian to be awarded the highest honour of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: the Henri Dunant Medal. Henri Dunant was a Swiss humanitarian. In the 1800s he witnessed the dreadful suffering of wounded soldiers on the battlefield in Italy and determined to form a neutral organisation to provide care to the wounded in times of war. He went on to co-found the Red Cross.

Last October Greg Vickery travelled to Geneva to receive the Henri Dunant Medal in recognition of his outstanding service to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Greg Vickery has served as national president of the Australian Red Cross, on the board of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and as chair of the Standing Commission of Red Cross and Red Crescent, one of the top three positions in the Red Cross. In these roles Greg Vickery has made an invaluable contribution to the integrity and governance of the Red Cross, supporting the organisation's ability to be an impartial, independent actor in the humanitarian field. All of the positions Greg has held in the Red Cross have been voluntary positions, with Greg using his holidays to attend international meetings. We thank Greg's wife, Dr E Sally Vickery, their children and grandchildren for the time they have given up with Greg to allow him to contribute so much to the international community.

As well as giving his time to the Red Cross, Greg Vickery forged a distinguished legal career, serving as president of the Queensland Law Society and as the Honorary Consul for Indonesia in Queensland. When I caught up with Greg recently to personally congratulate him on receiving this award I was struck by his intellect, his gentle humour and his kindness. It is his focus on community spirit and generosity that has resulted in Greg being recognised on the global stage by being awarded the Henri Dunant Medal. Congratulations again, Greg.

### **Scenic Rim Electorate, Cyclone Alfred**

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (9.17 pm): Tropical Cyclone Alfred and the floods and rain that followed the cyclone have touched every corner of the Scenic Rim electorate. The Logan and Albert rivers reached flood levels that are not unprecedented but significant and caused damage to public assets, farms and other property. I understand that Beaudesert and Districts Little Athletics was impacted again after receiving significant damage in November 2024 from other flood events. I know there are people in Ipswich who are still without power tonight. Energex and Ergon people are working very hard to restore power to them and the Logan City part of the electorate as well. I want to acknowledge the hard work of locals there who helped each other out and the leadership of Councillor Scott Bannan of Logan City Council, who worked with council and the LDMG to help people out.


In the Fassifern area, where I live, significant flooding took place. Many roads were blocked and properties impacted by the significant rainfall that came down. The effort that went into ensuring people were looked after in the event of bad situations occurring was significant and showed a great deal of community initiative, so I thank everyone who was part of that. There has been a lot of coverage of the

bad impact on Tamborine Mountain around Tamborine, Canungra and Beechmont. We need to recognise that for these communities it is the second time in around 14 months a really significant storm has hit this area. On Tamborine Mountain and in Tamborine, many people are still without power.

Lots of trees have come down and property has been damaged. There is a feeling of isolation for many in that community as a result of being without power and without communications. I was there yesterday and I felt the isolation because the mobile phones do not work, and that is significant. They are reeling and I want to thank the volunteers who have helped out that community so much, including the SES, the rural fireies and the chainsaw gang, those volunteers from the community who took it upon themselves to go out and clear roads. The Tamborine Mountain Presbyterian Church opened its premises up as a community centre where people have been gathering, using mobile NBN and supporting each other. There was such a great local organisation of volunteers on the mountain to help each other out.

I urge Energex and Ergon to keep working hard to restore power on the mountain and at Beechmont. It went out at 9.30 last Thursday night at Beechmont and they are feeling very cut off. We need to do all we can to support them at this time after this significant storm.

### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algerster—ALP) (9.20 pm): Last week South-East Queensland prepared for its first cyclone in decades. For many people across my electorate of Algerster, this was the first time they had ever experienced anything like this. Our community worked hard in the lead-up to the arrival of Tropical Cyclone Alfred and in true Queensland spirit they did not stop at just taking care of themselves; they also stepped up to help the community more broadly.

I was on hand multiple times at the Acacia Ridge sandbagging station and the Browns Plains Road, Crestmead sandbagging station where we helped so many local residents get the sandbags they needed to secure their properties. There were literally thousands of sandbags filled at just these stations alone, and I reckon I personally filled close to 300 of those myself. My back is telling me it was close to 300, let me tell you.

It was amazing to see local residents turn up and work hard to get their own sandbags and then stay to help others do the same. I stood next to an overseas student who helped me make up sandbags for some older residents who were unable to physically shovel the sand or lift the bags. On another occasion, a young gym owner went shovel for shovel with me to help speed up the process of filling sandbags and get people back to their homes quicker. It was an inspirational display of the incredible community spirit that is alive and well in the Algerster electorate.

When Cyclone Alfred finally arrived, it left a trail of destruction across the Algerster electorate. Yesterday I visited impacted local businesses and residents, including Acacia Pharmacy in Acacia Ridge where Elenora, Phil and the team of pharmacists were without power for a number of days, putting at risk their ability to get prescriptions to aged-care facilities. After advocating hard for them, their power was restored and they worked long hours to get important medication out to those who needed it.


I also visited Ceanne in Algerster who had a huge tree tear through the roof of the home she shares with her uncle. She shared with me that house insurance was sacrificed for other expenses and they were now wondering how they would repair the extensive damage to their house. She went to apply for support through the disaster recovery grants and discovered that her area was not eligible as the Crisafulli government had still not activated any suburbs in Brisbane at the time. She was as shocked as I was.

This same shock was repeated in other households in the Algerster electorate who still did not have power or had inundation in their homes and had no choice but to throw out spoiled food. These are people who do not have ready access to funds to replace food and were deeply concerned about how they were going to feed their families and they could not believe the Crisafulli government had still not activated their area for personal hardship support.

I wrote to the Premier seeking urgent action to make sure people who needed help could get it quickly. Thankfully, the activation has now occurred but by waiting longer than necessary the Premier and his government have created even more stress for vulnerable people, which is quite frankly unacceptable. As we move into the recovery efforts, I know people across the Algerster electorate will continue to support each other but they also need a government that is willing to move quickly and help those who need it the most.



### South-East Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. AJ STOKER** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (9.23 pm): I rise to pay tribute to the courage, patience and resilience of my community during the impact of Tropical Cyclone Alfred and in the rain that followed in its wake both on the mainland and on North Stradbroke Island. I want to thank the SES, the elders, the ambos, the midwives and health workers—twins were even born on Straddie during the cyclone—the fireies, the police, the council and the ferry workers who have all gone above and beyond over the last week.


In particular, I would like to share my admiration for the way in which the residents of North Stradbroke Island have, despite bearing the brunt of the force of the cyclone, risen to the challenge. As I have been trying to help get food and fuel supply to the island, to get Energex deployed and telecommunications on their way to being restored, I have seen so many wonderful attributes in this community. Many people do not realise that in a small island community, when there is not the same number of public facilities as you get on the mainland, local businesses really do take on a special role. The Amity Point general store, with the help of a Starlink device loaned from a resident, became the hub of Amity Point as locals without power or telecommunications gathered to charge from their generator and have the chance to send a message to the people they love.

I cannot express how stressful it has been for people to be cut off. The Amity Tav, the local hotel, fed people without charge and, as the waters rose, the community took care of each other there. As small businesses like Bo Beans and Rufus King struggled to trade with electronic payments not working and ATMs not working either, as local businesses dependent on generators drove 40 kilometres back and forth for loads of fuel to power the generators so they could keep going—having a staff member do literally nothing but drive back and forth to the island's one and only operating servo to keep it all together as desperate families were confronted with grocery stores with nothing in them—their desperation was real. At Point Lookout, where only half the town has generator power as we speak, the Beach Hotel stepped up to provide a place for people to safely gather, check on each other, charge their devices and eat. They could have closed their doors, and it probably would have been easier, but they did not hesitate to offer a safe place for people in this community.

I will finish this shout-out at Dunwich, where the servo and the FoodWorks were shut and the ferry terminal, even though it was within sight, was not operating. At St Stradbroke, Andy and Larissa turned their usual coffee, wine and cheese operation into a place where people could drop in, be cared for and unload.

These people are not social workers. They are not funded to provide counselling and support relief services to entire islands, but they did it anyway. Despite being stretched, none of them hesitated to answer the call of their neighbour in their hour of need. I just want them to know: I see you and I thank you for the lengths you have gone to, to help make your community stronger in adversity.

### Youth Crime

 **Mr DAMETTO** (Hinchinbrook—KAP) (9.27 pm): I have refrained from speaking in this House on the topic of crime to allow the incoming government the opportunity to address the acute crime problem that cripples our state. I acknowledge that the government has taken steps to tighten the Youth Justice Act, but these changes currently fall short of not only community expectation but also the expectation of consequences for actions for offending that were promised to Queenslanders.

In Townsville, there were 163 unlawful entry offences in the last month—five per day. Across Cairns, there were 199 unlawful entry offences in the last month—nearly seven per day. Recently, we saw one of the most horrific and vile examples of a home invasion in Cairns. Simply, in Cairns we have seen some of the most horrendous crimes committed in a family home.

Queenslanders right now are demanding that this government adopt Castle Law as a policy. No-one should fear being attacked in their own home by an intruder, and everyone should be afforded the right to defend themselves, their loved ones and their property with whatever means necessary in their home.


Castle Law must be implemented to deter invaders from entering into homes and property, and to protect victims. The law needs to shift in favour of people defending themselves, and Queenslanders should not be in fear of legal repercussions for protecting their families. Criminals are currently exploiting loopholes and they still have rights when they break into our homes, and they are using this against victims. Castle Law is about ensuring home owners have legal protection when responding to

intruders in their home or vehicle. Castle Law should be a God-given right and a legislated right in this state.

While I am on my feet, I will also acknowledge today that \$50 million has been set aside for primary producers, small businesses, not-for-profit organisations and clubs in Hinchinbrook and northern LGAs. Category D funding has been awarded by the state and federal government. We are very happy about that.

Primary producers, small businesses and those businesses out there that are looking for a hand up right now have been calling for this for weeks. We acknowledge the hard work of the Premier, the Agriculture Minister, the Small Business Minister and the Albanese government with organisations like AgForce, QCAR and Canegrowers to unlock this funding for our primary producers. Primary producers are now asking us to shift the focus to expanding the criteria, or some exemptions, for people who have off-farm income. These small businesses that are ineligible have not only had a significant loss of income and power but also a loss of trade during this event. We can all work together to make sure that this funding gets to the people who need it most so that communities in places like Hinchinbrook can be back on their feet and flourishing as they were before the flooding event.

### **South-East Queensland, Weather Events; Pumicestone Passage**

 **Ms MORTON** (Caloundra—LNP) (9.30 pm): Firstly, I would like to acknowledge all of the communities around South-East Queensland that have been impacted by Tropical Cyclone Alfred. We heard earlier today how many families are still without power and how the work of volunteer and emergency services is so appreciated. I rise today to speak about and highlight a place that is very clear to our hearts in Caloundra and that place is the Pumicestone Passage. Families have enjoyed the waterways of the Pumicestone Passage for generations—safe boating, clear waterways and many memories made. It is our postcard, and we are all so proud and connected to it.

Early in the last term of government we became acutely aware our passage was at risk when, after years of erosion, the northern end of Bribie Island broke through. The community rallied in support of taking action and tried to get governments to listen to them regarding the protection of this waterway. On the foreshores of Golden Beach, our very own Caloundra Power Boat Club was certainly at risk after severe erosion and the team there were vigilant in their preparations during this event.

Bribie Island acts as a barrier island to protect our community, as well as being a very special place to spend time. When I visited the island last just two short weeks ago, I witnessed another breakthrough occurring which has now turned into two. Our island is at risk of washing away through decades of inaction. We dodged a bullet that firmly hit our fellow communities in South-East Queensland in the event of Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Our best thoughts are with our fellow Queenslanders as they now go through the recovery process.

I would like to acknowledge the advocacy of Jen, Ken and the Pumicestone Passage Catchment Management Body—a community group of volunteers who are committed to fighting for the passage and its protection. I would also like to acknowledge Les, Hamish, Sally and all of the team down at the marina who are so invested in our boating community and have created a wonderful addition to our town. In addition, I thank the outstanding operation that is the Caloundra Coastguard and the four crews who run tirelessly. You are such an important part of our community and, despite a reported significant increase in events in our Pumicestone Passage, they continue to work and work to keep us all safe. Thank you.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.32 pm.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Asif, Bailey, Baillie, Barounis, Bates, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Bourne, Boyd, Bush, Butcher, Camm, Crandon, Crisafulli, Dalton, Dametto, de Brenni, Dick, Dillon, Doolan, Dooley, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Field, Frecklington, Furner, Gerber, Grace, Head, Healy, Howard, Hunt, Hutton, James B, James T, Janetzki, Katter, Kelly G, Kelly J, Kempton, King, Kirkland, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lee, Linard, Lister, Mander, Marr, Martin, McCallum, McDonald, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Minnikin, Molhoek, Morton, Mullen, Nicholls, Nightingale, O'Connor, O'Shea, Pease, Perrett, Poole, Powell, Pugh, Purdie, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Scanlon, Simpson, Smith, Stevens, Stoker, Sullivan, Vorster, Watts, Weir, Whiting, Young