



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Hansard Home Page: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/hansard/>  
 E-mail: [hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au)  
 Phone: (07) 3406 7314 Fax: (07) 3210 0182

Subject **FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT** Page  
**Wednesday, 30 November 2011**

<b>PETITIONS</b> .....	<b>3929</b>
<b>TABLED PAPERS</b> .....	<b>3929</b>
<b>MINISTERIAL PAPERS</b> .....	<b>3930</b>
Police Service .....	3930
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Queensland Police Service—Annual Report 2010-11. ....	3930
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Queensland Police Service—Annual Statistical Review 2010-11. ....	3930
<b>MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>3930</b>
Liberal National Party .....	3930
Brisbane Roar .....	3932
Health Services .....	3932
Crime .....	3933
Peter Kenny Medal for Excellence .....	3933
<b>COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY</b> .....	<b>3934</b>
Portfolio Committees, Reporting Dates .....	3934
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Portfolio Committees—Reporting dates on bills as resolved by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly on 30 November 2011. ....	3934
<b>MOTIONS</b> .....	<b>3935</b>
Order of Business .....	3935
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders .....	3935
Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to. ....	3936
Resolved in the affirmative. ....	3936
<b>NOTICE OF MOTION</b> .....	<b>3936</b>
Floods Commission of Inquiry .....	3936
<b>PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMITTEE</b> .....	<b>3937</b>
Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner, Report .....	3937
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Report of the work and activities of the Crime and Misconduct Commission under chapter 11 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. ....	3937
<b>ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES AND ENERGY COMMITTEE</b> .....	<b>3937</b>
Report .....	3937
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Environment, Agriculture, Energy and Resources Committee: Report No. 7—Report on subordinate legislation tabled 24 August 2011-10 October 2011. ....	3937

Table of Contents — Wednesday, 30 November 2011

<b>TRANSPORT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE .....</b>	<b>3937</b>
Report .....	3937
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Transport and Local Government Committee: Report No. 5—Portfolio subordinate legislation Nos 159-198 of 2011. ....	3937
<b>FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE .....</b>	<b>3937</b>
Report .....	3937
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 8—Portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 23 August and 15 November 2011. ....	3937
<b>NOTICE OF MOTION .....</b>	<b>3937</b>
Disallowance of Statutory Instrument .....	3937
<b>SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS .....</b>	<b>3937</b>
Visitors to Public Gallery .....	3937
<b>QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE .....</b>	<b>3938</b>
Bligh Labor Government .....	3938
Bligh Labor Government .....	3938
Mining Industry .....	3939
Infrastructure Projects, Local Content .....	3940
Speaker's Ruling, Question Out of Order .....	3940
Government Services .....	3940
Local Government Elections .....	3941
Queensland Economy .....	3941
Local Government Elections .....	3942
Bruce Highway, Upgrade .....	3943
North Queensland, Road Projects .....	3943
Schools, Attendance .....	3944
Fraser Coast, Health Services .....	3944
Housing Industry .....	3945
Infrastructure Projects, Local Content .....	3946
Local Government, Paid Parking .....	3947
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Letter, dated 15 November 2011, from the Attorney-General and Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State, Hon. Paul Lucas MP, to the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Councillor Graham Quirk, relating to vehicle parking in and around Cherside Shopping Centre. ....	3947
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Media release, dated 29 November 2011, by the Moreton Bay Regional Council titled 'No paid shopping centre car parking'. ....	3947
QFleet, Local Content .....	3948
<b>HOSPITALS FOUNDATIONS AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1) 2011 .....</b>	<b>3949</b>
Disallowance of Statutory Instrument .....	3949
Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to. ....	3964
Resolved in the negative. ....	3964
<b>STRATEGIC CROPPING LAND BILL .....</b>	<b>3964</b>
Second Reading .....	3964
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document titled 'Strategic Cropping Evaluation (3 farm aggregate analysis of 5% slope vs 8% slope)'. ....	3967
<b>CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS BILL .....</b>	<b>3974</b>
Second Reading .....	3974
<b>MOTION .....</b>	<b>3995</b>
Suspension of Standing Orders .....	3995
<b>CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS BILL .....</b>	<b>3996</b>
Second Reading .....	3996
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Australian Family Association Queensland media release, dated 28 November 2011, in relation to the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011. ....	4004
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Letter, dated 4 November 2011, from the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt, Anglican Diocese of Brisbane, to the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee in relation to the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011. ....	4004
Division: Question put—That the bill be now read a second time. ....	4006
Resolved in the affirmative. ....	4006
Consideration in Detail .....	4006
Clauses 1 to 91, as read, agreed to. ....	4006
Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to. ....	4006
Third Reading .....	4006
Division: Question put—That the bill be now read a third time. ....	4006
Resolved in the affirmative. ....	4006
Long Title .....	4006

Table of Contents — Wednesday, 30 November 2011

<b>ADJOURNMENT</b> .....	<b>4006</b>
Support Services .....	4006
Greenslopes Electorate, Sporting Clubs .....	4007
Cox, Mr VH .....	4008
Rothwell Roundabout .....	4008
Sandy Creek, Sandmining .....	4009
Education Reform .....	4009
Hervey Bay, Ophthalmology Services .....	4010
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Proforma letters from the Executive Director, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, dated 18 October 2011, and the Executive Director of Medical Services, Wide Bay Health Service District, dated 1 September 2011, in relation to the lack of availability of certain services. ....	4010
Mareeba Local Ambulance Committee .....	4010
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Queensland Ambulance Service brochure titled 'Snakes Alive: Watch out, watch out, Snakes are about!' .....	4010
Workplace Health and Safety .....	4011
Mulgrave Electorate .....	4011
<b>ATTENDANCE</b> .....	<b>4012</b>

## WEDNESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2011

---

The Legislative Assembly met at 2.00 pm.



Mr Speaker (Hon. John Mickel, Logan) read prayers and took the chair.

### PETITIONS

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

#### **Bruce Highway, Upgrade**

**Ms O'Neill**, from 56 petitioners, requesting the House to install noise barriers along the Bruce Highway between the Murrumba Downs exit and North Lakes exit [\[6037\]](#).

#### **Toowoomba Regional Council, Disability Officer**

**Mr Horan**, from 2,332 petitioners, requesting the House to provide funding for a dedicated Disability Officer for the Toowoomba Regional Council [\[6038\]](#).

#### **D'Aguilar Highway, Upgrade**

**Mr Powell**, from 223 petitioners, requesting the House to address the unsafe condition of the D'Aguilar Highway specifically between Caboolture and Woodford and the townships of Wamuran and D'Aguilar [\[6039\]](#).

#### **Sentencing Advisory Committee**

**Mr Ryan**, from 83 petitioners, requesting the House to support the work of the Sentencing Advisory Committee regarding minimum non-parole periods; increase penalties for certain serious, violent and/or sexual offences and offences committed against on-duty police and/or emergency services officers [\[6040\]](#).

#### **Kerry, Proposed Quarry**

**Mr McLindon**, from 1,305 petitioners, requesting the House to refuse to grant development approval to the application for a quarry at Erin View Road, Kerry in the Scenic Rim [\[6041\]](#).

#### **Capricorn Coast, Independent Council**

**Mr Malone**, from 10,549 petitioners, requesting the House to enable the Capricorn Coast and rural areas of the former Livingstone Shire to de-amalgamate from the Rockhampton Regional Council and be afforded the opportunity to elect their own independent local government council [\[6042\]](#).

#### **Telegraph Road, Rail Crossing Upgrade**

**Ms Davis**, a paper and an petition, from 1165 petitioners, requesting the House to urgently provide funding to upgrade the Telegraph Road Rail Crossing to reduce traffic congestion and improve safety for local residents [\[6043\]](#), [\[6044\]](#).

Petitions received.

### TABLED PAPERS

#### MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE ACTING CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Acting Clerk—

Deputy Premier and Treasurer, Minister for State Development and Trade (Mr Fraser)—

[6064](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly of a Ministerial Call-In by the then Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade (Mr Fraser), pursuant to section 432 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 in relation to the development applications for the Buffel Park Accommodation Village at Moranbah made by BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd

[6065](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly of a Ministerial Call-In by the then Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade (Mr Fraser), pursuant to section 432 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 in relation to the development applications for the Buffel Park Accommodation Village at Moranbah made by BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd-Annexure A: Development Applications, Part 1

[6066](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly of a Ministerial Call-In by the then Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade (Mr Fraser), pursuant to section 432 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 in relation to the development applications for the Buffel Park Accommodation Village at Moranbah made by BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd-Annexure A: Development Applications, Part 2

[6067](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly of a Ministerial Call-In by the then Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade (Mr Fraser), pursuant to section 432 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 in relation to the development applications for the Buffel Park Accommodation Village at Moranbah made by BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd-Earthworks and Clearing Vegetation

[6068](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly of a Ministerial Call-In by the then Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade (Mr Fraser), pursuant to section 432 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 in relation to the development applications for the Buffel Park Accommodation Village at Moranbah made by BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd-Civil Works and Utility Services, Volume 1

[6069](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly of a Ministerial Call-In by the then Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade (Mr Fraser), pursuant to section 432 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 in relation to the development applications for the Buffel Park Accommodation Village at Moranbah made by BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd-Civil Works and Utility Services, Volume 2

[6070](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly of a Ministerial Call-In by the then Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade (Mr Fraser), pursuant to section 432 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 in relation to the development applications for the Buffel Park Accommodation Village at Moranbah made by BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd-Civil Works and Utility Services, Volume 3

[6071](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly of a Ministerial Call-In by the then Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade (Mr Fraser), pursuant to section 432 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 in relation to the development applications for the Buffel Park Accommodation Village at Moranbah made by BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd-Civil Works and Utility Services, Volume 4

#### MEMBERS' PAPERS TABLED BY THE ACTING CLERK

The following members' papers were tabled by the Acting Clerk—

Member for Indooroopilly (Mr Emerson)—

[6045](#) Non-conforming petition, from 260 petitioners, regarding the closure of the Frederick Street and Mina Parade rail bridge at Alderley

Member for Morayfield (Mr Ryan)—

[6046](#) Non-conforming petition, from 230 petitioners, requesting the House to join with the Federal Government in advocating for a total global ban on whaling

Member for Mudgeeraba (Ms Bates)—

[6047](#) Non-conforming petition, from 81 petitioners, regarding the Queensland Government Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme

[6048](#) Non-conforming petition, from 772 petitioners, regarding the Gold Coast Quarry

Member for Pumicestone (Mrs Sullivan)—

[6049](#) Non-conforming petition regarding the construction of a major transit centre with park and ride infrastructure for the Caboolture Railway Station

## MINISTERIAL PAPERS

### Police Service

 **Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (2.02 pm): I lay upon the table of the House the annual report 2010-11 for the Queensland Police Service and the annual statistical review 2010-11 for the Queensland Police Service.

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Police Service—Annual Report 2010-11 [\[6050\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Police Service—Annual Statistical Review 2010-11 [\[6051\]](#).

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Liberal National Party

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (2.02 pm): What we saw in this House yesterday was a sequence of events that can only be described as extraordinary. It has left many not only red-faced but scratching their heads about how an entire opposition could be absent from a parliamentary session. The circumstances are so extraordinary and the excuses so unconvincing that I thought it would be useful to record for *Hansard* the sequence of events that led to this debacle.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable the Premier has the call.

**Ms BLIGH:** The Hansard live feed shows that the member for Currumbin was the last member of the opposition to speak in the matters of public interest debate. Her speech concluded at 11.46 am. The live feed vision returns to the opposition benches at 11.52 am and shows them to be completely empty. Eight minutes later, at 12 pm, the Clerk read the order of the day announcing the Commonwealth Games Arrangements Bill was to be debated—so, nothing secret, nothing underhand. The debate on the bill was announced in the usual way and played on every television monitor in every opposition office. This was the first missed opportunity for the opposition to ensure it was represented in the chamber.

I entered the chamber at approximately 11.58 am. I stood at 12.01 pm and moved that the bill be read a second time. Again, anyone watching a monitor, any member of the opposition staff could see that I was in the chamber starting debate on the bill. That was the second opportunity for the opposition to make sure that its duty was done. At this point the member for Ferny Grove, Minister Wilson, stood and drew the Deputy Speaker's attention to the fact that there were no opposition members in the chamber—again, nothing secret, nothing underhand. In fact, far from trying to exploit the situation, the member for Ferny Grove drew attention to it and advised the House of it.

**Mr Wilson:** I couldn't help myself.

**Ms BLIGH:** He is a helpful chap. So, again, nothing secret. As I said, the member for Ferny Grove announced the situation publicly to the whole chamber—*Hansard* recorded it, something that was played on every TV monitor in the precinct, and any member, whip or leader who was paying attention would have had a third opportunity to take action.

The Deputy Opposition Whip arrived in the chamber at 12.03 pm while proceedings were still occurring on the Commonwealth Games bill. As the *Hansard* shows, at no stage did the Deputy Opposition Whip, the member for Hervey Bay, take a point of order, seek to speak on the bill, call a vote on the bill or in any way indicate that the opposition had any concerns with the bill being dealt with as the government proposed.

If he had voted against a reading of the bill he could have called a division and summoned opposition members back to the chamber. If he had raised a point of order and spoken to it his members may have had a chance to return to the chamber—again, no secrets, nothing underhand. The Deputy Opposition Whip was in the chamber before the first bill was voted on and during the subsequent two bills and raised no concern, no voice of opposition, and a fourth opportunity to take action was missed by the opposition. In fact, it was missed by its own whip who is paid to deal with these situations.

At 12.10 pm the member for Kawana, the shadow Attorney-General of Queensland, entered the chamber. He too remained mute while the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was voted on.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Both sides of the House will come to order. I call the honourable the Premier.

**Ms BLIGH:** The member for Kawana raised no point of order, called no division, raised no voice of opposition.

**Mr Seeney:** Where was the Attorney-General?

**Ms BLIGH:** I think you will find he was here.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I am on my feet. I call the honourable the Premier.

**Ms BLIGH:** The Attorney-General's bill was actually over by the time the shadow Attorney-General arrived in the House.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Both sides of the House will come to order. The Premier has the call.

**Ms BLIGH:** Of course, the shadow minister for the Commonwealth Games bill—the member who should have been here, who should have been ready and who could have avoided the whole catastrophe—ambled into the chamber somewhere between 12.11 pm and 12.15 pm, just in time to hear himself and his colleagues being censured. All of this, every single minute of it, was publicly played on every TV monitor in the precinct. There can be no excuse for this appalling series of failures by the opposition to do their duty, yet they have compounded their woeful neglect by seeking to blame everyone but themselves. The chief excuse given by opposition members is that they thought that bills were being introduced. Let me make two points. Firstly, the Deputy Government Whip advises me that she did indicate that there may be some bills to introduce but she was not sure.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms BLIGH:** You would think they would want to understand what happened. You would think they would want to avoid a repeat.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** We will settle down again. The Premier has the call.

**Ms BLIGH:** She went to check and when she returned to the chamber to advise her counterpart, there were no LNP members in the chamber to advise. Secondly—and let me make this point—the introduction of legislation is no excuse for a mass walkout.

**Mr Fraser:** This is the business of the parliament.

**Ms BLIGH:** This is the business of the parliament. Is the opposition seriously asking Queenslanders to believe that they intend to vacate the chamber whenever legislation is being introduced?

I note the claims from some LNP members that they had legitimate reasons to be absent, and I do not doubt that and I make no criticism of it. However, that completely misses the point. The problem was not that every member was not present; the problem was that not one member was present. The epic failure that we saw here yesterday was then compounded by the disgraceful response of the Leader of the Liberal National Party, Mr Campbell Newman. In the face of this embarrassing

performance, Mr Newman sought to make light of it. He laughed at the possibility that his 31 members of parliament were all taking an early lunch in the cafeteria. Even more astonishingly, Mr Newman claimed that whether or not his members turned up for a vote was 'immaterial'. This is a response that is contemptuous of Queensland's parliamentary democracy and, worse, it is contemptuous of the contribution that his own members make here.

This was a moment that demanded leadership, and Mr Newman comprehensively failed the test. He has ducked and weaved and giggled and now, 24 hours later, he wants people to believe that he is taking it seriously because he has finally realised that it is a problem. It will not wash and the shambles that is the Liberal National Party parliamentary team has been exposed for what it is: a woeful and divided mess.

### Brisbane Roar

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (2.11 pm): I want to make a very short comment about something that happened on the weekend that was fantastic. The Brisbane Roar made history here in Queensland: 36 matches without a loss, the longest undefeated streak in top level Australian sport in any code. It was an amazing achievement. It has taken more than 70 years for the previous record of 35 unbeaten games to be surpassed. That record was set in the 1930s by the Eastern Suburbs Rugby League side in Sydney.

Of course in life there are always knockers. I understand one Sydney radio station even had the hide to run a poll questioning whether the Roar's achievement was worth celebrating. I think there is only one answer to that. Is it worth celebrating? You bet it is! That is exactly what will be happening this Friday. I am pleased to advise the House that at 1 pm in Queen's Park the Brisbane Roar players and coaching staff will be presented with Queensland Champion Awards. I encourage Queenslanders to come along and cheer for the Roar. The Roar have been a sensation. They have been on fire in the national league and we are so proud of their achievements. Unfortunately, I have a prior engagement out of the state. This has been arranged when it best suits the team as they are in the middle of their season. I do encourage others to come along and see them being honoured. Let us see that their undefeated streak continues and let us hope that they can go all the way and make it two A-League final victories in a row.

### Health Services

 **Hon. GJ WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Health) (2.13 pm): Today's Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report into the performance of Australia's public hospitals demonstrates what can be achieved over time by a government that is serious about building new hospitals, employing record numbers of clinical staff and reforming how the health services are delivered. It is yet another example of what can be achieved by a government that is serious about improving services and it also demonstrates what Queensland is putting at risk if the LNP is ever elected to government.

The institute report is our annual report card on elective surgery, and on elective surgery we top the class. Today we have seen again Queensland confirmed as being No. 1 for elective surgery in the nation. Average wait times for elective surgery in Queensland are shorter than anywhere else in Australia at just 29 days. Fewer Queenslanders wait more than a year for their operation than any other state in the nation.

The report also found that our emergency department performance is improving. On average, patients arriving at Queensland emergency departments wait 23 minutes before treatment begins. That is an improvement on last year's average of 24 minutes. Of course, urgent cases are seen in less than one minute. This performance is testament to the policies and hard work of our reforming government and the even harder work of Queensland Health staff. Our policy of delivering more services sooner and closer to home across Queensland is delivering for Queensland.

Before the Labor government came to power, Queensland's wait times were a national laughing-stock. Under the previous LNP government when the member for Toowoomba South was health minister, more than 8,500 patients waited longer than a year for elective surgery. Now it is the lowest in the nation. That is another measure where Queensland leads Australia. We have worked hard to bring these waits down and now we are on top. Significantly, this improvement happened during a period of enormous demand for emergency department treatment, with growth for services up 35 per cent.

Unlike those opposite, we have a vision for future health services in this state and we are delivering on it. Already we have delivered new emergency departments at Princess Alexandra Hospital and at the Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton hospitals and we are expanding the emergency departments at Logan, Redland, Ipswich, Mackay and Bundaberg. All the LNP have been able to do is release an infrastructure plan without a single new bed, a single new ward or a single hospital. Empty LNP slogans and plans to slash the Health budget will not keep us at No. 1. We want to stay where Queensland public hospitals are No. 1 for elective surgery. Under this government, we will keep Queensland ahead of the pack for elective surgery by continuing to build more health services sooner and closer to home.

## Crime

 **Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (2.17 pm): The 2010-11 annual report and statistical review demonstrate that our Police Service and the Bligh Labor government are continuing to achieve success in driving down rates of crime across Queensland. It shows that, for the 10th consecutive year, the overall rate of crime in Queensland has fallen by three per cent and by 30 per cent between 2000-01 and 2010-11. The rate of offences against the person decreased six per cent between 2009-10 and 2010-11 and by 25 per cent since 2000-01. The rate of property offences increased four per cent. However, since 2000-01 it has decreased by 46 per cent.

These significant reductions are a direct result of focused and professional policing and the significant increases in resources provided to the Queensland Police Service by the Bligh Labor government. For example, since 1998 the number of sworn police officers in Queensland has increased from around 6,800 to around 10,500 currently, an increase of 54 per cent against a population increase of around 33 per cent.

As with previous years, the statistical review shows that there will be increases and decreases in the rates of crime by both region and category. However, the real story about crime rates is the long-term trends. Under the Bligh government, crime rates have continued to fall and police numbers have continued to rise. I pay tribute to the professionalism and commitment of officers and staff of the Queensland Police Service for their efforts in achieving these results and I particularly acknowledge Commissioner Bob Atkinson for his leadership during this period of crime rate reduction.

The Bligh government is committed to increasing the number of police officers in Queensland in an effort to put further downward pressure on crime rates. We went to the last election with a commitment to increase the number of police officers in Queensland by up to 600, taking the total number of police in Queensland to more than 10,600 by March 2012. We are on track to meet that commitment with around 500 of the additional officers already on the beat, with the remaining 100 to be in place by March. Under the Labor government, increased police resourcing has led to more police feet on the beat and lower crime rates.

I would also like to draw to the attention of the House that tomorrow marks the 12-month anniversary of the tragic loss of Sergeant Dan Stiller and the six-month anniversary of the tragic loss of Detective Senior Constable Damian Leading, two fine Queensland police officers. Our thoughts are with their families and friends as they continue to cope with the consequences of these tragic losses.

### Peter Kenny Medal for Excellence

 **Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies) (2.19 pm): Today I am pleased to announce that nominations are open for the inaugural Peter Kenny Medal for Excellence in biosecurity. The medal has been established to pay tribute to the late Peter Kenny in recognition of his work in the agricultural sector and his dedication to improving biosecurity. With the support of Mr Kenny's family, we established this medal that will reward individuals or organisations that share his passion and demonstrate excellence in biosecurity management.

Peter Kenny, who passed away last month, was a passionate and well-respected advocate for Queensland agriculture. Arguably best known for his time as AgForce president, Mr Kenny was a leader whose approach focused on communication and collaboration. Under his presidency, AgForce signed the groundbreaking Blueprint for the Bush agreement with the Queensland government and launched the highly successful 'Every family needs a farmer' campaign.

Mr Kenny had a passion for biosecurity management. He understood that biosecurity is critical to the future of our environment and agricultural industries. In recent years this commitment is reflected through his appointment as the inaugural chair of the Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Council. The Peter Kenny medal is recognition of his strong commitment to Queensland's primary industries, particularly in improving biosecurity management. The medal will be awarded to an individual or organisation that excels in the field of biosecurity. Emphasis will be placed on not only protecting the profitability of our primary industries but also our unique biodiversity and our way of life. The sum of \$5,000 will also be awarded to the winner to help further advance their commitment to improving biosecurity awareness and practices in Queensland.

Nominations are now open for individuals or organisations who have made an outstanding contribution to the state's biosecurity efforts in the area of community engagement, education, creating best practice, or outstanding research. I urge Queensland biosecurity champions to nominate now. Nominations close on 20 January.

## COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

### Portfolio Committees, Reporting Dates

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.22 pm): I advise the House that, in accordance with standing order 136, the Committee of the Legislative Assembly has fixed reporting dates for bills currently before committees and varied committees responsible for bills in accordance with the schedule circulated in my name, which I now table for the record of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Portfolio Committees—Reporting dates on bills as resolved by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly on 30 November 2011 [\[6052\]](#).

I seek leave to incorporate the schedule in the parliamentary record.

Leave granted.

Portfolio Committees—Reporting dates on bills as resolved by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly on 30 November 2011		
Portfolio Committee	Bill(s)	Report date
Finance and Administration Committee	<i>Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming (Two-Up) Amendment Bill</i>	7 March 2012
	<i>Criminal Code (ANZAC Day Betting) Amendment Bill</i>	
	<i>Queensland Art Gallery Amendment Bill</i>	19 March 2012
Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee	<i>Criminal and Other Legislation Amendment Bill</i>	19 March 2012
	<i>Commercial Arbitration Bill 2011</i>	21 February 2012
	<i>Police Powers and Responsibilities (Motor Vehicle Impoundment) Amendment Bill</i>	19 March 2012
Health and Disabilities Committee	<i>One Funding System for Better Services Bill</i>	19 December 2011
Transport and Local Government Committee	<i>Stock Route Network Management Bill</i>	6 February 2012
	<i>Sustainable Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill</i>	6 February 2012
	<i>Heavy Vehicle National Law Bill 2011</i>	6 March 2012
Community Affairs Committee	<i>Multicultural Recognition Bill</i>	5 March 2012
	<i>Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Land Holding Bill</i>	19 March 2012
Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee	<i>South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill</i>	5 April 2012
	<i>Protecting Primary Production Amendment Bill</i>	6 March 2012
	<i>Biosecurity Bill</i>	19 March 2012
	<i>Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill</i>	20 April 2012
	<i>Chicken Meat Industry Amendment Bill 2011</i>	6 March 2012
Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee	<i>Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) and Other Acts Amendment Bill</i>	6 February 2012
	<i>Surat Basing (Long-Term Lease) Bill</i>	19 March 2012
	<i>Resources Legislation (Balance, Certainty and Efficiency) Amendment Bill</i>	19 March 2012

## MOTIONS

### Order of Business

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.23 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, in accordance with standing order 59(3), General Business Notice of Motion—Disallowance of Statutory Instrument No. 1 may be debated during government business commencing at 3.30 pm this day.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

### Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.23 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That standing order 136(6) and sessional order 3(2) be suspended for the Civil Partnerships Bill, to allow the commencement of the second reading debate despite three calendar months not having elapsed since the tabling of the portfolio committee report on this bill.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (2.24 pm): I rise to oppose the motion. It is most unusual in any event for a member of the government to introduce a private member's bill. It is certainly welcome but it is most unusual. It is especially unusual when it is the Deputy Premier who introduces the bill. In spite of the Deputy Premier's protestations, I and many others believe it is political manoeuvring. We have a process in this place for private members' bills. I doubt that there are any private members who have enjoyed the escalation of process that this private member's bill has enjoyed. This is not an emergent issue. It is divisive, it is emotive and the proposal in the standing orders for adequate time to be allowed for consultation is important. I oppose the motion.

 **Mr McLINDON** (Beaudesert—KAP) (2.25 pm): I note that one bill which was put before the House which required a sense of urgency was the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Bill, given the circumstances that Queensland was facing early this year. I also oppose the motion. I think if we start changing the goalposts left, right and centre then it will leave the door open for these sorts of games to be played into the future and it will set a terrible precedent in this parliament.

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (2.25 pm): I support the motion that the Leader of the House has moved. It is important to say for the record that this is a bill which has lain on the table of the parliament and has been subject to consideration and deliberation by the new committee system.

The Committee of the Legislative Assembly gave a report-back date to provide for that committee report to the parliament, and the committee has had the full opportunity, including public submissions and a public hearing, in which to consider the bill that was introduced into the parliament to advance the rights of Queenslanders in this regard. It is also important to say that that timetable has been met as set down by the bipartisan committee. Therefore, this parliament is now in a position given that the committee has concluded its deliberations, including a public hearing, including submissions—a feature of bills that was not included in the past—to be able to deliberate upon this bill today.

It is incumbent upon all members of parliament, therefore, to take the opportunity for the debate to occur, for the vote to occur, on what is a bill that is ultimately important to many people across Queensland. To say that this is not a priority is to deny the absolute justice that can be delivered by this bill. To say that this is a distraction is an outrage against those people who see this as an important issue. For a long time people have desired to see the change that this bill proposes and to deny that, to seek refuge in a concept of erecting some refuge of process, I think is to deny with courage the true opposition that people have.

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.26 pm): The opposition will not be supporting the motion moved by the Leader of the House. We will be supporting the comments made by the member for Gladstone. This bill was a stunt from day one. This bill was a distraction from day one. It has been engineered through this House to the personal benefit of the Deputy Premier because he sees some political benefit in it for him. As the member for Gladstone quite rightly says, the government is affording the Deputy Premier a privilege that is available to no other member of this House, and it is an affront to the standing orders of this place—just as the whole process that has led to this bill being before the House today is an affront.

This was put forward as a private member's bill simply because there is such division within the government. The Deputy Premier had to come in here and put forward a bill that was written in his colleague's department. It was written in the Attorney-General's department. That, too, is a privilege that is not afforded to any other member in this place. No other member has a department draw up a bill that is rejected by cabinet and that then has to be brought in here as a private member's bill by somebody who thinks there is some personal electoral advantage in it for him.

The whole thing has been a farce. The whole process has been farcical from day one. This bill has been about distracting attention from a government that has failed in every aspect of public administration. Its fast-tracking through this parliament, which the motion the Leader of the House has moved today will enable, is a continuation of that farce that has been perpetrated in this parliament from day one. We will not be supporting the motion that has been moved by the Leader of the House, and we concur completely with the comments made by the member for Gladstone.

 **Mr FOLEY** (Maryborough—Ind) (2.29 pm): I also rise to oppose the motion moved by the Leader of the House. With the deepest of respect, what the Deputy Premier and Treasurer said is an absolute nonsense. All other members in this House have to wait in the legislative queue should they wish to bring legislation into this House and the importance of that legislation is delegated and debated in due process. I am very concerned that this particular motion has been given a gold-plated armchair ride through the whole process and has been put in as mates rates. I believe there has been an abuse of process in speeding things up for political expediency, and therefore I oppose the motion.

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (2.30 pm), in reply: During the last sittings, I moved a motion similar to the one that I have just moved today giving committees fixed reporting dates for particular pieces of legislation. Last time, I moved this motion giving this committee the reporting date to have this bill ready to be debated this week. All I am doing today is giving effect to that decision that we collectively made—that you all supported—the last time parliament was sitting. I think the committee that looked at this bill did a magnificent job. They have managed—

**Mr Seeney:** It's not the same thing at all.

**Ms SPENCE:** Well, if you had a problem with us debating this bill this week—and everyone knew this was coming on—you should have signalled that when we asked the committee to fast-track their consideration of the bill. Everyone did that in the knowledge that this bill was going to be debated this week. If you wanted the committee to have a longer time, then you should have opposed it at the last session of parliament. It is quite ironic that everyone has woken up today and said, 'Hey, we don't want to debate this bill tonight,' when that was the understanding all along.

That committee has done a magnificent job of undertaking public hearings into this legislation. I actually popped in and had a look at that full day of public hearings. They were marvellous hearings. Lots of people came along and commented and gave their views on this legislation. All credit goes to that committee for fast-tracking their consideration of this piece of legislation. As I said, we all agreed to it last time. This motion is just giving effect to something that we all agreed to last time parliament was sitting and which the committee has already done an admirable job on.

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

**AYES, 50**—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Male

**NOES, 37**—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### Floods Commission of Inquiry

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.36 pm): I give notice that I will move—

That this House:

- 1) Notes that the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities, the Deputy Premier and Treasurer and the former Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport, Hon. Terence Mackenroth, have produced to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry certain parliamentary papers that were prepared for the ministers and which are proceedings in parliament pursuant to s.9 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001.
- 2) Ratifies the production by the ministers and former minister of those papers.
- 3) Resolves that the ministers and former minister have not committed any contempt by producing the papers.

I move that motion.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the House gave notice that she would move that motion. The Leader of the House quite clearly gave notice that she would move that motion. I think that requires a different procedure, Mr Speaker.

## PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMITTEE

### Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner, Report

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (2.37 pm): I lay upon the table of the House a report of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner, Mr Paul Favell, on the work and activities of the Crime and Misconduct Commission under chapter 11 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. These activities relate to controlled operations carried out by the CMC in the exercise of its crime function. The parliamentary commissioner is required to inspect the CMC's records at least annually to ascertain the extent of the CMC's compliance with the controlled operations provisions.

*Tabled paper:* Report of the work and activities of the Crime and Misconduct Commission under chapter 11 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 [6053].

## ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

### Report

 **Mrs SULLIVAN** (Pumicestone—ALP) (2.38 pm): I table the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee's report titled *Report No. 7: report on subordinate legislation tabled 24 August 2011-10 October 2011*.

*Tabled paper:* Environment, Agriculture, Energy and Resources Committee: Report No. 7—Report on subordinate legislation tabled 24 August 2011-10 October 2011 [6054].

## TRANSPORT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

### Report

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (2.38 pm): I table report No. 5 of the Transport and Local Government Committee titled *Report No. 5: portfolio subordinate legislation Nos 159-198 of 2011*.

*Tabled paper:* Transport and Local Government Committee: Report No. 5—Portfolio subordinate legislation Nos 159-198 of 2011 [6055].

## FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

### Report

 **Mr WENDT** (Ipswich West—ALP) (2.39 pm): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 8 of the Finance and Administration Committee. This report covers the portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 23 August and 15 November 2011 considered by the committee. The subordinate legislation has disallowance dates between 1 December 2011 and 16 February 2012. The committee did not identify any significant issues regarding consistence with fundamental legislative principles or the lawfulness of the subordinate legislation. I commend the report to the House.

*Tabled paper:* Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 8—Portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 23 August and 15 November 2011 [6056].

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (2.39 pm): I give notice that I will move—

That the Waste Reduction and Recycling Regulation 2011, subordinate legislation No. 231 of 2011, tabled in the House on 29 November 2011, be disallowed.

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

### Visitors to Public Gallery

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Before I call question time, today in the public gallery we will be visited by students, teachers and parents from the Wilston State School in the electorate of Stafford and the Harristown State School in the electorate of Toowoomba South. I would like to welcome in the public gallery this afternoon the former member for Ipswich West, Don Livingstone. Question time will end at 3.40 pm.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Bligh Labor Government

**Mr SEENEY** (2.40 pm): My question without notice is to the Premier. As this is the last sitting week before a state election, can the—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my right!

**Mr SEENEY:** My question without notice is to the Premier. As this is the last sitting week before a state election, can the Premier tell us which of her famous broken promises made at the last election has been the most beneficial to the people of Queensland? Has it been the Premier's promise not to introduce a fuel tax or the Premier's promise not to sell Queensland's assets to prop up an inept Labor government?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, it is a wide-ranging question. It is in order. I call the Premier.

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the honourable member for the question and I thank him for coming along today. It is good to see him here. The next scheduled sitting of this parliament is 14 February, which of course is Valentine's Day. I cannot imagine a better way to spend Valentine's Day than here with the member for Callide and all of his colleagues—again, if they can show up!

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to talk about those things which our government committed to at the last election. What we said at the time of the last election was that Queensland faced the most dire of economic circumstances, as did the rest of the country and indeed the Western developed world, as the global financial crisis was spiralling in a way that nobody could understand or predict. What we said to Queenslanders was that none of us could understand—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has the call.

**Ms BLIGH:** Thank you. What we committed to was to guide Queensland's economy and the people of our state through the most difficult of economic downturns seen since the Depression in the last century. Did we achieve that? Absolutely. We are on track to create 100,000 jobs—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my left! It is a wide-ranging question. The Premier has the call.

**Mr Seeneey** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has the call.

**Ms BLIGH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. We promised to guide Queensland through the toughest of economic circumstances to protect people's jobs, and we did that and more to create new jobs. We have done every single one of those things and we have done it across the length and breadth of Queensland. And do you know what? It did require hard decisions—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I rise to a point of order. I seek clarification from the Premier. Was she talking to the 3,500 public servants whose jobs she is now going to cut out of the Public Service? Was that one of her promises as well?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I call the Premier.

**Ms BLIGH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker—and I note that doughnuts are on special in the cafeteria again today. Did it require some tough economic decisions? Yes, it did. And did we have the leadership and the courage to take the right decisions for Queensland, even if they were against our own political interests? Yes, we did, because we put Queensland first and because we have what it takes to lead this state, not like the—

**Mr Seeneey:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I asked the Premier for a choice between two broken promises—the fuel tax or the asset sales. Which was the most beneficial to the people of Queensland? It is a choice between two broken promises.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I call the Premier.

**Ms BLIGH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Every economic decision that we have made has kept Queensland strong and kept people in jobs. It took leadership. We have got it. You have not!

### Bligh Labor Government

**Mr SEENEY:** My second question without notice is also to the Premier. I refer to the promises the Premier is already making in the run-up to the fast-approaching state election, and I ask: given the Premier's extensive list of broken promises from the last election from which she cannot point to any benefit, how can Queenslanders trust any promise the Premier makes between now and the looming state election?

**Ms Jones** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Ashgrove, would you cease interjecting before I call on somebody to speak.

**Ms BLIGH:** Again, I thank the member for the question. Mr Speaker, I am very happy to have an opportunity to talk about election commitments. As you know, we will be going to the next election with big ideas for a big Queensland. We have seen one of those—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. You have asked the question of the Premier. The Premier is answering that question. I call the Premier.

**Ms BLIGH:** They are a lot more polite when they are not here, Mr Speaker. We will be going to the next election with big ideas for Queensland at one of the biggest times in its history—ideas like—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Stop the clock. I will make it plain. As I understand this question, it is a wide-ranging question. I wrote down 'promises', 'an extensive list', 'trust any other promise'. That is a fairly broad question. The Premier is therefore endeavouring to answer a broad question. It may not be the answer that those on my left like, but it nevertheless is an answer. The Premier therefore deserves the courtesy of the House. I call the Premier.

**Ms BLIGH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I said, we are committed to the big ideas that will take Queensland forward at one of the biggest moments in its history—ideas like the one we released last week, the Queensland Education Trust. As I advised earlier, we are seeing people from across Queensland get on to the website. They want to know more. They like what they see and we will be talking about it more.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting. The Premier is not casting any personal reflection on the honourable gentleman. She therefore deserves the courtesy of the House. I call the Premier.

**Ms BLIGH:** Mr Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity, however, to tell the House about a broken promise. The people of Ashgrove recently had material put into their letterboxes by the candidate for Ashgrove in which the candidate for Ashgrove said—

The LNP will reform electricity tariffs, saving Queensland families up to \$330 a year.

But what did the member for Clayfield have to say in a press release he put out yesterday? He said that it will save households \$120 a year on their power bills. So those opposite have broken a promise before they are even elected. So the Liberal National Party has broken a new record: it has broken its first election promise six months before the election. It quotes \$330 when it goes out in Ashgrove and \$120 in the press release from the member here. Of course, as we saw in today's *Courier-Mail*, it actually really is not anything because those opposite are not going to stick to it. Those opposite who want to talk about broken promises should ask another question, because they have set a new record—the first political party to break its own promises before it even gets to an election. That makes them look like geniuses yesterday!

## Mining Industry

**Mrs KEECH:** My question is to the honourable the Premier. Can the Premier outline how the government intends to spread the opportunities of the resources boom and what is the essential ingredient to achieve that objective?

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the member for the question. She, like all members of my team, believes that the resources within our borders belong to every Queenslanders and that every Queenslanders deserves to benefit, not just the privileged few. That means that we have the challenge to spread that economic benefit as widely as we can. That is why we announced the Queensland Education Trust, which is a way of saving and investing some of that benefit and spreading it across the next generation, and that is what we will continue to talk about.

It also means recognising that many of those opportunities are right here and right now. That means that we need to ensure that people who are either unemployed or underemployed and who want a job in this industry know what those jobs are and can get access to them and the skills needed to get them. That is why I am pleased to advise the House that we will be holding a second summit with the mining industry, with companies and unions and government agencies in December this year. As a result of the huge success of our Work for Queensland job expos, we will be holding another four in late January and early February: one in Toowoomba, one in Logan, one in Caboolture and one in Ipswich. We saw 24,000 Queenslanders come to the Work for Queensland expos. That tells me that Queenslanders understand the opportunity that is on their doorstep and they want to be part of it. They want a slice of the action.

The challenge for a government is to make sure they can get that action. What is the essential ingredient? It is leadership—people who are prepared to look over the horizon, people who are prepared to make the hard decisions, a government that is driven with a sense of purpose. Leadership is not what you see from those opposite and certainly not what we saw from the leader of the Liberal National Party yesterday. Yesterday, the opposition benches were as empty as King George Square on a hot day or the Clem7 tunnel at peak hour. The benches were as empty as Campbell Newman's promise to keep rate rises to CPI. Can members imagine what Wayne Bennett would do if his players did not turn up for the game? Do they think he would have giggled? Do they think he would have nervously laughed and said, 'Maybe they were all out to lunch'? There is something profoundly weird and worrisome about a bloke who wants to be a member of parliament but who thinks that the parliament is immaterial and a waste of time. He does not just want to be a member of parliament; he wants to be Premier, but he thinks that this parliament is a waste of time and he believes that what happens here does not matter.

**Mr Seeney:** You had no idea what was happening.

**Ms BLIGH:** Mr Speaker, I cannot help it. I have to take that interjection.

### Infrastructure Projects, Local Content

**Mr NICHOLLS:** My question is to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. After 20 years of this tired Labor government, how can Queenslanders trust his flimsy election eve pledge on local content for future projects when he was responsible for wasting \$10,000 on 'Buy Queensland' T-shirts that were made in Bangladesh and then instructed public servants to cut off the tags to cover it up?

**Mr FRASER:** Mr Speaker, I am happy to answer the question by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I would seek your guidance, however, on the imputation that was contained in the question.

**Mr SPEAKER:** If you could demonstrate to me what you consider the imputation was?

**Mr FRASER:** The shadow Treasurer's question contains an imputation which is against the standing orders. Secondly, it is not true.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I do not need any assistance from those on my left. I have asked the honourable gentleman to just explain to me—

**Mr FRASER:** Mr Speaker, the question contained an imputation which is against the standing orders.

**Mr SPEAKER:** And I am asking—

**Mr FRASER:** And the imputation was that an action was taken at my direction which was a cover-up and that is not the case.

**Mr SPEAKER:** In that case, I will ask for the question to be reframed.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** After 20 years of this tired Labor government, how can Queenslanders trust his flimsy election eve pledge on local content for future projects when he was responsible for wasting \$10,000 on 'Buy Queensland' T-shirts that were made in Bangladesh and then instructed public servants to cut off the tags in an action that could be construed as a cover-up?

### Speaker's Ruling, Question Out of Order

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, that is the same imputation.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It was an action that could be construed as a cover-up. It did not imply it was a cover-up.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Those on my right! The imputation that the honourable gentleman found offensive and, therefore, I asked for the question to be recast was that the honourable the Treasurer had directed it. Having had a second go at it, I will now call the member for Mount Isa.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my right! I am on my feet. The House will come to order.

### Government Services

**Mrs KIERNAN:** My question is to the honourable the Premier. Can the Premier outline to the House how the government is improving front-line services for Queenslanders and any other policy she is aware of in this regard?

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the honourable member for Mount Isa, who understands, I think perhaps more than any other member in this chamber given the size of her electorate, just how important government services are to the many families she represents. We are home to some of the best front-line services in the country and we had that confirmed today in two separate reports. I want to thank and congratulate the doctors, the nurses and the health workers of Queensland Health. Today we saw the national report that confirmed that Queensland remains the No. 1 state when it comes to the lowest median elective surgery waiting times in Australia.

Our doctors and our nurses and our health workers achieved that at a time when some of their elective surgery had to be cancelled because of the devastating effect of floods, when doctors and nurses could not actually make it to the hospital. So they achieved No. 1 in Australia for the shortest elective waiting times despite the fact that many of their services had to be cancelled during those terrible weeks in January and February. So I take my hat off to them. They do a great job and they deserve to be applauded.

It is not only our health workers. Today, the Queensland police put out their annual crime statistics and confirmed that, for the 10th consecutive year, we have seen crime rates fall—down three per cent from last year. Crime rates in Queensland have reduced by 30 per cent under Labor in the last decade. Congratulations to the Queensland Police Service, who are out there in numbers we have never before seen because Labor put more police on the beat. They are doing a fantastic job.

Of course, all of this comes hot on the heels of the fantastic year 3 NAPLAN results and great PISA results in education. But what do those opposite have in store for education in our schools? I cannot stress enough the dangers associated with the education policy that we saw put out by the LNP this week. This policy is a tired, old policy that has been recycled by somebody who knows nothing about the education system.

This is what happens when you take people like the member for Gregory out of the frontbench. He would remember sitting around that cabinet table trying to sort out the mess that Bob Quinn and his Leading Schools brought to our schools. What it means is that schools get pitted against schools and that some are lucky while the rest are left to fend for themselves. Every single electorate and every single school from now until election day is going to know that this policy that tore them apart is on its way back. Where did it end? It ended in trying to sack cleaners and in some schools getting money given to them and others having money taken off them. When Labor members talk about education we mean education for everyone. When Liberal National Party members talk about education they mean education for the few.

### Local Government Elections

**Mr GIBSON:** My question without notice is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Local Government. In light of the Premier ruling out an election in February 2012, will the minister rule out using regulations under section 23 of the Local Government Electoral Act to move the local government elections to enable a March 2012 state election?

**Mr LUCAS:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The Premier will determine the timing of the election when the Premier sees fit. I would just make this observation, though: every day that we have sat in this place since the leadership of Campbell Newman of the LNP has been an embarrassment for your side. I have been in this chamber now for 15 years and I have observed—

**Mr GIBSON:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Stop the clock. We will hear the point of order.

**Mr GIBSON:** It was a very tight question, it was on a specific issue and I ask for your ruling on relevance.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The question referred to the election.

**Mr LUCAS:** The question was based on the premise that the Premier had ruled out particular dates for an election. The Premier will call an election when the Premier sees fit.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Accordingly, there is no point of order.

**Mr LUCAS:** There was a false premise. That was the point. I just make this point about questions from the honourable member or, indeed, other members: in my observation of this parliament, both in opposition and in government, and of other parliaments, oppositions turn up to hold governments accountable. Yesterday we saw an example, and, indeed, every other day, of an opposition that cannot even hold themselves to account.

### Queensland Economy

**Ms FARMER:** My question is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade. Can the Deputy Premier update the House on any new economic data that shows the investment surge that is flowing through the Queensland economy and is he aware of any other plans that could impact upon the Queensland economy?

**Mr FRASER:** I thank the member for Bulimba for her question and, indeed, for her commitment to this government's economic program which is seeing investment surge for the Queensland economy. You can see that in evidence today when the Australian Bureau of Statistics released its capital expenditure data at 10.30 this morning which shows, after that record surge in the June quarter, another 10 per cent growth in the capital expenditure flowing across the Queensland economy—bolting on another 10 per cent in another quarter. That is not 10 per cent for the year but another 10 per cent for the quarter. What does that take the yearly result to? The yearly growth in capital expenditure is now 63.9 per cent—64 per cent is an historic high in capital expenditure growth—and that is driven off the back of the activities of this government in setting up the Queensland economy for the investment surge that is moving through to the future.

What did we see this morning? We saw a government in action, out there committing to making sure that local industry will get a fair go at getting access to those opportunities to secure local jobs. It was Labor in government that introduced a local industry policy, it has been a Labor government this term that has passed the policy into legislation and it is Labor that has made the commitment today, as in force yesterday, to make sure that we give local industry a go.

It stands in contrast to the opposition. They were invited to meet with the Steel Industry Alliance, they were asked to provide a view, they were asked to go to the rally. And what happened? They were MIA—missing in action again. What we have seen is that the Leader of the Opposition has led from the front this year in taking the pay and not doing the job. We have the whip who is following the lead in taking the pay and not doing the job. In fact, yesterday we saw that they all went out in sympathy. They have decided to make an art form of taking the pay and not doing the job. In the end, what you see is a window on a future LNP government. You can just imagine them high on the hog and low on the hard yakka, where the only hard stuff is the stuff that is clinking around in the glasses in the afternoon evensong as they put their feet up cruising along as is their wont—the born-to-rule mentality where they do not think they have to put in the hard yards.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I rise to a point of order. Will the Treasurer explain how hard it is to spend money you do not have to provide jobs for people who will not be there and on kids who are not born yet?

**Mr SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Stop the clock. The House will come to order.

**Mr FRASER:** On the point of order, I know that you, Mr Speaker, have made a point in the past on ruling on frivolous points of order and I note that is the third frivolous point of order taken by the member.

**Mr SPEAKER:** There is no point of order and I will take note of what the honourable gentlemen is saying because I think he has a fair point.

**Mr FRASER:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank you for your stewardship of the House. The point to make here is this: we have seen the LNP already break a world record in breaking an election promise before they even get to the election. They have \$2 billion worth of unfunded promises and they are not worth the paper they are written on.

### Local Government Elections

**Mr EMERSON:** My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Attorney-General's failure to rule out the government using section 23 of the Local Government Electoral Act to move the March 2012 local government elections. Will the Premier rule out her government using that provision to move the 2012 local government elections?

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the member for the question. I thank him for turning up today as well. If the member for Indooroopilly had been paying attention he would know that in fact the Local Government Association of Queensland voted at its annual general meeting, I think in 2009, to request the Queensland government to move the local government elections by six months so that they would be voting in October in 2012. I gave that good consideration and resolved that it was not appropriate, that there were no grounds on which to extend their mandate, and I advised them accordingly and made it public that the Queensland government would not be moving the date of the council elections in 2012. I do not know whether I put out a press release but it has been out there in the public arena.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Those on my left, a specific question has been asked. The Attorney-General will cease interjecting, as will those opposite.

**Ms BLIGH:** As I said, if the member had paid just the smallest amount of attention to what was going on around him in his first term of parliament he would have—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms BLIGH:** If the member for Indooroopilly had paid even a second of attention to what was going on—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Those on my left. Member for Indooroopilly, you have asked the question. The Premier is answering the question.

**Ms BLIGH:** He would know that this issue had been well canvassed. I recall it actually being raised in this chamber, but of course we know that those opposite believe this chamber is a place that is immaterial to them. That is what their leader told Queensland yesterday.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Those on my left will cease interjecting.

**Ms BLIGH:** I will make it as clear as I can for those who rarely show up in here and when they do they are unable to understand the most basic of points: I have already ruled this out. If they paid attention, turned up and did the job that they are paid by Queenslanders to do, they would know that.

### **Bruce Highway, Upgrade**

**Ms NELSON-CARR:** My question is to the Minister for Main Roads. Could the minister please update the House on progress on the Bruce Highway upgrades in Townsville and any alternative plans of which the minister is aware?

**Mr WALLACE:** I thank the member for Mundingburra for her question. I have great news for her constituents and the people of Townsville. I am pleased to report that later this week on the Douglas Arterial Road north-bound traffic is expected to be switched onto the new Ross River bridge, weather permitting of course. By Christmas we are expecting all lanes of the bridge to be in business, again weather permitting, opening up that section of the road in the middle of the electorate of Mundingburra. That will mean a reduction in congestion around the busy Townsville Hospital and the James Cook University precinct. It is part of our \$120 million Douglas Arterial Road duplication, which is just one of dozens of projects that we have underway on the Bruce Highway. In fact, up and down the highway there are 32 projects underway which are being delivered by the Bligh government for the people of Queensland who use that vital road.

One thing that the people of Queensland will not find under their trees on Christmas Day is Campbell Newman's plan for the Bruce Highway. We know that when it comes to the LNP's plan for the Bruce Highway Santa's sack is empty. Of course they have said that they will not be releasing their Bruce Highway strategy until six months after the election. It would be like my kids getting their Littlest Pet Shop Christmas presents in June. That is not good enough. It is not good enough for the tourism operators in the Whitsundays, it is not good enough for the freight operators who travel through Townsville and it is not good enough for the mums and dads who take their kids to school in Cairns. Only Labor has a plan for the Bruce Highway.

We in North Queensland are decent, giving people. I have an early Christmas present for the Leader of the Opposition, Campbell Newman. It is a copy of the Bruce Highway Upgrade Strategy. I say to him: Sir, take our Bruce Highway strategy and copy it, just like you are copying all of the government's other policies. I know that Santa Claus will not be bringing the opposition any more presents this year, because they have been very, very naughty—bullying, compiling 'dirt files' and not showing up for work. It is not something that Santa takes kindly to. I challenge the opposition to use our Bruce Highway Upgrade Strategy. They can copy it if they like, because it is a first-rate document. Santa is bringing their gift early.

### **North Queensland, Road Projects**

**Mr KNUTH:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Main Roads. On 14 June this year the department of main roads committed to the construction of two overtaking lanes between Townsville and Charters Towers. Will the minister advise what progress has been made on this construction and the expected completion date?

**Mr WALLACE:** I thank the member for Dalrymple for the question. It is good to see him in that position in the House, asking a question. His old granddad worked in the sugar mills of the Burdekin. He was a good Labor man. I say to the member for Dalrymple: mate, you are halfway to coming home and thank you very much for the question. As the member is aware, in this year's budget we announced that we would build two new overtaking lanes on the Flinders Highway between Townsville and Charters Towers. Even though the Flinders Highway is part of the national network and its funding is the responsibility of the federal government, we have chipped in. We are investing \$4.2 million of state funding in the project to help motorists on that busy part of the highway.

This afternoon I am pleased to tell the member for Dalrymple and the House that, instead of two lanes, we will be building three overtaking lanes between Mingela and Charters Towers. We will be delivering three lanes. Planning and design are complete, the contract has been awarded to RoadTek

and the entire project is due to be completed by June next year, weather permitting of course. Construction should start on 17 January and the first lane should be completed by the end of February. The member for Dalrymple can keep his constituents informed about that.

The member and the House will be interested in other significant roadworks in the electorate of Dalrymple. Work is now underway on a 10-kilometre section of the Gregory Developmental Road near Greenvale and is on track to be delivered by January. South of Charters Towers on the Gregory Developmental Road, \$4.5 million worth of NDRAA arrangements are due to begin. Those works will see about four kilometres of flood affected road rehabilitated. There is more good news for the people of Dalrymple. We have just finished rehabilitation works on the Flinders Highway near the Burdekin Bridge. We have invested \$4 million of state funds into the reconstruction of an intersection with a high rate of incidents near Macrossan itself. Works to make that intersection safe are now complete.

Right across Dalrymple, the Bligh government is working hard to deliver better and safer roads. But it is not just Dalrymple that is benefiting from the record road creation program of the Bligh government. We are looking after the people of regional Queensland. For every man, woman and child in regional Queensland we will be spending \$1,600 on regional roads. Right across the state we will spend over \$730 for every man, woman and child. That is far and away more than any other state is spending. We are concentrating on electorates such as Dalrymple. I have driven the Gregory Developmental Road. Now when I go to the Goldfield Ashes, I drive the Flinders Highway more proudly. I know that that work will continue, and only Labor can deliver.

### Schools, Attendance

**Mr WATT:** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Industrial Relations. Can the minister update the House on 2011 student attendance figures and also any other workplace absenteeism data?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the honourable member for his question. He is a man who takes his job in this place very seriously and is always talking about education issues relevant to Everton. This year was not business as usual for Queensland schools. At the beginning of the year the natural disasters exacted a huge toll on Queensland schools. There were 450 schools affected by the floods and the cyclone that befell our state. However, in the true Queensland spirit, students, parents, staff, community members and departmental staff rolled up their sleeves, got on with the job and got schools back on their feet. I inform the House that our preliminary 2011 student attendance rate is 90.9 per cent, which is down 0.1 per cent from our attendance rate last year. That is a very significant achievement in difficult circumstances. It reflects the excellent work ethic of Queenslanders and their willingness to get on with the job.

Sadly and regrettably, not all Queenslanders have the same attitude to getting back to work. Yesterday, in the middle of the day, we saw some extraordinary scenes in the parliament. It was an extraordinary moment when the LNP sought to trash parliamentary democracy in this state. They have no respect for this House. When the pseudo Leader of the Opposition, Campbell Newman, was asked why they might have gone to lunch, what was his response? It was, 'Ah, yeah, well, maybe they did.' Yesterday we saw the great LNP canteen stampede. They were more interested in beating the rush up to the canteen. They were more interested in beating the rush to lunch. As a matter of fact, I have the cafe menu from Tuesday, 29 November. I say to the Leader of the Opposition, I hope the corned beef was worth it. I say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I hope he enjoyed the calamari rings. I say to all members from the Gold Coast—the member for Mudgeeraba, the member for Gaven, the member for Surfers Paradise and 'the little mermaid', the member for Mermaid Beach—I hope they enjoyed putting the canteen before the Commonwealth Games bill.

What happened yesterday was a travesty. The behaviour of the opposition was shameful. It disrespected the House and it disrespected the people of Queensland, who pay our way. They pay our wage to come in here, to advocate and speak for them and to represent them. It is not 'can-do'; it is 'coulda-woulda-shoulda-do'. He always has an excuse. From the top down—from Campbell Newman down—they disrespect this parliament and they disrespect their duty. Under Campbell Newman the LNP is as bankrupt as the Clem7 tunnel, it is as laughable as the bike scheme that no-one wants to use and it is as dishonest as a 42 per cent rate rise for ratepayers in Brisbane.

### Fraser Coast, Health Services

**Mr FOLEY:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. The people of Maryborough are sick of hearing promises that are about as empty as a testimonial dinner for Peter Slipper. The AMA Queensland President, Dr Richard Kidd, recently stated that Fraser Coast health facilities lacked specialist cataract services, that the mental health department was poorly resourced, that false waiting times for referred surgery were given and that at least 53 more hospital beds are needed to achieve the national average of 2.6 beds per 1,000 people. Minister, what will you do to rectify this situation?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Firstly, what I would ask the honourable gentleman to do is address the question properly. You know, I have ruled on this for 2½ years. Why would I break the habit of a lifetime? Will the member rephrase the question so it is in order.

**Mr FOLEY:** Will the minister advise the House what he will do to rectify the situation?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you. I call the honourable the Minister for Health.

**Mr WILSON:** I thank the honourable member for the question. This gives me an opportunity not only to address the question in relation to the Fraser Coast but also, as a matter of duty, to say to all Queensland Health staff—the 80,000 staff around the state: congratulations on the fine work that you have done in the last 12 months to produce a first-class report on elective surgery in Queensland public hospitals. This is illustrated by the matters that I referred to in my ministerial statement earlier this afternoon.

We have the shortest waiting lists and lead the nation when it comes to the wait times for elective surgery—29 days. We continue to lead the nation with the median waiting time of 29 days. Secondly, we are outright first—that is, leading the country—for long waits; that is, those who have been waiting too long and who are now getting surgery. Thirdly, we are outright first on what they call the 90th percentile. That means that 90 per cent of people are getting surgery in less than five months.

Those three key indicators are showing that Queensland is leading the way like we did last year. We are not only leading the way across the nation but also leading the way on the Fraser Coast. Why? Because we are rolling out more and more funding to our health facilities on the Fraser Coast. Multimillion dollar expansions of our major hospitals, including in that area, mean that there are more beds and more services sooner and closer to home on the Fraser Coast. We will continue to do that. Sure, there will always be people looking to improve the health service we provide on the Fraser Coast. That is why we do long-term health service planning to ensure that highly trained clinicians are there to provide the services that we want to provide.

The folk on the Fraser Coast are getting a better deal out of the Labor government than they will ever get out of the LNP because its promise for health for the next election is that it will cut \$400 million out of the Health budget. What were the figures for long waits when Mike Horan, the member for Toowoomba South, was minister for health under an LNP government? Some 8,500 Queenslanders were waiting for far too long for their elective surgery. Now Queensland leads the nation in having the lowest long-wait elective surgery lists in the country. That is what we have done. Under the LNP we have a discussion paper that is two years old. There would be not one new bed, not one new ward and not one new hospital under the LNP.

*(Time expired)*

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Caloundra will cease interjecting.

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Both of you!

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The Attorney-General will cease interjecting.

### Housing Industry

**Ms O'NEILL:** My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade. Will the Deputy Premier update members on new data that outlines the performance of the housing market in Queensland? Is he aware of any alternative economic plans?

**Mr FRASER:** I thank the member for Kallangur for her question and for her commitment to supporting the housing industry. It was in the member's electorate, of course, that the Premier and I launched the Queensland Building Boost, which is out there providing a \$10,000 boost towards construction, getting people into the housing market and supporting jobs in the housing market at this time.

What is the evidence of that Building Boost beginning to make a difference? We saw yesterday the Housing Industry Association, the HIA, release its update of the October home sales figures. What it said about detached house sales across the nation in the month of October was that they had moved by 5.5 per cent.

But who was at the front of the pack? Out there at the front of the pack with a massive increase of 20 per cent was Queensland. Queensland was out in front—where it belongs, where it ought to be; out there at the front. That is because of the policies of this government in action. But, of course, when it

comes to the LNP all we see is inaction—nothing about forward motion. Those opposite like to talk about the four pillars of the economy. It turns out that what they actually need is four pillows, because while we are out there building the Queensland economy and driving investment they have all decided to have a lie down. What we have not seen yet is an explanation of where they were during this farce.

The Leader of the Opposition is yet to say where he was. He was probably up in the opposition office punching out a time card which is, of course, the only onerous task that he has to perform. There might have been a little bit more punching out going on later on in the evening, but I make no comment on that. In the end, the member for Clayfield has not explained where he was. He was probably out there driving around Campbell Newman. The Clayfield cabbie says to people who ask where the taxpayer funded car is that he is out there driving Campbell Newman around. We have not heard from the member for Kawana and the member for Surfers Paradise, who missed their bills. They said in this morning's paper that they were caught unawares up in their offices. B1 and B2 might have been caught unawares, but I suspect I know what was going on. The member for Currumbin took the Bondy defence. She said she could not recall. We could pass her a glass of water, we could repeat the question, but, in the end, she said that she could not recall but she was not paying much attention.

We know from what we have seen that the Opposition Whip was not doing his job, but the Opposition Deputy Whip, the member for Hervey Bay, was here. But, as it turns out, he is not all there. In truth, what we saw from the LNP yesterday was a window on what they would be like in government—asleep at the wheel, sipping from the cup, without a plan or a vision for the future. The window we saw was in fact just a 'back to the future' with the same old divided LNP.

### Infrastructure Projects, Local Content

**Mrs STUCKEY:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member has the call.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business. How can Queenslanders believe anything this minister says, on the eve of an election, about local content for future projects when the pipes for the current gas boom out of Gladstone are being imported from China?

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I am sorry, I could not hear the last part. There was an interruption from the middle of the Assembly. I would just ask you to repeat the last bit so I can hear it.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** Would you like me to read the question?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Not the whole thing, just the last bit.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** Local content for future projects when the pipes for the current gas boom out of Gladstone are being imported from China.

**Ms JARRATT:** I thank the honourable member for the question and for being here today. Thank you very much for coming. I do note, though, that yesterday the member missed two bills that are of great importance to tourism. There were three bills in total, but two of them were of enormous importance to tourism. The Commonwealth Games bill is surely of enormous importance.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. I ask about the minister's relevance in answering this question about local content and pipes.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The question, Minister, was quite specific about local content in the gas pipelines—that is what I wrote down—and about Chinese product. The point of order is valid. I ask the minister to come to the question.

**Ms JARRATT:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your guidance. When we are talking about local content may I just conclude by saying that if there was something that was local—

**Mrs Stuckey** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Currumbin, you have asked the question. You have taken a point of order. The minister has been directed to answer the question. The minister is answering the question.

**Ms JARRATT:** I am talking about things of local interest and local content. Surely the Commonwealth Games is of local interest on the Gold Coast. I am happy to come to the point. I am happy to come to the question.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. I cannot hear the minister's reply.

**Ms JARRATT:** As the first Minister for Manufacturing in this parliament, I was very happy to introduce into this parliament the very first bill that addressed local content for industry in Queensland. That meant that we gave a fair go to local business and local industry through government procurement on big government projects in Queensland. We have taken that a step further. The Coordinator-General, through recent major projects, through the EIS process, was able to condition the companies—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Just wait. A question has been asked. There was a point of order on relevance. I am trying to listen to the minister to make sure that she is relevant as per the point of order. The question now is how much. That is a separate question. The minister was asked a question. I am listening for that answer. As far as I can tell and I can hear, the minister is answering the question. The honourable the minister.

**Ms JARRATT:** I am indeed talking about local content for industry in Queensland. This government will always stand up for local manufacturing businesses and local industry because we know that, as the economic future of Queensland grows and grows—and we have heard the good news today about capital investment in this state—we want Queensland manufacturers to have a part of that.

The question is: will it be possible for every component of every major project in Queensland to be available for tender by local business? The answer to that of course is no. Some of these projects are so large that they can only be produced by those companies that currently exist overseas. We will work with our local industries through our ICN. We will build their capacity and the supply chain capacities in Queensland to ensure that they get every job possible out of the growing resources boom in this state. I will be there as the minister to back that in through the announcement by the Deputy Premier yesterday that we will introduce local content participation in all major projects that come to Queensland.

### Local Government, Paid Parking

**Mr KILBURN:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Local Government. Could the minister please inform the House of any councils proposing to use provisions in the Sustainable Planning Act to restrict the introduction of paid-parking meters, paid parking and any other relevant views on this important matter?

**Mr LUCAS:** I thank the honourable member for his question. He is taking a real interest in this matter in relation to the Carindale Shopping Centre within his electorate, as are a number of other members. It is really regrettable, though, that the Brisbane City Council is taking no interest in it whatsoever and has indeed washed its hands of it.

Yesterday I released legal advice that I had received and had forwarded to the mayor about two weeks ago about the ability to stop paid parking at both Garden City and Carindale. Regrettably, because the council sat on its hands, notwithstanding having notice of two applications over two years ago, we now have a paid-parking situation in Chermside that it has walked away from. What has happened here? Clearly, this legal advice shows that councils, who always want to be left to their own devices, have the power to issue a temporary local planning instrument to stop paid parking in these shopping centres. I table that advice and my letter to the mayor.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 15 November 2011, from the Attorney-General and Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State, Hon. Paul Lucas MP, to the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Councillor Graham Quirk, relating to vehicle parking in and around Chermside Shopping Centre [6057].

*Tabled paper:* Media release, dated 29 November 2011, by the Moreton Bay Regional Council titled 'No paid shopping centre car parking' [6058].

But it is worse than that. Yesterday the mayor of Brisbane, Graham Quirk, ruled out his desire to do that. But what happened in those areas where councils are actually interested in doing something for their ratepayers? Yesterday, the mayor of Moreton Bay Regional Council, Allan Sutherland, said that they will do something about a temporary local planning instrument in their local authority area. So where Graham Quirk says he cannot do something—like the opposition, he has clocked off—Allan Sutherland can. What did Graham Quirk say yesterday in justification? In the space of an hour he had given three different versions. On Channel 9 he said, 'I have the power to do it.' On Channel 7 he said, 'If you did that, you would be taking away an existing right; there might be consultation.' On Channel 10 he said, 'The TLP will take a really long time and they might do something or we will have to do it.' There were three different versions. Like any kid who has been caught out, he cannot get his stories straight.

What is crystal clear is that, if it is good enough for Moreton Bay Regional Council using the law, it is good enough for the Brisbane City Council. We maintain that offer to work with them in relation to Carindale and Mount Gravatt where people will face cars on the streets, let alone the poor shop assistants and those workers. The South-East Queensland Council of Mayors never once played interference. They never want us to have a role. However, we are happy to work with them to do that. They have washed their hands of the situation. It is an utter disgrace. When you look at what the Brisbane City Council does—and I should reflect that we are coming to the end of a parliamentary year. I cannot think of the number of times they have kicked out Brisbane city councillors from that chamber. I can count on my hand the number of times you have done it in the last three years, Mr Speaker,

because you can control the chamber. Imagine having a council where the deputy leader is sending texts to the chair telling him to kick out a member of the opposition. There would be a riot if that ever happened here. That is governance LNP style. It is a total and complete disgrace.

*(Time expired)*

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Both sides will cease their crossfire.

### **QFleet, Local Content**

**Ms BATES:** My question—

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Clayfield!

**Ms BATES:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Government Services. I ask: after 20 long years of Labor government, how can Queenslanders believe anything this government says about supporting local manufacturing when the Labor Prime Minister was forced to write to the Premier seeking an explanation for QFleet's poor record of buying locally made cars?

**Mr FINN:** I am delighted to answer this question. Can I say from the outset that I only speak for the government when I say that we are very delighted to see you here today, Ros. I only speak for the government.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The honourable the minister will call the member by her correct title in this place.

**Mr FINN:** I am delighted to answer this question, which goes to local content again. Yesterday what we saw is those opposite went local while we did content. They went local; we did content. They were not even here. So I am delighted to be talking about local content. I am also delighted—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Resume your seat. We will wait for the House to come to order.

**Mr FINN:** Let me talk a bit about QFleet. What we have done with QFleet—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my left!

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable minister has the call.

**Mr FINN:** What we see in the Queensland fleet is a growing number of Australian vehicles. What we see is a government that deliberately sets policies so that Australian vehicles could be made with a 5½-star green star rating. We set that target. We went to the car manufacturers and we said—

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba, I have talked to you before about this endless running commentary. You have asked the question. The minister is answering the question.

**Mr FINN:** We went to the car manufacturers and we said that we will buy vehicles with a 5½-star rating. We encouraged the Australian manufacturers to do it and they did it. Our fleet is gaining more and more Australian cars right now. It was interesting that the question asked what the government might have been doing for 20 years, and I note that the member's former questions have related to asbestos. I will tell the member what we have been doing for 20 years. We have been removing the asbestos that you put into our government buildings. That is what we have been doing for 20 years.

**Ms BATES:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I hope it is a point of order.

**Ms BATES:** There is an issue about asbestos currently at the Ethics Committee that the member is well aware of and he is alluding to that.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr FINN:** I will conclude with the member's own words as addressed to the AIIA when she said, 'We won't be an accountability-free zone.' Well, you certainly were yesterday. None of you were here. You say that you will not be an accountability-free zone, but you are as bankrupt as your Clem7 tunnel.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The time for question time has ended.

## HOSPITALS FOUNDATIONS AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1) 2011

### Disallowance of Statutory Instrument



**Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (3.40 pm): I move—

That the Hospitals Foundations Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011, subordinate legislation No. 223 of 2011, tabled in the House on 15 November 2011, be disallowed.

Let me make it very clear from the outset, before my words or those of the LNP are twisted in relation to the Queensland Children's Hospital, that the LNP supports the construction of the QCH on the Mater site and if elected to government will work to ensure that hospital delivers what is needed for this state and sick children, not just in the immediate future but also in years to come. But what the LNP will not stand for is the manufacture of a new foundation which has as its purpose the raising of capital, as is stated in the explanatory notes to the regulation, to offset Labor's inability to plan for this particular hospital's infrastructure, as evidenced across many hospital sites in Queensland.

The LNP will not stand for the public purse being added to to meet capital costs on an ongoing basis as this is the province and obligation of this government. The LNP will not stand for donations being taken away from research purposes, as currently provided by the RCH Foundation. The RCH Foundation was formed in 1986, and since that time a sum of \$193 million has been raised. In 2010, \$14.1 million was raised. These funds were used by the foundation for assistance in regard to research into paediatric conditions to the Queensland Children's Medical Research Institute. That is what a foundation of this nature, dealing with children's issues, should be used for. It should not be used to raise capital to offset a lazy government—a government that has developed, perpetrated and put upon this state a multibillion-dollar debt and a multibillion-dollar deficit that we will have to pay for years and years.

Further, the Queensland Children's Hospital is up to three years away from opening and operating. The question has to be asked: why has this new foundation been founded, gazetted and made operational now? Why has this particular foundation been formed three years out from the new QCH operating? There is something going on behind the scenes. There is something happening that this government does not want us to know about. In part, that is a clear indication that they want to use this as a vehicle to raise capital. I will come back to that point in a few moments.

The formation of this new foundation was carried out in almost total secrecy. The first public awareness came with the gazetting of the new members of the board which occurred on 11 November this year. I will come back to that. The first time it came to the attention of the greater public was when an article appeared in the *Sunday Mail* of 13 November, when the question was raised: why was this done in such secrecy? Why was this done in a manner such that the people of this state did not even know it was occurring? One would have thought the QCH foundation—not the correct title at this point in time—and the RCH Foundation would be working in conjunction or in parallel. I will come to what can happen in the act to amalgamate those two items, but nothing appeared in any newspaper. There was no heralding, there was no fanfare, there was no media alert, there was no media release indicating that these two bodies were prepared to work together. That raises real concerns about what was taking place behind the scenes.

The question for the minister at this point in time is: what was happening with the RCH Foundation that they did not come out and endorse the process being put in place by the government? Nothing has been pointed out to me to indicate that they came on board and applauded this process. In fact, the exact opposite occurred. They were completely secret and completely quiet because they were very concerned, in my opinion, that the process being put in place was one that they were not a party to, they were not invited to and they were not even advised of in any great detail. That is a real concern. That a board which will be asked to work with a new board is not even involved in the process and is not endorsing the process in the public arena raises real concerns. There is only one pool of money that both foundations can draw upon, and that is the same pool of money that the RCH Foundation has drawn upon for many years.

I raise another question. When you look at the board members of the new foundation you see that the CEO of the Children's Hospital is one of those board members. That raises the real question: doesn't this colour the board? Doesn't it paint the board as being the vehicle of a political decision and political motivation? Doesn't this mean that a member of the board who was in charge of the construction of a new Queensland Children's Hospital is also the same person who sits on the board to determine what fundraising will take place and where money will be allocated? Isn't that a conflict of interest? Why was this man appointed to the board when there are so many other people right across the state who are equally able to deal with this issue and provide ongoing guidance?

The explanatory notes to the regulation state quite clearly at page 2—

The capital funding anticipated to be raised by the Foundation is an important component of the overall Queensland Children's Hospital budget and establishment works.

Again, at page 2, the explanatory notes state—

Initially the focus of the Foundation's operations will be a \$10 million capital fundraising campaign.

It is stated in black and white. The government is saying to this foundation, 'We haven't got the money. We want you to go cap in hand to the public and say, "We want you to fund our capital costs. We want you to fund the construction and ongoing fit-out of this hospital because we don't have the capacity or the money to do so."'

With regard to the budget papers, I have been advised that to date the Queensland Children's Hospital has an underspend of \$54 million. I have also been advised that for 2010-11 the underspend in relation to the Queensland Health budget is some \$380 million. This explains why the government is moving to endorse a foundation, appoint a board and give them the instructions to raise capital—because the Queensland Children's Hospital to date, I have been advised, has underspent on a capital basis \$54 million and in relation to the underspend across the portfolio in 2010-11 I have been advised that \$380 million was underspent.

There are some real concerns about the processes involved in the appointment of this board but, more particularly, there are, in my opinion, some real concerns about what will happen from now on. As I said before, there is potential for the amalgamation of the two boards under section 71A of the Hospitals Foundations Act. That may apply if you have a compliant board on the RCH Foundation, but I can guarantee that that board is not compliant. They are not prepared to sit down and do nothing and see the hard work they have done to raise money for research squandered and set aside by this new foundation. They understand that their role is to get money for research and to provide scientists with the money they need to undertake the research they need to provide better outcomes, clinical advice and so on for our children. Section 56 of the act states—

The Governor in Council may, by gazette notice, order that the entry in the register in respect of a body corporate—  
in this case, the foundation—  
be removed—

...

(b) where the Governor in Council is satisfied that the body corporate should be terminated.

Who advises the Governor in Council? The executive. So what can happen is this: the RCH Foundation can now be wound up by the Governor in Council. Not only that; the funds can then be distributed to the new foundation via the Supreme Court under sections 57 and 58 of the Hospitals Foundations Act.

This is another plot by this government to get a hold of capital and to wind up an entity that has a corpus, I am advised, of \$18 million sitting in their coffers at this point in time. It is a grab for cash, it is a grab for capital and it is a grab for the public purse—against the background of a hospital that has been underfunded, poorly planned and poorly executed from way back when Peter Beattie stood in this House and said that the QCH would be built on the Mater site. We have seen in this case a capital blow-out from \$700 million to \$1.5 billion on a site that is inadequate and that cannot cope with the growth in the population and the growth in needs of the children across this state. The situation is that the real bed numbers—that is, overnight beds, not chairs and trolleys—keep dropping as time goes by. At the end of the day, what we have is a grab for cash by this government. They have put in place a foundation directly in conflict with the RCH Foundation.

I ask the minister these questions. Can the minister advise whether the current board of the RCH Foundation have advised that they are prepared to serve with the new foundation if an amalgamation takes place pursuant to the Hospitals Foundations Act? Can the minister advise whether the current board members of the RCH Foundation were asked to advise on whether or not the people appointed under the gazettal of 11 November 2011 were approved by them? Were their opinions sought in relation to the capacity and capabilities? More importantly, will the minister now confirm that the Children's Hospital Foundation Queensland, which is what it will be called, is nothing more than a grab for capital?

I have never seen a situation where we have in a regulation a statement that there is one sole purpose for a foundation—that is, to raise \$10 million in capital. That is an appalling situation. Has this government got so bad that it cannot even raise the money to build and fit out the infrastructure that is required for years to come to deal with our children's issues? Is that a situation we have here in Queensland with the health minister? He sat in this chamber today and praised the doctors and nurses—as he should do—but he did not inform the House of the full situation in this state in that we are behind in the construction of infrastructure right across this state and we are falling behind every single day.

One of the major issues facing this state is the budget, and that will impact directly on the issue facing Queensland Health in years to come. There are ongoing issues across hospitals, and one example relates to the PQ unit at the Townsville Hospital. There have been signs situated in that hospital for quite some time saying that the PQ unit is located at a certain spot, yet this government have stated over and over again, after they have built the hospital, that there is no funding available to do that. You can build the infrastructure but you have to have the recurrent funding and the staffing to make it happen. We are now facing another situation where the government have run out of funds and

run out of the capacity to raise capital and they are now turning to you, me and our neighbours to fund what they would be doing if they were in any way capable of running and dictating the budget. At the end of the day, we are now facing—

**Mr Dowling:** They'll have nurses busking for their pay next.

**Mr McARDLE:** I take the interjection from the member; that is quite correct. I can just see the day when the minister will be asking nurses to busk in the Queen Street Mall to raise the capital that is needed. It is about time this government came clean and made a clear statement. This foundation is nothing more than a sham set up by this government to raise capital to protect its own butt—to protect itself—and it does not take into account—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr O'Brien): Order! That is unparliamentary.

**Mr McARDLE:** I withdraw. It comes down to a couple of quick points. The government have failed to plan and the government have failed to budget. They set up a foundation to assume and consume the RCH Foundation by way of the Governor in Council and to take the corpus of \$18 million. They are now using this vehicle as a method for doing what they should be doing with the taxpayers' funds that they already have.

We have \$11 billion in the health portfolio—\$11 billion. It has the biggest budget, if I recall correctly, in the state government, yet the government still cannot fund a critical piece of infrastructure like the Queensland Children's Hospital. The budget of the Queensland Children's Hospital, as I said, has blown out from \$700 million to \$1.5 billion. What the government is going to do is ask the public to dip in to put capital into the QCH budget when that \$10 million should be used for critical research that can be undertaken day in, day out to assist the children of this state who suffer from horrendous diseases. It could also be used to develop new procedures, new outcomes and new benefits right across this state—not just for now, but for years to come. The foundation is a sham and the regulation should be disallowed.

*(Time expired)*

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.55 pm): I rise this afternoon to contribute to the disallowance motion for the Hospitals Foundations Amendment Regulation (No. 1) and to expose the cash-strapped Bligh Labor government's secret plan to raid donated funds from the highly successful Royal Children's Hospital Foundation. Up until now, the public have been hoodwinked and kept largely in the dark over Labor's plan to use the foundation donations to fund its budget blow-outs but, by establishing the Children's Health Foundation Queensland two years before the Queensland Children's Hospital is due to open in 2014, the government has telegraphed its move—one which is designed to precipitate the winding down of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation.

The Queensland Children's Hospital was first announced as an election commitment in 2006 and it was estimated to cost \$700 million but, as we have come to expect from this financially irresponsible government, the cost has blown out to a staggering \$1.5 billion. That is an \$800 million budget blow-out. To make matters worse, the new Children's Hospital will provide only 71 new beds over the current 191-bed Royal Children's Hospital—a shortfall of 138 beds. The LNP supports the construction of the Queensland Children's Hospital but we are not prepared to stand idly by while taxpayers' money is being thrown around like confetti. We will hold this government to its litany of broken promises.

The government's real purpose here is to create a new foundation to replace the existing Royal Children's Hospital Foundation with a new Labor friendly board. This will allow the government to undertake a rapid capital-raising program and quarantine donations to pay for its raging mismanagement, incompetence and blow-outs. This Labor Bligh government is so broke and desperate it has had to resort to dipping its greedy fingers into the hospital's donation fund. Not satisfied with wasting taxpayers' money, the Bligh government is now hitting a new low trying to pinch hospital donations, but why not grab the hospital poor box while you are at it?

Significantly, the current board of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation have indicated that they will not be a party to this action and have already refused point blank to serve on the new board of the Children's Health Foundation Queensland. They are courageous people with principles who refuse to be used as rubber stamps and politicised pawns.

The hospital foundation board has devoted its life fundraising towards research into health services. The Royal Children's Hospital Foundation was established in 1986 and raises around \$13 million annually and it has invested more than \$100 million since it began. An important role of the foundation since inception has been to prevent donated funds from being used for day-to-day hospital running expenses. These funds have been allocated exclusively to foster excellence in medical research, for education and to acquire specialist medical equipment. As a registered nurse, I know firsthand the value of such a contribution and the huge difference it can make to sick children.

The Royal Children's Hospital Foundation has, as always, made an important difference. In the past year, the foundation funded significant new equipment purchases for the department of emergency medicine, the paediatric intensive care unit and the paediatric rehabilitation department. Further,

courtesy of generous donations, the Queensland Children's Medical Research Institute remains front and centre on the national and international stage thanks to the foundation's investment in vital research and programs. Besides the donations, many selfless Queenslanders too have also generously donated their valuable time as volunteers, including rugby league legend-in-waiting Darren Lockyer, who has been an ambassador for the foundation since 2007. Darren and his wife, Loren, have participated in many fundraising activities.

Other foundation ambassadors have been equally generous such as Duncan Armstrong, Peter Senior, Luke Power and Ten Network newsreader Georgie Lewis. I wonder what these ambassadors and other volunteers will think of this situation. I wonder if they, along with financial donors, will be so generous and giving of their time and money in the future when they find out that their efforts are not to raise much needed funds for groundbreaking medical research to help sick kids but to prop up the Bligh government's bottom line. Who is next? Is the Mater Foundation the next victim?

 **Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.59 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the disallowance motion that is currently before the House. I want to talk about the new foundation and how it represents an evolution and a new era in children's health research and services. This new foundation will be the Queensland Children's Hospital Foundation representing kids care in the state of Queensland. It will raise even more funds for children's health research and patient support, and we need to start now because the foundation needs to demonstrate to partners a future that has certainty during the transition of the old RCH to the new QCH. This new foundation will build on the strength of the existing foundation but will truly be a state-wide children's health service foundation. This evolution recognises that we are building specialist children's health services at the QCH and also a children's network of emergency departments. We are building the \$1.45 billion Queensland Children's Hospital which means another 7,900 jobs in construction and 2,400 jobs once it opens.

The Queensland Children's Hospital marks a new beginning for paediatric care in Queensland, built on a strong tradition of more than 250 years combined service to children and young people. As the state's tertiary paediatric referral hospital, this world-class facility will bring together the existing specialist paediatric services of the state's three leading children's facilities. The Royal Children's Hospital, the Mater Children's Hospital and the Prince Charles Hospital's Queensland Paediatric Cardiac Service will come together in a single new hospital to be built adjacent to the Mater Children's Hospital at South Brisbane. The Queensland Children's Hospital will offer children and young people and their families access to the best treatment and healthcare facilities available in Queensland and be purpose designed to cater for the distinct needs of different age groups. It is due to be opened in progressive stages from 2011 to 2014 and this new hospital will become the centre of exemplary training and education in paediatrics in Queensland as well as the centre of a coordinated state-wide paediatric network—a centre of excellence.

Here is what the experts have to say about the Queensland Children's Hospital. Dr Leigh Atkinson AO, a children's neurosurgeon, says—

I am convinced that if we wish to provide international levels of children's hospital services in Brisbane we need one metropolitan children's hospital.

Dr Richard Lewandowski of the Australasian College of Surgeons said—

Over the past 20 years, this has been what we've all hoped for—a unified centre to provide the best standards of health care for the kids of Queensland. It would be a disappointment if that's going to be derailed at the 11th hour.

There is a wealth of national and international research that clearly demonstrates that a single children's hospital provides the best clinical outcomes for our sickest children. But do not ask me; ask the UK, Canada or Ireland, just to name a few. Do the parents of a sick child transferred from Mackay care whether a hospital is on the north side or the south side of the river? Do they want to know that their child will be afforded the best possible care in the best possible setting? Being raised in a large family of 11 children with an ever-expanding number of children's children living throughout Queensland, I know that the answer is easy and I challenge any parent sitting here today to refute that.

It is time we moved beyond the politics and put the sickest children of Queensland first. The same compelling logic that supports the case for the QCH also supports the case for the new Children's Health Services Foundation. As we build more new children's health services closer to home for people in the Brisbane suburbs and in regional Queensland, the Queensland Children's Health Services Foundation will support them. The Queensland government took on board the advice from expert clinicians, which is more than I can say for the opposition, which continues to be divisive on this issue. In 2006 with the full support of the AMAQ, Dr Zelle Hodge said—

... the AMA is totally supportive of a single children's hospital.

**Mr McArdle:** That's right—single!

**Mrs ATTWOOD:** The coalition went to the last election promising to hold the government to account for a new children's hospital.

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Mrs ATTWOOD:** By contrast, the LNP has no policy—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr O'Brien): Order! Member for Caloundra, I do not remember the member for Mount Ommaney interrupting you during your contribution. You will pay her the same respect.

**Mrs ATTWOOD:** I listened very carefully to the member for Caloundra. By contrast, the LNP has no policy on the QCH, no policy on the RCH and no policy on children's health services at all. There is nothing under the Christmas tree for children in Queensland from the LNP. It recently delivered a grand infrastructure plan that offers not one new single bed, not one new single ward, not a single new emergency department and not a single new children's health facility. The LNP is not planning a single new health facility anywhere in Queensland. But the Bligh government's policy is clear. We will build the world-class Queensland Children's Hospital and we will not split our children's health service in half.

**Mr WATT** (Everton—ALP) (4.06 pm): I rise to join with the member for Mount Ommaney in opposing this disallowance motion. The \$1.45 billion Queensland Children's Hospital, as we have already heard, is scheduled to open in 2014 and I am very pleased that, as is commonly becoming the case with projects run by this government, this particular project is on budget and on track. In fact, just this morning I was driving past the new hospital site on my way in here and noticed how well the construction is progressing. It truly will be a great facility for sick children all across Queensland, whether they are on the south side of Brisbane, the north side of Brisbane or in far-flung places like Mount Isa, which is represented by the high-quality member for Mount Isa.

**Mrs Kiernan** interjected.

**Mr WATT:** And she will take that comment. Not only will it be a great facility for sick children; it is also a very important job creation project. This is one of many infrastructure projects that this government has pursued in difficult financial times and this particular project has created nearly 8,000 jobs during its construction, so it has been a very good stimulus for our economy as well. It is going to provide high-level medical, surgical and emergency services for the most seriously ill children all across Queensland. One of the most important aspects of this particular new hospital is that it really represents a revolution in how we will deliver children's health services in this state in the future. The Queensland Children's Hospital will be the central point of a network of new children's health services right around the state, the idea being that the most sick and most unwell children in Queensland no matter where they live will have the opportunity to be cared for in this particular hospital. It will also provide outreach services to smaller children's specialist services in many other hospitals right around our state.

In South-East Queensland there are a number of new children's health services being developed currently. These include services being developed at the Prince Charles Hospital at Chermside and services being expanded at Redcliffe, Caboolture, Redland, Logan and Ipswich hospitals. I have spoken in this House on many occasions about the developments at the Prince Charles Hospital at Chermside, and that is a development that is particularly close to my heart. It was only a couple of years ago that the Prince Charles Hospital gained an emergency department to cater for people on the north side of Brisbane and we are currently building a specialist dedicated children's emergency department at the Prince Charles Hospital which will ensure that high-quality emergency care is available closer to home for many families on the north side, and it will certainly provide emergency care closer to home than is currently the case for families living in the electorate that I represent.

Those children's metropolitan hospital services will complement and network with services at the Royal Children's and Mater Children's hospitals up until 2014, when the Queensland Children's Hospital will be opened. The creation of the new Children's Health Services Foundation, which is the subject of this disallowance motion, will complement these new children's health services. The new foundation represents an evolution in children's health research and services and will raise even more funds into the future for children's health, research and patients.

Already this afternoon we have heard a couple of opposition speakers trying to whip up some sort of conspiracy theory about the creation of this new foundation. I say to the members of the opposition that this new foundation is nothing more than a recognition of the changes to children's health services that I have already outlined in my speech. It is common knowledge that the Royal Children's Hospital will close in 2014 when the Queensland Children's Hospital opens. I do not see that it would make any sense to have a foundation continuing to exist for a hospital which no longer exists.

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Mr WATT:** I take the interjection from the member for Caloundra, who is questioning why we have to get ready three years early. I know that it might be a foreign concept to members of the opposition to actually get ready, to prepare and to put in the hard work to ensure a good policy outcome, but this government has a different approach.

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms O'Neill): Order! Member for Caloundra.

**Mr WATT:** We believe in preparing early. In setting up a new foundation, all we are doing is preparing for the reality that some members of the opposition continue to not recognise—that is, the Queensland Children's Hospital will open in 2014.

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Caloundra.

**Mr WATT:** The member for Caloundra continues to fight over old ground. He wants to continue fighting the battles of the past. At two previous elections the Queensland population have endorsed the concept of a single children's hospital. This opposition, in cahoots with its great mate Des Houghton—its chief propagandist and the chief policymaker for the member from Caloundra—wants to continue fighting over old ground rather than look to the future, get ready for the children, think about what children's health services will require in the future and make sure we have a foundation. If we took the position of the member for Caloundra, we would continue to build the Queensland Children's Hospital and about a day before the Children's Hospital was to open we would say, 'Oh, hang on a minute. We haven't got a foundation. We had better get something through parliament and do it now.' The member for Caloundra rejects the proposition that someone would take action early.

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Mr WATT:** The member for Caloundra continues to object to the point that we would take this action three years out. I fail to understand what is so wrong with getting ready, but there you go: that is the opposition.

**Mr McArdle** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Caloundra, that is the third time. You have been warned.

**Mr WATT:** Madam Deputy Speaker, he cannot help it. He has no new policy; he just has to fight old battles.

In short, we are establishing a new Children's Health Services Foundation by regulation. The foundation will raise money to spend on research and on special services to support the families of sick kids well into the future. The new foundation has been created for two reasons. The first is that the old foundation is attached only to the Royal Children's Hospital. As great a job as that foundation has done, the Royal Children's Hospital is only one of the hospitals in Queensland and, as I have already outlined, it will cease to exist in 2014 when the QCH opens. I know for a fact that donors to the foundation and many others have begun to wonder what will happen to the money they donate to the foundation once the RCH closes, so creating a new foundation provides certainty for those donors into the future.

The second reason the new foundation is being created is that the old foundation, as I have said, is based only around the RCH whereas, as I have explained already, not only are we opening a new children's hospital but also we are opening other children's health services in a network around SEQ. The new foundation, just as the new Queensland Children's Hospital, will be for children all around Queensland. The new foundation will be for all of Queensland and all children's health services around Queensland, not just the Royal Children's Hospital. So they are the primary reasons for wanting to create this new foundation.

As I have said, we have heard the LNP reject the idea that we should get ready early, that we should put in place a foundation so that it can start fundraising for the new hospital well and truly before it opens. It is not really surprising that the LNP takes this approach. As the member for Mount Ommaney has mentioned, recently the LNP delivered a grand infrastructure plan that offers not a single new bed and not a single new ward, not a single new emergency department and not a single new children's health facility.

While I am at it, I might as well point out that there was very little infrastructure on the north side of Brisbane—health infrastructure, schools, roads or anything else. In fact, the LNP is not planning a single new health facility anywhere in Queensland. There is no mention of any work to upgrade the facility at Herston. The LNP has no plan to renovate or modernise the RCH, but it continues to want to keep its foundation open rather than move with the times.

I oppose this disallowance motion. All it does is recognise the reality that we are moving to having a single new children's hospital. The LNP should get with the times and get on board.

 **Ms DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (4.14 pm): I rise to speak to the disallowance motion for the Hospitals Foundations Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011 moved by the member for Caloundra. It is quite clear that this subordinate legislation showcases the Bligh government's autocratic, ad hoc approach to health. This is a government that is only too happy to live for the moment and to crash through with any strategy that will serve it well politically. But when it comes to implementing the proper planning to address the future needs of Queenslanders, the government is completely lost at sea. The Hospitals Foundations Amendment Regulation (No. 1) presents an unsavoury politicisation of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation.

I think it is appropriate to highlight how the existing foundation operates and how government's proposed reforms will adversely alter the current fundraising model. The Royal Children's Hospital Foundation was established in 1986. It raises about \$13 million annually and it has invested more than \$100 million since it began. For over 20 years these funds have been channelled into medical research and patient and family support to improve the lives of sick kids. The Queensland Children's Medical Research Institute has become a hub for paediatric research in Queensland since its establishment in 2009. Research undertaken at the QCMRI is extensive and, in many areas, unique. The research encompasses respiratory medicine, oncology, infectious diseases, telemedicine, biostatistics, burns and trauma, to name a few.

One area the institute has focused a considerable amount of research on and resources in is cerebral palsy. This is a condition that affects one in 500 Australian children. As the shadow minister for disability services, I have heard only positive feedback from both parents and stakeholders about the Queensland Cerebral Palsy and Rehabilitation Research Centre, which was established with the help of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation in late 2006.

The RCH Foundation has successfully established a culture of inquiry into contemporary medicine, a culture driven by a vision for the future and a community-wide determination to provide the best possible health services for kids. Indeed, donations to the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation have assisted the institute in a number of avenues in relation to its research endeavours. Through strong relationships with research institutes and universities, the foundation is able to offer PhD scholarships in areas of need and improve the supervision and support of research led projects.

The institute is fast becoming a centre of excellence for medical research, as evidenced by the record \$8.8 million in grants that it was awarded by the National Health and Medical Research Council last month. The research programs already in place that attracted these grants would not have been possible without the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation and the charity of Queensland people. Many high-profile Queenslanders have jumped on board to promote the foundation's sensational work. People such as Darren Lockyer, Georgie Lewis, Bill McDonald, Wayne Bennett, Karmichael Hunt and Leisel Jones have been instrumental in attracting community support to propel medical research in Queensland.

I could talk more about the foundation's exhaustive list of successes, but the bottom line is that all facets of medical research require considerable ongoing funding. In this regard the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation has been dependent on the generous spirit of the Queensland people. There is no doubt that the community is willing to dig deep when it comes to supporting health services for children in our state. That is why politically the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation has enjoyed consistent bipartisan support in this parliament. This generosity, which I think has come to define us as a community—just in this past year particularly—should not be subjugated by cynicism and mistrust. Sadly, the more I speak with my constituents the more I am convinced that these feelings are exacerbated by this arrogant, blundering Bligh Labor government.

Members on both sides of the House would recall Premier Beattie's election commitment in 2006 to aggregate children's health services at a single site with a 400-bed capacity at a cost of \$700 million. In the lead-up to the 2009 election at a community meeting I attended hosted by the member for Brisbane Central, then health minister Robertson told the group that there would be absolutely no budget overrun to the revised figure of \$1.1 billion. Five years on, construction of the Queensland Children's Hospital at the South Brisbane site is well and truly underway and I have had the opportunity to visit it. But the cost now has been revised to \$1.5 billion.

The explanatory notes state that the new Children's Health Foundation Queensland will establish a new relationship with a district to reflect the emerging scope of responsibilities of the district including the commencement of the Queensland Children's Hospital. The new board of the foundation will be headed by Minter Ellison lawyer Bruce Cowley. This foundation is purported to improve fundraising capacity and to enhance the interface and engagement between the community and the new Queensland Children's Hospital. What will be its initial campaign? What is the core priority of the Children's Health Foundation? A major capital raising venture with an initial target of \$10 million. Queensland Health has stated that the capital funding anticipated to be raised by the foundation is an important component of the overall Queensland Children's Hospital budget and the establishment works.

The people of Queensland have shown extraordinary support to the existing foundation and have done so with the expectation that money donated would be directed into research and support services. It will be very interesting to see if such generosity would be expected with a foundation established to fund the Bligh Labor government's budget shortfalls. This proposed subordinate legislation ought to send a very clear message to the people of Queensland. The Bligh government, aside from being fiscally inept, will go to any lengths to cling onto power, even raiding donated funds.

As members would know, this project is one I have followed with considerable interest since it was initially canvassed. I, along with my LNP colleagues, firmly believe that money donated to the hospital foundations is there for the general betterment of public health, unlike members of this Labor government who are licking their lips at the thought of possible money for jam. It is utterly deplorable that this government is prepared to be so sneaky and deceptive when it comes to an issue of such importance to our community. I am not the only one expressing grave concerns. My office has already received calls from residents in my area who have told me that they will withdraw donations to the new foundation if they are directed to infrastructure rather than research. They are telling me that this government has lost its way and has lost their confidence.

It was a story published in the *Sunday Mail* on 13 November by David Murray, aptly titled 'Funding fears for Queensland Children's Hospital as money diverted from vital research', which roused public interest. Murray notes concerns that donated funds are being directed to acquisition of equipment ordinarily provided by state government and, moreover, that up to 17 of 130 overnight beds and an operating theatre remain unfunded. Clearly this plan to snatch funds will not fly under the radar as the government would have liked to have seen happen. The establishment of the Children's Health Foundation Queensland two years before the Queensland Children's Hospital is due to open in 2014 is set to capitalise on the winding down of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation. This can only be described as a very sorry outcome. And what is unbelievable is that the current board members of the RCH Foundation were not even advised of the establishment of the new foundation.

This government has a lamentable track record when it comes to economic management, health and consultation with the community. Frankly, it is no wonder we are seeing this frantic cash grab at the eleventh hour. Last Friday the Premier said she will always make the decision that is best for Queenslanders even if it is at her own political peril, and this could be just one such decision. It begs the question: is it a move that respects the wishes and needs of the people of Queensland? And the answer surely is a resounding no.



**Ms MALE** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (4.22 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion and I refute the nonsense that we have just heard from the opposition. The new foundation will focus clearly on children's health research and services and it will raise even more funds for research and patient support. Importantly, it will build on the strengths of the existing foundation. The staff, volunteers, researchers and our other partners will continue their invaluable work with the new foundation. All research grants will remain unaffected and we expect to be able to increase our contribution to research in the coming years. We have already received expressions of interest from new donor partners, and I thank them for their offer of support.

The new foundation provides certainty and security for staff, volunteers, researchers and our corporate partners. It means staff know they will continue to have jobs, researchers have guarantees about their research grants and donors can know the support they give will continue to be used for the benefit of sick kids. This is happening now because the foundation needs to demonstrate to partners a future that has certainty during the transition of the old RCH to the Queensland Children's Hospital. The change will be minimal as one foundation evolves into another. The focus will remain on children's health research and support for sick children and their families and will have exactly the same priorities as the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation. Until the Royal Children's Hospital transitions across to the new site, the RCH will be the primary focus of all the activities and the RCH will be unaffected by the change. The new foundation will build on the strengths of the old foundation but also better position children's health research and family assistance for the future.

The fact is that the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation needs to modernise. A recent media report highlighted the RCH Foundation's administrative structure, which is extremely expensive by industry standards. Unfortunately, more than half of the foundation's income never makes it to the front line of research or services. Over half the income of the foundation is spent running its own administration. That is around \$7 million in administrative and overhead costs that come straight out of the funds donated by mums and dads and corporate donors. Overheads make up around 53 per cent of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation's expenditure. Compare that to organisations like St John Ambulance, which spends about 34 per cent on admin; the Starlight Children's Foundation, which spends 38 per cent; and the Red Cross, which spends about 27 per cent. Those figures demonstrate a need for reform and modernisation of the excellent work that the foundation does.

The new foundation provides an opportunity to do better in this area and put more funds into front-line foundation services like supporting the families of sick children, supporting children's medical research and providing more high-tech specialised equipment. These are the current priorities of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation and it does truly work wonders, as its motto says. With modernisation and reform it will be able to raise more money and, importantly, it will also be able to deliver more of what it raises straight into research and support services. The new foundation is a wonderful step forward to complement the new Queensland Children's Hospital and the new Queensland children's health services across all of Queensland.

The LNP should be embarrassed at its inability to stick with the policy about children's health services and its inability to provide plans for new infrastructure for Queensland Health. This government cares about Queensland children, we care about their health and we will continue to deliver for children, adults and everyone across Queensland.

 **Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (4.26 pm): The most important issue in caring for patients of any age, but particularly children, is patient care. In support of our shadow minister in moving this disallowance motion today, patient care should be at the forefront of everything that we think about in relation to the children who will be future patients. The volunteers over the years who have worked on the board of the Royal Children's Hospital have done a magnificent job. They have raised about \$13 million a year, and since 1986 the amount that has been raised has been well and truly in excess of \$100 million. That has been a magnificent fund for research into areas that will help children with special needs, with particular diseases and to use all the expertise that is available at the Royal Children's Hospital in order to provide the most up-to-date and contemporary research which can benefit the young children of Queensland.

You would think that a foundation like that would be treated with respect and gratitude by this government. Instead they have been treated in the opposite way. There could have been a gradual transition. There could have been a proper system of respect in the way that these people were treated. They could have arranged for some of them to have been on the new foundation for a period of time to enable a smooth transition. But, no, they have just chopped it off—here is the new foundation. Worse still, what we see in the reading of some of the Queensland Health directives is that it is going to be for capital works. Queenslanders are increasingly cynical. They know that this Labor government has made a mess of just about everything that it has touched financially. We see a state debt of \$85 billion, which is costing Queenslanders \$600,000 an hour in interest. One after another we see a litany of massive overruns that have been contributing to this massive budget debt that will be the legacy for Queenslanders forever.

The Royal Children's Hospital was promised back in 2006 at a cost of \$700 million. The cost is now around about \$1.5 billion. It was said it would provide 400 beds. It is now in the order of 138 beds short of that target. Therefore, the cost has doubled but the bed numbers have come way down, which typifies some of the massive blunders of this Labor government. This is just like the Traveston dam proposal, which they went ahead with as a stunt because the polls were showing that the Labor Party was not building dams. They knew it would probably never go ahead because it was so far down the list of proposed dam sites, but still they wasted over \$700 million before they had the approval to go ahead and build the dam. We see a similar thing happening here. We saw it with the western corridor recycled water pipeline. In the very health department that is associated with the construction of the hospital we have seen \$240 million wasted on the most disgraceful mess imaginable with the Health payroll system.

Now we have the construction of the Royal Children's Hospital. The government has given a direction to the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation that it has to raise \$10 million or more towards capital costs. They have picked a site where, lo and behold, they could not dig deep enough to put in the carpark levels that were required. They had to go next door to my old school, St Laurence's College, to negotiate a 99-year lease to build a multilevel carpark. Good on St Laurence's; the school got a number of carparks on the second top level, a brand-new artificial sports field on the top and a \$35 million performing arts centre. That was the cost of the blunder of picking a site that was not right and it added to the blow-out in overall costs.

Then they had to pay \$70 million for the Telstra site. They had to relocate other facilities associated with the Royal Children's Hospital such as the Leukaemia Foundation. They had to pay something like \$20 million for a building located a couple of streets away to accommodate the hospital foundation building. A sum of \$125 million was promised for the research centre, which is such an important part of the work of children's hospitals. That sum has come down by about \$45 million. Negotiations regarding pathology backup by the Mater Hospital, child-care parking places and child-care places have all stumbled along the way. What has happened to the support of the University of Queensland and the Mater for research? It has all gone.

This is absolutely typical of how this Labor government blunders and makes an absolute mess of anything to do with finances, planning and construction, management and services. Now, because they are so short of money, they are asking to establish a foundation and for that foundation to provide some \$10 million of capital. Yet they have blown the budget by more than double—from \$700 million to close on \$1.5 billion. The people of Queensland—the good people who, out of the goodness of their hearts, have always supported the research of the foundation of the Royal Children's Hospital—are being asked to stump up with some donated money so that the government can cover up some of its blunders. After all the other blowouts that it has been responsible for, the government is asking for \$10 million.

On this issue, the biggest blunder of all is the fact that the bed numbers will come down by 138. The proposal was to build a single hospital that would be contemporary in terms of the bed numbers required for a growing population. Instead of having two hospitals, there would be one hospital that

would have adequate bed numbers. But what do we see? Within a couple of years, the bed numbers have crashed by 138. It will not be long before the hospital's bed numbers will not be adequate, because they are nowhere near what was planned for and deemed to be necessary back in 2006.

The way the Queensland Children's Hospital Foundation is being put together demonstrates the absolute mess created by this government and its failures over a period of up to 20 years, which Queensland people are now seeing very clearly. Worse than that, it shows the disrespectful way in which the government has treated those good Queenslanders who have served for so long on the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation and those people who have generously given funds to that foundation for medical research. The way those people have been treated is an absolute disgrace. The way the government has treated those people and moved towards this new foundation smacks of disgrace, disrespect and incompetence.

I am pleased that the LNP, through our shadow minister, has recognised that and has moved this disallowance motion so that some decency can come into the process of putting together a new foundation; so that some respect can be shown to those people who have given so much of their funds, their time and their talent to the previous foundation; and so that the people of Queensland can recognise that this Labor government is cynically putting together the foundation to cover up the massive cost overruns and mismanagement of just about everything associated not only with this project but also with every single project it has touched in its time in government.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (4.35 pm): I rise to speak to the disallowance motion in relation to the Queensland Children's Hospital. I am interested in some information from the minister in relation to this proposal. Historically, hospital foundations have raised funds for hospital procedures. In this case it is the Queensland Children's Hospital. I am concerned about the \$10 million in capital fundraising. Historically, such capital was provided by government and foundations provided funding for other issues. I do not believe that anyone who has debated from either side of the disallowance motion today would in any way want to depreciate or reduce the accessibility of or access to children's hospitals and children's health services. Children are in a very vulnerable age group, because sick little ones need all the help they can get.

When the first consultation was taken about where to locate the Children's Hospital, there was an emotive debate about whether it should be on the north side or the south side, or whether it should have facilities on both sides of the river. There is concern about the current location because it is landlocked. Parking will be expensive for families, because in the main they will have to use parking facilities. Currently the Mater Hospital is a very expensive place to visit. To avoid paid parking—that is, in a private parking station—you have to accept a fairly long walk. By definition, being a children's hospital there are practical issues for children accessing the children's services.

I am interested in the inference in the regulation that the hospital foundation will be raising money to pay for things that, in the past, have been the purview of government—things such as MRI machines, infrastructure at the hospital such as a long-day lounge and acute overnight accommodation. It is not unusual for foundations to pay for a fit-out, if that is what this means. At the Gladstone Hospital our women's auxiliary, which does a brilliant job, is made up of mostly senior people. The auxiliary does not have a lot of young people. They work tirelessly to raise money to buy additional bits and pieces for the hospital, because Queensland Health has very poorly resourced and staffed the Gladstone Hospital. The people there work extremely well, but they are underresourced and certainly the hospital needs more staff and more specialist services.

Therefore, I am interested in the minister's view in relation to the role of the foundation and the level of capital expenditure and capital fundraising the foundation will be required to undertake. If, as the members of the LNP said, there has been a wholesale resignation by current foundation members because of concerns over the new foundation, certainly that does not augur well for the new Children's Hospital or, indeed, for the process. In the past people joined foundations because they have very generous and compassionate hearts and lifelong ambitions to give back to the community. If those same people have expressed an unwillingness to be involved in the new foundation, that is an indicator that there are problems with that foundation.

I reiterate that I do not believe any speakers for or against this disallowance motion want to see a diminution in children's services. What speakers want to see is that those people who work tirelessly to establish a foundation raise money for things that are outside services that are normally funded by government. I look forward to the minister's response.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (4.39 pm): I continue to be amazed at how Labor can distort a fact about some minor health measure and report and not just make it misleading but give really no beneficial information at all. In many ways, the two best examples of this are the disallowance motion today related to the Children's Hospital foundation and, interestingly, the health minister's statement today about emergency departments.

To understand that statement a little better, firstly, we are discussing the real reasons behind the effective dissolution of the former Royal Children's Hospital Foundation when the publicly stated reasons are beyond obscure; they are false. Second is the announcement about the one-minute

improvement in waiting times in EDs, from 24 minutes to 23 minutes, and urgent cases now being seen within the minute. The truth of the matter is that on the Gold Coast emergency department officers are being asked to admit only one in four rather than continue with the current practice of admitting one in three. Under Labor, ambulance ramping, which basically has become the norm, really defeats the whole concept of waiting times. In fact, it is institutionalised.

To more formally address the tragedy of this decision by Queensland Health, we have a rapidly drafted in new board of the new Queensland Children's Hospital foundation when the previous foundation either was uninformed or refused specific direction regarding how funds raised by that foundation were to be spent. It does appear that the current RCH board did not support a view that it should allocate large grants to the new Children's Hospital to purchase big-ticket items such as, as has been mentioned, MRI machines and other capital equipment items. This is clearly what the new Children's Hospital foundation is either ticking through or is considering favourably. In fact, it looks like that is their objective.

In the ordinary course of business, major capital items, even within our public hospitals, are paid for by the government of the day or by specific individual group donations that specify the purpose of that donation. That is the norm. As such, we are able to maintain the integrity of that donation or purpose—what they call the stewardship cycle. That a desperate government faces such a terrible financial dilemma that it now seeks to inject itself into that process and effectively override the wishes of the thousands of donors to the fund is terrible. The clear purpose of the fund at its inception, and immediately prior to its discontinuance in its previous form and board, was for research into health services for sick children in Queensland.

The RCH Foundation has not changed its view and, as I say, it will not serve in this new board. That is an error on the part of the government. Nothing in its charter or mission states that it is to provide funds from its reserves to purchase or subsidise capital equipment items for the new Children's Hospital. Maybe the new foundation does so, but only newly raised funds under that mission or charter should be spent on the purpose for which this health minister is directing staff to proceed. I do note that the charter of the board currently is to provide capital equipment items.

I say to the health minister, who believes that I patronise him and give him gratuitous advice, that the public donation—

**Mr Lawlor** interjected.

**Dr DOUGLAS:** If the member for Southport is such an expert on this, maybe he should get up and speak on the issue. The public donations to the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation are not to be raided like the GOC reserves were raided by former Premier Beattie; nor should the Queensland Children's Hospital funds be raided. This is not the way to even run or direct a foundation. They should give the public their money back under those circumstances and then ask how they wish to have it spent. For those new donors, the objective of this foundation should be clearly stated and we should ask them to make a decision on whether they want to donate under these circumstances. They may find that people are not willing to provide the minister, the foundation or the health department a cash filled hollow log. By the way, if the minister truly supports this decision of effectively stealing from what is the hospital poor box then he really does need advice and direction.

We in the LNP support the new Children's Hospital. I am on the public record as always supporting it. The head of the hospital, Professor Peter Steer, was a colleague of mine through medical school. What a dreadful position he is placed in by the government as he seeks to deliver a major new, single tertiary facility—the Queensland Children's Hospital at the Mater, a referral centre of excellence. I understand, as we all do, that this hospital is running short of money for capital items as it gets closer to completion. It has been publicly stated that the budget has certainly gone from \$800 million to \$1.5 billion.

I realise that hospitals are expensive, but whose fault is that? It is the fault of the government of the day. As to the defence I heard from the member for Everton of the need to start a new foundation three years out from the hospital's actual completion, when we already have a very successful Royal Children's Hospital Foundation why not just transition to the new facility?

**Mr Lawlor:** It is called forward planning. It is just a transition.

**Dr DOUGLAS:** No, it is not a transition, member for Southport.

**Mr Lawlor:** It is forward planning.

**Dr DOUGLAS:** No, it is not. It is effectively an abolition of the previous board and basically starting a whole new board. It is the idea of revolution, not evolution.

I do not need to repeat that success in Australia in medical progress has basically been built by standing on the shoulders of giants and not this scorched earth idea and starting from scratch, which is what this approach is. I just mention how one might measure the Labor method in health in a regional electorate like Gaven. My electorate was told that we would be getting desperately needed replacement dental equipment for our dental clinic. In answer to my question on notice the minister said that it had been purchased three months ago. Well, it is still not installed and there is no sign of it coming.

For four years staff at the Carrara Health Centre, which is basically a step-down centre—it is a great idea and I believe the health department should have more of these if it can afford them within the budget; these are very important for people in these facilities—have said that they need car parks for roughly 100 people but we are actually only getting 63 car parks and it is still not finished. In fact, it is not going to be finished this year. The council was blamed for two years. I wrote to the minister multiple times and eventually something happened.

It is in the detail that Labor gets it wrong in health. It does so because its philosophy is all about hyperbole and not about fact. No forward progress is ever—

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Dr DOUGLAS:** This is specifically for the former health minister. No forward progress is ever made on dreams without a core base structure. That is the measure that comes from this piece of incorrect subordinate legislation. The purpose of the foundation must remain primarily research. Our greatest advances have been made, particularly in children's health, in leukaemia and other haemological malignancies. They are called soft-tissue carcinomas. They are followed by respiratory disease and then major disability. This decision allegedly to reform the foundation is driven by desperation and not medical paediatric progress. It is a fundamental error.

**Mr MOORHEAD** (Waterford—ALP) (4.47 pm): I rise to oppose the disallowance motion moved by the member for Caloundra. From listening to those from the opposition who have spoken before me, it seems to me that the disallowance motion is based on nothing more than a conspiracy, unsubstantiated allegations of secret plans and a few clichés.

I want to take the House through some clear facts about what is happening. We are building a \$1.5 billion Queensland Children's Hospital. We can see it coming out of the ground. This means another 7,900 jobs in construction and another 2,400 jobs when it is open. This government has always been clear: we are building the Queensland Children's Hospital and we will make it the centre for children's health services across Queensland. This is not a stand-alone facility. The development of the Queensland Children's Hospital has been accompanied by improvements to other hospitals across Queensland to ensure that services will work together.

I know that at Logan we have received significant funding for new paediatric waiting areas and paediatric emergency treatment areas to ensure we can provide emergency responses closer to where people live. We can provide primary responses. When people need to be referred to a hospital they have access to the Queensland Children's Hospital. There is nothing more simple than that. When people want specialist services they can go to the Queensland Children's Hospital.

At the same time, we are equipping Logan Hospital with an expansion that is going to see an emergency department of more than an acre. That will provide specific paediatric waiting areas and specific paediatric treatment areas to ensure that children's health will work across facilities to ensure the best care for kids no matter where they live. Contrast that with members of the LNP. They have had five different positions in five years. Their position has no integrity. They would say anything to win this debate, but it is simply not true. It does not add up. The children of Queensland deserve more than empty rhetoric and a few thought bubbles.

In 2009 they said that they supported a one-hospital policy and opposed the construction of the Queensland Children's Hospital. Then they took a two divided hospitals policy to the last election and supported both the Royal Children's Hospital and the Queensland Children's Hospital. Then in 2010 the shadow minister told Sunshine Coast radio that he wanted to scrap the Queensland Children's Hospital and divert funds to support services in his own electorate. Then in 2011 the Leader of the Opposition announced support for the Queensland Children's Hospital and a one-hospital policy when he told Patrick Lion that the Royal Children's Hospital issue was dead and buried and said, 'Obviously we're going to have a dedicated Queensland Children's Hospital.' Then in mid-2011 Campbell Newman came along and announced they had no children's hospital policy and the policy slate had been wiped clean. Then recently we have seen the shadow minister back out there again advocating a policy of two divided hospitals.

Having previously argued that the Queensland Children's Hospital should be scrapped and the funds spent on his own electorate, the shadow minister saw no problem in saying that he supports the Queensland Children's Hospital. He still does not say how the LNP would fund its policy. Not one cent of funding has been identified, let alone the \$400 million ripped out of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. Queensland kids deserve better.

Just as their policy on the Queensland Children's Hospital has no credibility, their position on the Children's Health Services Foundation has no credibility either. Claims that research funding will be reduced as a result of the modernisation of the foundation are just dead wrong. In fact, the renewal process is already generating interest from new corporate partners who are keen to get on board and support the work of the new hospital. There will be more money for research, not less.

As part of the Queensland Children's Hospital development, the Bligh government is also putting \$80 million into a new children's academic and research facility. QUT and the University of Queensland have committed a further \$15 million each towards the development of this facility. This facility will bring

together children's health research from the Mater and Royal Children's Hospital, as well as other research entities. That is the truth about the government's investment in delivering more health services and investing in cutting-edge research.

This regulation is about ensuring that children's health services and investment in the Children's Health Services Foundation are about children and are no longer tied to a set of bricks and mortar—that is, the Royal Children's Hospital. Children's services are not about one set of bricks and mortar at Herston; this is about building a system across our suburbs and across our state. The Queensland Children's Hospital will be great for Logan. We will have ready access to the Queensland Children's Hospital at South Brisbane as well as our new improved paediatric services. However, this foundation will recognise the reality that children's research foundations should no longer be tied to one set of bricks and mortar. I oppose the disallowance motion.

 **Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (4.53 pm): I am pleased to rise and make a brief contribution to this disallowance motion in relation to the Hospitals Foundations Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011, moved by the shadow minister and member for Caloundra.

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**Mr DOWLING:** I am from Redlands. This is typical of the government's actions over the nearly three years that I have been in this House. It is class A—it overpromises yet underdelivers. This is a commitment by a former Premier of this state to build a hospital, and he promised 400 beds. What are we going to get? We are going to come up 138 beds short. We are not going anywhere near the target that was set. This is a government that has allegedly been planning this strategy for this growth in Queensland. Everything has been checked and balanced. Everything is coming. We know the numbers are coming. The government planned a hospital that needed 400 beds back in 2006. All of a sudden we do not need them apparently. What we do need is this new foundation to go out to town, cap in hand, begging for money. I mentioned this to the shadow minister and he was kind enough to take the interjection. Next, we are going to see healthcare workers busking in Queen Street Mall to get their pay. That is where we are going with this—it overpromises and underdelivers.

Members opposite talk plenty about planning for the future. They talk plenty about the growth. They talk about the management, but here is a glaring example of more mismanagement of health—complete mismanagement of health. The budget blow-outs are again another glaring example. A project that was supposed to be somewhere around the \$800 million mark has blown out to \$1.5 billion—almost double. Yet this is a project that comes up short on the target. It comes up short on the target yet is over on the dollars. It is typical of this government. It is tired; it is 20 years tired. This government saw all this growth coming, talked up a good game but has yet to deliver.

Here we have this foundation that is going to be set up to try to raise the target of \$10 million. Funnily enough, the government can find \$200 million plus to fix the payroll system, to bandaid that \$60 million payroll system. It can find the \$200 million for that, but can it find \$10 million for the Children's Hospital? Can it find \$10 million for that? That is just wrong. That is typical of this government. It is tired. It overpromises and underdelivers. It is a pattern; it has a history of doing this.

Someone was telling me about the Robina orthopaedic ward. They built this fantastic ward but cannot open it, cannot get any equipment in and cannot man it. So that is just dead on the vine. It is like the best hospital in the *Yes Minister* series. The best hospital in the borough had no patients, but they get their paperwork in. They get their paperwork in, but there are no patients. They have no complaints about the service. There is no problem with the canteen and the cafeteria. There is no complaint with any of the staff, but there are no patients. That is what this is like. The emperor has no clothes.

If we have to start a foundation to find \$10 million in a \$1.5 billion project, there is something fundamentally wrong with this government's management of the health system and the state of Queensland when it comes to this Children's Hospital. It has come up short. It has blown out the budget by nearly double and now we have to go, cap in hand, to town to find \$10 million for a \$1.5 billion project.

**Mr Rickuss:** Sir Humphrey thought this up.

**Mr DOWLING:** Sir Humphrey would be dead proud of this. With that brief contribution, I thank the House.

 **Hon. GJ WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Health) (4.58 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion. The new foundation that is being established represents an evolution in children's health research and services in Queensland. It will greatly assist in raising even more funds for children's health research and patient support. We will be building on the strengths of the existing foundation and taking it state-wide. The staff, the volunteers, the researchers and other partners of the RCH Foundation will be able to continue their invaluable work with the new foundation. All research grants will remain unaffected and we expect to be able to increase the contribution made available to research in the coming years. Already expressions of interest have been received from new donor partners, and that is to be commended.

The new foundation provides certainty and security for staff, volunteers and researchers and corporate partners. It means that staff know that they will continue to have jobs, researchers have guarantees about their research grants, and donors can know that the support they give will continue to be used to benefit sick children. It is happening now because the foundation needs to be able to demonstrate to partners that there is a future with certainty while we transition the old Royal Children's Hospital together with the Mater into the new Queensland Children's Hospital.

The change that will take place from one foundation to the new foundation will be minimal. As I say, there will be an evolution from one to the other. The focus will of course remain on children's health research and support for sick children and their families. That is why we are doing what we are doing. The foundation will have exactly the same priorities as the former Royal Children's Hospital Foundation. Until the Royal Children's Hospital transitions across to the new site, the Royal Children's Hospital will be the primary focus of all activities and the RCH will be unaffected by the change.

The new foundation will build upon the strengths of the old foundation, as I have said, but will be better positioned for children's health research and family assistance Queensland-wide for the future. The new foundation is a wonderful step forward to complement the new Queensland Children's Hospital and the new Queensland children's health services across Queensland.

Claims that research funding will be reduced as a result of modernisation of the foundation are dead wrong. In fact, the renewal process is already generating interest from new corporate partners not previously associated with the former foundation who are keen to get on board and support the work of the new hospital. There will be more money put into research, not less. As part of the new Queensland Children's Hospital development, the Bligh government is also investing \$80 million into a new children's academic and research facility. The Queensland University of Technology and the University of Queensland have committed a further \$15 million each towards the development of this facility. The facility will bring together children's health research from the Mater and the Royal Children's hospitals and other research entities. That is the truth of the matter. This government is investing in delivering more health services and investing in cutting-edge research. We are building a \$1.45 billion Queensland Children's Hospital. Another 7,900 jobs will be created during construction and 2,400 jobs once it opens.

The Bligh government's position is very clear. We are building the Queensland Children's Hospital, and we will make it the centre for children's health services across Queensland. The project is already rising into the South Bank skyline. It is on track and on budget despite the wrongly based claims of those opposite.

The Liberal National Party have had at least five different positions in five years on the Queensland Children's Hospital. They have supported the construction of a new Queensland Children's Hospital and then they have opposed it. They have wanted to divert Queensland Children's Hospital funding to the Sunshine Coast and now they want to rip \$400 million out of the Sunshine Coast, despite the fact that they have the shadow spokesperson for health as the member for Caloundra. He wants to rip \$400 million out of funding to Health dedicated to the Sunshine Coast. I do not know how the shadow spokesperson could walk down the streets of Caloundra and explain to members of the public the justification for ripping \$400 million out of the Health budget on the Sunshine Coast. I do not know how he holds his head up when he is in his own electorate, let alone how he holds his head up when he is in the other four electorates on the Sunshine Coast which will also receive a negative impact of \$400 million ripped out of the Health budget on the Sunshine Coast. There is no explanation given for that.

I will move to the next iteration of their position on the Queensland Children's Hospital. This is probably about year 3. They agreed to consolidate the Children's Hospital into one first-class campus and then they said they would split the children's health services into two. The truth is that when a party changes its policy as often as they have it is impossible to believe anything that they promise. Indeed, they change their policies more often than they change a particular garment that I will not refer to. Queensland's kids deserve more than empty slogans and flip-flop from the LNP.

I want the opposition to understand how falsely based their allegations are about capital investment by this new foundation and of existing foundations. Further to some of the other issues that have been raised by speakers from the LNP, particularly in relation to capital, the existing Royal Children's Hospital Foundation has invested in capital items such as computers and books, high-tech medical equipment and telemedicine services, and refurbishments to facilities such as the Wonder Factory, where sick kids and their families can play together. There is nothing new about that hospital foundation investing in capital. These are exactly the sorts of capital items that the new foundation may well wish to invest in.

As the chair of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation and the Queensland Children's Health Services Foundation stated in his media release announcing the creation of the new foundation—

The focus will remain on children's health research and support for sick children and their families, just as the RCH foundation focus primarily on research but also make contributions to family friendly facilities and patient support for sick children and their families. Those priorities will remain the same for the new children's health services foundation.

The former chair of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation, Mr Kerry Prior, wrote in the foundation's annual report of 2011—

During the foundation's early years infrastructure was a key focus of our funding. In 1992 the foundation launched an ambitious appeal in Japan to raise several millions of dollars for the new medical wing. The building program did not end there, with the Leonard Lodge family accommodation facility extended during 1997, the same year that plans were put in place for what would become the RCH foundation building.

That foundation was not adverse to contributing funds raised by it to capital expenditure, let alone overtly publicly calling for donations earmarked and identified to be allocated to capital expenditure. There is nothing wrong with that at all because that is the past practice from time to time of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation, and I do not criticise them for that. They acted appropriately at that time and continue to do so in the way in which they have sought to raise funds from the public. Likewise, the new foundation will continue in the tradition established by the Royal Children's Hospital, its predecessor.

I note that the current member for Toowoomba South, who spoke earlier in the debate, was the health minister at the time in which the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation was raising funds for capital expenditure. Mr Horan must have forgotten that when he said earlier this evening, 'Worse still, the new foundation will be raising money for capital works.' Let us be clear: hospital foundations regularly raise money for capital items. The Royal Children's Hospital Foundation raised money for special capital projects. The Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Foundation, which is chaired by former Liberal MP Warwick Parer, raises money for capital projects and so too will the new Children's Health Services Foundation. There is nothing wrong with that. That is why those foundations have done that. There was nothing wrong with it in the past and there is nothing wrong with it in the future.

The LNP was also concerned that the establishment of the new foundation was a secret exercise. The foundation chair, Mr Bruce Cowley, put out a statement and spoke on radio on the morning of the announcement—hardly a secret. As for the allegation that the old board members did not support the appointment of the new appointees, I read from a statement written by the old board. It states—

The board of the RCH Foundation warmly welcomes Bruce Cowley as its new chairman. The RCH Foundation deputy chair, Kerry Prior, said Mr Cowley's outstanding business acumen along with his board experience in the not-for-profit sector would serve to strengthen the foundation's ability to work wonders for sick Queensland children and their families. The board will also be joined by four new directors—Andrew Thomas, Sue Forrester, Peter Steer and Linda Hardy. These individuals will provide new energy and enthusiasm to the board and they in turn will be inspired by a truly wonderful cause.

The member for Gladstone raised the question of whether the new foundation was going to be asked to fund essential equipment. I have responded to that issue as it was raised by a number of LNP members, but I expressly respond to the point as she has raised it. I draw the honourable member's attention to a public statement made by Dr Peter Steer as acting director-general of Queensland Health on Sunday, 13 November this year. He stated—

Queensland Health has always made clear that we—

that is, the foundation—

would be accepting donations from corporate partners willing to donate towards the capital cost of building special family friendly support facilities for children's families, and special hi-tech equipment which is not an ordinary component of a new hospital's equipment. Indeed, some donors expressly ask that their contribution be used to deliver new technology and equipment to the hospital. Those donors' wishes are respected.

The honourable member can see that that statement by Dr Steer resonates fully with the actual activity on prior occasions of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation itself, as I said earlier. So there is nothing unusual about that.

This is an important initiative that has been undertaken by this government. Not only are we building a world-class, first-class Queensland Children's Hospital for the sickest children in Queensland no matter where they are from and drawing to that new establishment the most highly qualified specialists working in that field; we are also building a marvellous new research facility that will encourage internationally recognised practitioners to come to Brisbane and work with our experienced and highly qualified clinicians. Those practitioners can then perform research into paediatric care as well as work in the Queensland Children's Hospital with seriously ill children from throughout Queensland.

We are building a network of specialised paediatric care that will be provided in a number of major facilities around greater Brisbane. We are also connecting with the services provided in the major hospitals throughout Queensland. This is a phenomenal development that will mean that Queensland parents and their children can have the utmost confidence that Queensland can provide the best quality of care that our sickest children could get anywhere in the world. To complement this major initiative, we are creating a state-wide Children's Health Services Foundation that is not limited to the bricks and mortar of the new Queensland Children's Hospital but is focused on captivating the attention, interest and support of all Queenslanders across the state as to how we can invest in highly geared research that improves the health services for children across Queensland, no matter where they live. So the two travel together.

It is important that we start on the transition now. We cannot wait three years and then be criticised by the other side of the House for having failed to plan and act. They want to be nay-sayers no matter what occasion they are focusing on. We are acting now because we want to maximise the

opportunity available for our sick children when the Queensland's Children's Hospital is operating and open for business. We do not want to wait until then to set up the new foundation. We want to build on the great traditions established by the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation and captivate greater interest from the public of Queensland and garner even more public donations to the new foundation. We want to do that now—not later—and in the years leading up to when the Queensland Children's Hospital is finally, delightfully, opened to the benefit of parents and their children across all of Queensland. We vigorously oppose this motion.

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

**AYES, 31**—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Nicholls, Powell, Robinson, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

**NOES, 53**—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Foley, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Lawlor, Lucas, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Pratt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Male

Resolved in the negative.

## STRATEGIC CROPPING LAND BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from 29 November (see p. 3922), on motion of Ms Nolan—

That the bill be now read a second time.

**Mr HOPPER** (Condamine—LNP) (5.22 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Strategic Cropping Land Bill 2011. The LNP will be supporting this bill with reservations. I offer my congratulations to the shadow minister, the member for Hinchinbrook, for his contribution and the in-depth work he has done on this bill. I will be outlining during my speech the concerns I have with the bill and the flaws I feel should be revealed during the debate.

The Strategic Cropping Land Bill has been developed by the Labor government to preserve and protect the land in Queensland that produces our food and fibre for future generations from the impacts of resource development and urban growth. Protecting this land is paramount. It is an issue that is very close to my heart. My electorate has some of the most fertile and highly productive soils in the world. The land in the Condamine electorate has been intensively farmed for over 100 years.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kilburn): Order! If members want to have a conversation, could they please move their conversations outside and keep the noise down.

**Mr HOPPER:** Thank you. Can we stop the clock, Mr Deputy Speaker?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Order! I call the member for Condamine.

**Mr HOPPER:** Thank you. It is very good to see the respect they have for the chair. Protecting this land is paramount, as I just said. My electorate has some of the most fertile and highly productive soils in the world and this land has been farmed for over 100 years. Only last week our leader said that the Felton Valley would be protected from mining under an LNP government. It was a great announcement for my electorate in that that mine would not go ahead under an LNP government. Under our planning, it would not suit the area. I have proudly been an advocate for the protection of this land for many years and I will continue to fight alongside my LNP colleagues to ensure that farmers are able to feed the people of Queensland, Australia and the world. They will provide the strongest possible protection for our environment, our land and our water.

During the last few years I have met with many landholders and a large number of representatives from rural industry organisations in Queensland to discuss the protection of our prime agricultural land for the future. In all of these discussions there has been a common thread: we want certainty. Our food and fibre producers want to be certain that they can invest in their businesses and know that the investments that they make now will not be lost tomorrow when a resource company enters their property and threatens their investment. I do not see that certainty being offered in this bill that we are debating today. Around the world there has been an increase in the loss of good agricultural land. Freshwater supplies, including aquifers, are dwindling and the population of the world continues to increase dramatically. This creates an even greater imperative to ensure that farmers are valued, that their farms stay viable and that agricultural land in Queensland remains productive for the future and for our food security.

The LNP strongly believes that strategic cropping land must be protected and that currently the protection offered is inadequate. However, the bill we see before the House tonight is flawed. The bill is inconsistent in the level of protection offered to strategic cropping land. The separation of strategic cropping land management areas and protection areas devalues the intent of the bill. There are no technical differences between the quality of the soils on strategic cropping land in the two protection

areas. The 50-year time frame for determining if a permanent impact has occurred on strategic cropping land is totally inappropriate and not supported by the agricultural sector. Relevant time frames that fit with the planning cycle of agriculture should be enacted. The 50-year time frame appears to be a number that the government has just plucked out of the air and no justification for that time frame is provided in this bill, the explanatory notes or by DERM.

Restoration techniques should be proven physically to work prior to project approval and independently verified. Restoration is obviously a major concern. I note that DERM has not yet established an accurate mechanism to calculate what will be required to re-establish the productive capacity of strategic cropping land through mitigation. Rehabilitating prime agricultural land to restore its productive capacity to strategic cropping land has not been scientifically proven to date. This would appear to be a major flaw in the bill given that chapter 5 of this bill is particularly dependent on the assumption that strategic cropping land can be rehabilitated. We are yet to see that.

The ability to accurately calculate the loss of production capacity after a development activity has ceased is of great concern to landholders, and rightly so. The bill is vulnerable because it has been built on compromise and capitulation. The first principle which legislation of this nature should be built upon is certainty, and the LNP will offer certainty with its statutory regional plans. The statutory regional plans will provide cohesive strategic planning for each region in Queensland by mapping priority land uses, identifying infrastructure needs for developing industry, ensuring local input to the management of land-use conflicts and coordinating state and federal policy with local government planning. This is something sadly lacking in this government's policy.

**Mr Lucas:** You guys opposed statutory regional plans. You opposed them!

**Mr HOPPER:** I would like to see you sit in your seat if you want to mouth off. This bill fails to look—

**Mr Lucas:** Take the interjection. You guys opposed statutory regional plans.

**Mr HOPPER:** How many can you fit in a house?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr HOPPER:** How many can you fit in a house?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Attorney-General and member for Condamine, that is enough of the shouting across the chamber.

**Mr LUCAS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find that statement offensive. I do not particularly care what my size is, but it just shows the mentality of someone if he would make a comment like that.

**Mr HOPPER:** I find that comment offensive actually and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! We are not going to start having a slanging match. Member for Condamine, the comments that you made were a bit inflammatory. If the minister finds them offensive, it might be helpful if you withdraw.

**Mr HOPPER:** I withdraw.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Attorney-General, the member has withdrawn. We can now move on with the debate.

**Mr HOPPER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I find the minister's comments offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr Lucas:** I objected to comments as reflecting on me.

**Mr HOPPER:** He talked about my mental capacity. I find that offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Attorney-General, I ask that you withdraw the comment.

**Mr Lucas:** The thing spoke for itself, but I am happy to withdraw it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** All right. Now we can move on.

**Mr HOPPER:** Eight physical soil criteria will be used to assess whether land is strategic cropping land or not. These criteria, whilst relevant and legitimate tests, have serious flaws. In some cases the criteria will exclude highly productive land that has been successfully growing high-value crops for extended periods from being deemed strategic cropping land. Considerable concerns have been raised over the transitional arrangements provided for in this bill, in particular in relation to some resource developments that have met certain milestones in the assessment and approval process prior to 31 May 2011. The government allowed an application to proceed in the Springsure area of Central Queensland even though evidence has been provided to the state that the May deadline was not met. Yet that project is still going ahead. That project has broken the deadline and broken the agreement with the state. Surely, that is outside the intent of the transitional arrangement provisions of this bill. These arrangements have undermined public confidence in the Strategic Cropping Land Bill.

For over two years the government has thrown the Strategic Cropping Land Bill from one set of hands to another. The government has finally decided that the protection of our food and fibre producing land is of great importance. The government has spent a long time procrastinating over a bill that has immense consequences for our environment, our economy and our food security and it still has not got it right.

The absence of scientific evidence and research to support this bill is extremely disappointing. This government has failed to develop a land-use plan to manage the competing interests of agriculture, mining and urban development. For the past 20 years this Labor government has failed to secure our food security and ensure the protection of our water, our land and our environment. If this government was far dinkum about protecting our prime agricultural land for future generations, it would have provided greater commitment to our farming communities. It would have provided assurances to farming communities that there would be no open-cut mining on strategic cropping land. If this government was fair dinkum, it would have provided assurances that there would be no underground mining on strategic cropping land—no coal seam gas activity or other development on strategic cropping land—if it is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the productive capacity of that land to produce food and fibre.

These are the commitments of the LNP policy. It makes real commitments that have real outcomes instead of playing politics. We have made those commitments. When we win government, we will protect our prime agricultural land. Farmers and mining companies will know where they stand and that is what is lacking in this bill. This is hearsay tonight. The farmers will know exactly where they stand and so will mining companies. That is what is lacking in this legislation.

 **Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (5.33 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Strategic Cropping Land Bill. I have to say that this bill is a really good start. We have to—and all farmers know this—protect our good agricultural land. But as we go around the state—and I am pretty sure the minister's department would have realised this—we see that the areas that are being dealt with are very diverse. As in most things, a one-size-fits-all approach does not work and this bill for the South Burnett—

**Mr Cripps:** Is a shocker.

**Mrs PRATT:** This is an absolute shocker, as was just said. I would like to spend a little bit of time explaining why I believe this bill is fundamentally flawed for the South Burnett and how a simple procedure could be put in place to remedy the situation.

The South Burnett is a very productive area. As the minister would know, there has been a lot of correspondence to and from the Kingaroy Concerned Citizens Group, which became active because of the UCG mining—the underground coal gasification pilot project that was taking place in the Kingaroy area. The problem with this bill that I can see—and as the Kingaroy Concerned Citizens Group can see—is that the definition of strategic cropping land should be based on the productivity of the land. In many instances that measure does not seem to have been taken into consideration. When you think about it, the slope that has been set in this legislation at five per cent for highly productive volcanic soils will really protect only 37 per cent of the cropping land outside Kingaroy. That is a really low percentage when you think of the productivity that goes on in those areas. I will just name a few crops that are being grown there at the moment. There is maize and soy beans, wheat, barley, navy beans, popcorn, sorghum and a lot more. These crops are growing on land up to eight per cent and even higher and, under the remedy that has been proposed by the concerned citizens group, if this legislation incorporated eight per cent for the South Burnett then you would incorporate almost all of the South Burnett. As almost all of the South Burnett is prime agricultural land which grows really good crops, one has to ask why there is not another category of land—for instance, a ninth strategic cropping zone. If you did that, you would get 95 per cent of the South Burnett covered. So there should be a ninth zone for the South Burnett. There would be many areas that could fall into a ninth zone for some particular reason and in the case of the South Burnett it is because primarily all of the land in that area is good arable land.

So under the current five per cent slope, we are getting only 37 per cent of land classified as prime agricultural land. Under an eight per cent slope, we would be getting 95 per cent classified as prime agricultural land, which is a more accurate assessment. I think the shortcomings of a slope set at five per cent were predicted and acknowledged by DERM. That acknowledgment can be found on page 42 of the technical assessment document on the DERM website. So this legislation fails the people of the South Burnett.

I would like to quote from the Kingaroy Concerned Citizens Group, which undertook a study with landholders in the area. I am not sure if the minister is familiar with this study but it showed that, under the current proposal, 65 per cent of our local food producing land is just discounted.

I will table the strategic cropping evaluation which was conducted on the properties of three farmers in the area. When one thinks about it, it is logical that the government should be looking to preserve the maximum amount of land. The LNP has acknowledged that it was an atrocious bit of evaluation of South Burnett land and I hope it will therefore take on board and incorporate a zone 9 so they can incorporate up to eight per cent, because it is logical. That anyone would allow any part of this

type of soil in the South Burnett to be threatened by any kind of mining is a little bit disturbing. We already have a mine there that fuels Tarong Power Station. That is perhaps the only one we would care to have in the area.

*Tabled paper:* Document titled 'Strategic Cropping Evaluation (3 farm aggregate analysis of 5% slope vs 8% slope)' [6059].

Strategic cropping land is essential. We are losing it at a fast rate. Everyone is admitting that. Legislation needs to address that, not just make a pretence of addressing it. Although I believe that this is the start of good legislation, it really is only a pretence. It is a sop to a certain degree. It reminds me a little bit of when amalgamation was underway in that there was no proper research done in the first place. There are locations that should be in another area. It is also a bit like the tree-clearing legislation and the shemozzle that that was in the first instance. There was no groundtruthing or anything else. I know that this legislation needed to pass in order to protect the land. It could have been better. I am not sure how many of the submissions the minister took on board. I know that she did not take on board the one from the area of the South Burnett—and that is to the detriment of the government, I believe, because this is prime agricultural land and it should have been included.

Basically, if you are going to take a one-size-fits-all approach at five per cent, you must be flexible enough to recognise that there are exceptions to the rule. The South Burnett is an exception. There are other areas that are exceptions to the rule. A wise person would take that on board and amend the provisions as quickly as possible to pick up the slack, as they say. Sometimes you have to have an all-encompassing, blanket provision, but DERM has already acknowledged that there needs to be a greater percentage of slope in the South Burnett. There is no reason the government cannot go ahead and fix it.

Overall the legislation was needed. We do need to protect that land. There is an awful lot of land that can be imposed upon by mining and other activities. I would encourage the minister to look at this again between now and the election, whenever that might be. I think she might have a bit of time up her sleeve. I ask her to take the time and look at it. If she came to the South Burnett and told people that they were going to get the eight per cent slope, there would not be a farming community out there that would knock her or close the door on her. I look forward to her looking at this and changing it in the near future—not the long-term future, because we do not know what will happen after Christmas. We would like it as a Christmas present, if that is all right.

 **Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (5.43 pm): It was a comparative pleasure to listen to my neighbour the member for Nanango. Whilst she has her reservations, which she has explained, about this legislation, she did acknowledge that the legislation is needed to protect the land in question. That is the most important thing I gained from what she had to say today. That is in stark contrast to another neighbour of mine, the member for Condamine. I anticipate that another neighbour yet to speak, the member for Toowoomba South, will probably say things in line with the member for Condamine. The member for Lockyer is on the other side of me. I am surrounded by these people. I will miss the current member for Nanango, who is an Independent in this place and in her thought and action as well. She has done a great job for the people who live in the electorate of Nanango.

**Ms Jones:** You had another Independent neighbour, didn't you?

**Mr SHINE:** I did have another Independent neighbour, but he is currently a member of the LNP.

**Ms Jones** interjected.

**Mr SHINE:** There are rumours of approaches being made by Mr Katter, I am told, to the honourable member for Condamine. We shall see what time delivers.

**Mr Cripps:** They say that Katter has approached you.

**Mr SHINE:** Katter has approached me, you say?

**Mr Cripps:** Did you say that?

**Mr SHINE:** No.

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr SHINE:** Peter Pyke has certainly spoken to me. I speak to everyone. But I can assure the honourable member for Hinchinbrook that the honourable federal member for Kennedy has never approached me. Although I think I have met him, I am sure he does not know who I am or what my name is, and that is a situation that he and I are both happy about.

**Mr Johnson:** One thing about you, Kerry: we know you are a man of your word when it comes to what you believe in.

**Mr SHINE:** I take the interjection, member for Gregory. This is all in jest; however, the subject matter is serious. It is certainly an issue that has caused a great deal of comment and a great deal of feeling, particularly for people in the Felton area that the member for Condamine referred to which is in his electorate—not only there but also further out west at Warra and other parts of the Downs, in the

Lockyer no doubt and in the Brisbane Valley, too. People are understandably concerned about what the future holds, particularly in relation to that prime agricultural land that is responsible for the food bowls of the nation, and it is recognised that we should do something about it. I listened yesterday to the honourable member for Callide criticising the government for the lack of action over a period of time.

**Mr Rickuss:** You were a bit slow.

**Mr SHINE:** The honourable member for Callide took credit as the first one ever to raise this type of issue in 2008, I think he said, up at the parliamentary sitting in Cairns. I sat here in that last term and listened every Wednesday night to debate of private members' bills on an array of issues. I cannot remember one dealing with this type of issue that the opposition put up. Why was that? Perhaps the honourable member for Toowoomba South might, on behalf of the member for Callide, explain why the opposition was negligent. It might well have been because they did not really think this was an issue that was that important or it was just too hard. I think, to be honest, it is a very hard subject—a very difficult one, a complex one.

I congratulate the minister. Having been a minister for natural resources, albeit for two months—about the same time as the member for Southern Downs, I think—I have an appreciation of how complex it really would have been. I congratulate her and her departmental officers, who would have had to work very hard on an original piece of legislation with no precedent, so far as I am aware—certainly not in Australia but probably in the world. For them to come up with what we see here tonight is a great credit to them. I think that should be acknowledged even by the opposition here, particularly bearing in mind that they themselves were not able to come up with anything even approaching what we see in this legislation.

**Mr Rickuss:** That was a strange little backhander there, Kerry.

**Mr SHINE:** It was not meant to be, and I do not see how you could interpret it in that way at all. I meant every word I said in terms of praise for the minister and her departmental officers and I certainly want to make that very clear if it was unclear to you.

I think what has to be achieved here by any thinking person, any reasonable person, is an outcome that is acceptable to both major industries in Queensland. We have on the one hand the resources industry, which I think, from memory, is worth about \$14 billion in today's money. It will increase in time as other mines and other resource industry projects are opened up. On the other hand, of course, we have the agricultural, pastoral industries. The agriculture industry alone is worth about \$18 billion. Both of them are essential, we all agree surely, for the current and future economic wellbeing of our state.

Therefore, we have to arrive at a balance that protects the absolute best land—which I understand has been assessed at four per cent, although, to be honest, I thought that that figure was a bit low but nevertheless that is what we are told—and at the same time allow people to be employed, businesses to grow and the economy to grow through the expansion of our resources industry. From my observation of what is contained in the bill and what I understand it represents, this is a first-rate effort to address that balance and to provide for both industries to prosper into the future.

There is nothing more of great import that I want to say. I acknowledge that in my own electorate there are many people who are not necessarily involved in farming or the mining industry—although I assure the House that both industries are represented—who have concerns about what might happen to our aquifers, our environment generally and our food production ability. Of course, many others who now live in Toowoomba are dependent for their livelihood on the resources industry. Therefore, as one of the local members, it is an issue that I need to be very interested in.

I raise this issue: the honourable member for Condamine mentioned how happy he was that the LNP had come out with some sort of policy that apparently guarantees that there will never be any mining activity in the Felton Valley. I read that with a little bit of scepticism. Not so long ago I raised the fact that Campbell Newman had lunch with representatives from Ambre Energy, the company that is proposing to mine in the Felton Valley. That information was not volunteered; it was revealed via rumour in Toowoomba. I raised the issue and it was subsequently admitted. How honest, forthright, open and accountable is this LNP leader? What sort of precedent does it set for the future in terms of how they will operate if their leader and others can have a silent and secret lunch with such people?

**Mr Rickuss:** He made the announcement.

**Mr SHINE:** He made the announcement, but the honourable member for Condamine, of all people—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms O'Neill): Order! Stop the clock! Could we have a little less conversation across the chamber.

**Mr SHINE:** The honourable member for Condamine, of all people, must have serious doubts about the LNP leadership, both outside and inside this House. We know what his views—

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr SHINE:** I can assure the honourable member for Lockyer that there are plenty of senior counsels with different views of the world.

**Mr Rickuss:** Are you saying you never had lunch with them?

**Mr SHINE:** With Ambre? No, I never had lunch with them.

**Mr Rickuss:** No, with the senior counsel when you were Attorney-General.

**Mr SHINE:** They never paid, if I had. I am not too sure. The honourable member for Lockyer is about to tell us who else was at the lunch. That will be a first and I listen with great interest. My time is up, but again I congratulate the minister and her department for what they have brought to this House. This is novel legislation, it is groundbreaking legislation and it is first-rate legislation.

*(Time expired)*

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Before I call the member for Toowoomba South, I acknowledge Angie, Shane and Ben King in the gallery this evening.

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (5.53 pm): This is a particularly important bill. In my electorate of Toowoomba South, there are many people who, either directly or indirectly, rely heavily upon the Darling Downs for their income. Many other people have come into town from farming operations on the Downs. Therefore, for my electorate this is a very important bill and I want to say a few things about it.

Recently in Queensland mining has galloped ahead at a rapid rate, but often it has been located in the outlying areas of the state. In recent times, attempts have been made to mine in intensive areas such as the Darling Downs, which has caused much concern. Without doubt, the Darling Downs is among the best agricultural land in the world. The only places that could compare with it would be the Liverpool Plains at Gunnedah, the Haystack area just to the north-west of Dalby and the golden triangle in the Central Highlands. It compares with some of the best land in the Steppes of Russia and the Midwest of America.

There are wako soils on the western plains of the Darling Downs, around Norwin, Brookstead, Cecil Plains and some of the valleys on Hodgson Creek, King Creek, Oakey Creek and so on. Those areas have magnificent black soil that can sustain outstanding high-producing crops, even though there is not a high rainfall. Because of their clay content, they hold moisture. In my previous occupation at the Toowoomba Showgrounds, I had the pleasure of being involved in running many crop competitions throughout the Downs. I know of some of the records set for corn and sorghum, and winter crops such as cotton, chickpeas and so on. The Downs has amongst the best yields in the world and with irrigation it is even better. We are talking about some of the very best land in the world.

If we look around Queensland, near the Brisbane area we have seen the demise of some of the best small cropping land in the world at Redland Bay and Sunnybank. Once those two areas were magnificent small-crop areas, producing beans, strawberries, avocados, custard apples and those sorts of crops. They have been overtaken and subsumed by housing subdivisions and other developments. Near to the south-east corner of Queensland we have the Lockyer Valley, which is the best winter vegetable producing area of Australia because of the frosts in that area. Many of the small-crop growers of the Lockyer are moving to the Downs, particularly around Allora, Clifton and such areas. They are moving into irrigation areas there and further out.

We are talking about precious land, we are talking about magnificent land and we are talking about land that can feed not only Australia but also many parts of the world through exports. Something like 80 per cent of the eggs for eastern Australia are produced in the near vicinity of the Felton Valley. The chooks are fed on sorghum and the summer and winter crops grown in the area. It is important that we consider that as the intensity for mining builds. In many areas of the Downs, people have dug holes to put down corner posts and hit coal. It is important that we protect the black soil on the top of that coal and that we protect the pristine farming land. It is important that, in doing so, we provide security for those people involved in agriculture and certainty for those people who want to go into other ventures so that they can know whether or not those ventures can go ahead in particular areas.

Basically, this legislation divides the strategic cropping lands of the state into two areas: the protected areas and the managed areas. The Darling Downs, the Lockyer Valley and the golden triangle in Central Queensland will come under the protected areas. The managed areas will be subject to various tests to see whether or not people can do certain activities. The protected areas that I particularly refer to tonight are basically exempt and any other use can be considered only in exceptional circumstances. I think we need to have it made quite clear in the minister's reply tonight that the Darling Downs is protected so if anyone wants to come in and mine above ground or underground they know it is not on. If they want to come in and extract coal seam gas they should know it is not on. We need to know that quite clearly and irrevocably.

**Ms Nolan:** Is that LNP policy, though—no coal seam gas on strategic cropping land?

**Mr HORAN:** That is right. I am talking about the present and this particular bill. On the subject that the minister interjects about, I would like to congratulate the member for Condamine, the member for Warrego, the member for Southern Downs, the member for Gregory and the member for Callide who have worked hard in crisscrossing the Downs and Central Queensland in recent days putting forward the very sound LNP policy for those areas. I know how hard the member for Condamine worked with regard to getting that security that there will be no mining in the Felton area.

On the Downs we have seen a number of issues recently. We have seen an exploration permit granted for the Gowrie Junction area. It is absolutely ridiculous that exploration permits can be taken out over areas that include housing subdivisions and rural lifestyle subdivisions. This is an area that is virtually an outer suburb of Toowoomba. It has caused great upset to the people there, particularly younger people who have bought a house and land and are suddenly concerned that the value of their house and land which they have a mortgage on could have depreciated so quickly.

The important thing with regard to this bill is the statement of reservations that was put forward by the LNP members of the committee that looked at this bill. That committee did not have long to consider the bill. It received well over 50 submissions in the short time that they had. It is quite obvious that there are a number of contentious issues in this particular bill.

Very sensibly and responsibly our shadow minister and the LNP have decided to support this bill because people need this bill as at least it is a start and a foot in the door. We are very critical of many aspects of it, especially where it does not properly deal with particular issues. I know that our shadow minister will deal with those as we go through the consideration in detail stage.

Organisations representing people on the land want to see this bill go through for the simple reason that it is a start. There is protection in it. There are a lot of queries and a lot of questions and there are a lot of issues that might be wrong. In terms of looking at what is exempt, we have to make sure that any genuine bona fide exempt approvals are allowed for these particular areas because people might want to build hay sheds, a winery, a house, silos, grain drying equipment or many other things that are associated with food production.

The contribution made by the Darling Downs to Toowoomba has always been immense. There have been direct contributions and indirect contributions. Many of the accountancy, legal and education services—just about everything in the city—are dependent upon the massive amount of cropping and intensive agriculture that happens on the Darling Downs and generates so much domestic and export income.

The mining activities in the Surat Basin further out are starting to provide other opportunities for people from Toowoomba and further out in Dalby, Chinchilla, Miles and Roma. The important thing is that this starts to draw a line in the sand so that people can go ahead with their farming operations on the Darling Downs with some form of comfort.

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (6.03 pm): I am pleased today to speak to the Strategic Cropping Land Bill 2011. This legislative process to protect strategic cropping land began when Ray Hopper, who is the member for Condamine, and I met with landholders on the Brigalow flood plain at the Haystack Road. Landholders were concerned that the development of a coalmine would decimate this magnificent farming land. Anyone who has been to the Brigalow flood plain will know that it is a very large area that is very flat. Governments and landholders have probably spent \$20 million over the years to make sure the water floods over the flood plain properly. The fences have been pulled out and the roads have been run the right way. Big culverts have been put in so that the water can go across the area. If a mine were put in the middle of that it would divert the water. It would mean that some places would get flooded and others would not. All the work that has been done would be lost. Plus it is also a very productive area.

I determined that we needed to clearly identify this land as special and call it iconic farming land. The member for Condamine and I strongly supported the protection of this iconic farming land and the then shadow minister for the natural resources, Jeff Seeney, announced at the regional sittings in Cairns in 2008 that we would protect this land. That is when this first started in the Queensland parliament.

The state Labor government, under pressure from the opposition and well organised rural lobby groups, eventually announced that it would protect strategic cropping land. That is where we are today, finally. It took a very long time for the government to eventually bring this legislation to the parliament. During the delay in the formulation of the legislation other resource industries, such as the CSG industry, the coal seam gas industry, were moving onto strategic cropping land. Landholders, coal seam gas companies and resource companies have been let down due to the fact that the government did not act sooner to manage the rush to resource development on strategic cropping land.

The coalition and LNP have never wavered from the view that strategic cropping land must be protected. The LNP announced that its policy is to double agricultural production by 2040. This cannot be achieved without the protection of strategic cropping land. We as a state and as a nation have a duty to future generations to ensure that we grow enough food to sustain ourselves and be a strong export nation of food products.

The bill before the House is a small step in the right direction. The intent is to protect strategic cropping land. However, typically, this government has been unable to present a totally practical and workable legislative solution. The bill provides little protection of strategic cropping land from CSG development. Clearly, the Labor government is more interested in coal seam gas royalties than landholders. The LNP supports the CSG industry; however, it must not impede production on strategic cropping land or other designated areas, such as residential areas.

The bill excludes land that may not meet the strategic cropping land criteria but has access to irrigation water. A combination of water and land can be very productive and is strategic cropping land. In every sense of the word, if we put those things together we have very productive land. Underground mining should never be allowed under strategic cropping land.

The one strong example of this is Gordon Downs near Emerald where subsidence of between one and three metres has occurred. This is absolutely unacceptable on strategic cropping land. Rehabilitation of land can be carried out on some grazing land. However, it is unproven at this time on strategic cropping land. The example of Gordon Downs is a very good one. When there is subsidence of between one and three metres it does not matter what we do as we cannot get that land up to full production. We must use the precautionary principle at this time and protect strategic cropping land.

The state government's contention that the applicant may have to restore strategic cropping land to its predevelopment condition is farcical due to the fact there are no genuine examples of this occurring or, in fact, any peer reviewed science showing where this can be done. It is a bit like the government's view on debt: they put it on the bankcard and worry about it later. We cannot worry about fixing strategic cropping land after it is entirely damaged. It must be protected now.

The LNP policy will clearly define land that will be protected from resource development. The LNP's policy that we announced in recent times—as the member for Toowoomba South said, the members for Gregory, Condamine, Southern Downs and I travel around a lot of those regions and we talk about our view of the future of strategic cropping land in this state—clearly defines land that would be protected from resource development once and for all. We will fast-track the protection with a draft plan in the golden triangle, the Darling Downs and the Scenic Rim regions. We will not allow open-cut mining on strategic cropping land areas or CSG or underground mining if it has any impact on strategic cropping land.

This brings me to the issue of the golden triangle, which I visited recently with my colleague the member for Gregory. Landholders on the strategic cropping land are concerned about the government's decision to allow Bandanna coal to proceed with an underground mine. AgForce put this in a submission. It said—

It has since come to AgForce's attention that a 'deal' was then done with the Bandanna Coal proponents outside of the framework of the SCL policy position and without the acknowledgement of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

For a start, that does make people very suspicious and I do not think it is fair that that has been done. A submission from the Central Queensland golden triangle group said—

The Government seems to have accepted Bandanna Energy's claim that it is capable of rehabilitating land at this site which will subside due to longwall mining. Yet the vital information required to assess the extent of subsidence in this project and its effect on cropping capability is simply not known.

The submission goes on to quote the then minister—

'It is important to note that these transitional conditions were granted to the Springsure Creek project only after Bandanna Energy provided a written assurance that the project would not permanently damage strategic cropping land.' We have, on countless occasions, requested a copy of this 'written assurance' provided by Bandanna Energy. This has not been forthcoming.

The debate on this bill is an opportunity for the minister to provide that information or to guarantee that this written assurance that was supposedly given to the government by Bandanna is provided to these people so they can at least rest easy and know that information is correct and also to ensure the company is kept to that commitment. The submission goes on—

Realistically, it is to be expected that the subsidence will seriously and permanently interfere with drainage and cause substantial ponding. ... after subsidence and some parts of the land may be left with slopes which exceed the SCL limit of 3%.

So, in fact, there may be strategic cropping land—in fact, right now we do have—that exceeds the slope limit. That may not be the case because of subsidence. Bandanna Energy's expensive modelling of Springsure Creek from an open-cut mine to an underground mine demonstrates the company's faith in the project and the region. The truth is that Bandanna Energy lodged an application with DERM for Springsure Creek as an underground longwall mine. DERM approved the application on 17 December 2010. Therefore, the government held detailed knowledge that no open-cut mine was to proceed at Springsure Creek as at 2 December 2010. So there was no application for an open-cut mine; it was always going to be an underground mine. That is what is going to happen out there, and that is of great concern to the people in that community.

 **Mr MALONE** (Mirani—LNP) (6.13 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Strategic Cropping Land Bill 2011. Firstly, I congratulate the shadow minister who has carriage of this legislation for the LNP in the parliament. My colleagues who have supported his view in terms of the importance of strategic cropping land in Queensland—

**Ms Nolan** interjected.

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wendt): Order! Stop the clock. It is highly unusual and unnecessary to have these cross-chamber interjections. The member for Mirani has the call.

**Mr MALONE:** This is one of the most important pieces of legislation to come before this House in many years. There are many members in this House who do not really understand the importance of protecting strategic cropping land and, more importantly, protecting land that can actually grow our food source from here on. No artificial land can be created that would duplicate some of the great country we have here in Queensland. Land like that is not made anymore, unfortunately. Some of the descriptions that have been provided to this parliament by people who live in those areas are very apt. The depth of the black soil, the viability of cropping on that land and the moisture-holding ability of those blacksoil plains is just magnificent. Quite frankly, once they are stuffed up there is no way of bringing that land back into production.

My contention is that, as we move into the future, there will be innovative ways of extracting gas without major disturbance of the land. I think it is incumbent on this parliament, if we take our responsibilities as law-makers and legislators seriously, to take into consideration the absolute necessity to protect land that can actually grow our food into the future. If we do not do that, we are abrogating the rights of our children, our grandchildren and the future generations who will live in this country.

That being said, it is important obviously for the mining industry to progress. I do believe that there is a way forward for the mining industry to work cooperatively with landholders. I again stress that there are many members in this House and there are members outside of this House who really do not understand the connection that long-term landholders have to the land—not necessarily only the rights but also their understanding of and connection to the land. They will fight tooth and nail to maintain their productivity on their land.

They will also fight tooth and nail with anybody who tries to interfere with their right to earn a living on the land that they have in some cases acquired from past generations. Indeed, in some parts of my electorate there are farmers and graziers whose family inherited land before the 19th century so they have been farming there for well over a hundred years. It is not without huge recriminations that they have in some cases sold out to mining companies. There has been a huge amount of self-sacrifice. A couple of lifetimes of work have gone into developing that country. They then see it ripped up, with cuts made through it that are 180 to 200 feet deep. The rehabilitation of those sites is not necessarily as good as it could be. I will admit that the rehabilitation that is taking place currently is a hell of a lot better than it used to be. With the right amount of rehabilitation, I believe that some of that country could go back to grazing land. I have yet to see that happen effectively.

**Mr Johnson:** You would never pull a plough over it, though.

**Mr MALONE:** That is correct. I believe that with correct rehabilitation it could be passed back to grazing land. With open-cut mining there is no way that you will ever get land back to being suitable for agriculture. More importantly, underground mining certainly has a way forward. Unfortunately, with the subsidence that occurs with underground mining—and let us hope that newer technology eliminates that—huge chunks of flat plains are converted into hollows, rills et cetera that make it almost impossible to work the land and certainly impossible to irrigate.

I stand in this place to reinforce the fact that the opposition is supporting this bill with a huge amount of reluctance. We believe that it is a small step in the right direction, but it needs to go much further. It is about three or four years too late. The horse is out of the barn, and we have to try to round it up and get it back in the barn. The push for the mining industry into regional Queensland is huge, and it is of great benefit to a lot of people who live in the region but, as I said, it has to be done right. If we do not do it right, we have stuffed it up for generations to come and it can never be repaired or rehabilitated back to country that can produce food and secure the production of food into the future.

We in this House have a huge responsibility to ensure that everybody who listens to this debate tonight knows that we do understand what is going on out there. We do understand the need for the mining industry, the grazing industry and the cropping industry to move forward. People should also understand that we do feel for those people who are being impacted by the mining industry, not just those who are losing land but those who suffer encroachment into their communities by heavy vehicles, increasing population and single men's camps. It is a huge quantitative shift in terms of lifestyle and the ethos of some of the towns. I am not saying that is bad; it is part of progress, but it has to be managed.

We do not need a situation where governments are over the top and micromanaging the situation so it becomes impossible. There is a real need to return money into the regions. Councils are struggling because roads which were built many years ago to, at the very best, haul cattle are now having 50- to 80-tonne loads travel over bitumen that was put down in some cases on the top of formations of soil. In some cases there is not any gravel under the roads.

There is a real need to recognise that mining has a real impact not just on farmers and graziers but right across the community including those doing business in the area. As a legislative group and as members of parliament who represent people who live in those regional areas, it is our responsibility to make them understand that we are on their side. We are also on the side of productive industries of Queensland. We need to pay back the debt and pay the \$12 million a day in interest for the debt that the Queensland government has left us. With those few words, I implore the House to move forward with this legislation and look very carefully at where we go after this.

 **Mr LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (6.23 pm): I support the Strategic Cropping Land Bill. I would like to address the aspect of extensive consultation that was undertaken in the development of the strategic cropping land policy. In recent times Queensland's cropping land resources have been subject to increased land-use competition across some of the state's most important economic sectors—the agriculture and resources sectors and the urban development sector. This competition has seen community concerns increase in relation to the effects of development on our best cropping land. In order to achieve a balance between competing interests, the government has undertaken extensive consultation with key stakeholders during development and implementation of the strategic cropping land policy and considered all public feedback. The Queensland government is committed to adopting best practice regulatory principles and to ensuring that new regulatory arrangements are developed in a rigorous and transparent manner.

In February 2010 the Queensland government released a discussion paper in relation to protecting the most valuable cropping resources for the future. This discussion paper identified the government's overarching policy response to the increasing pressures on the state's cropping land resources. That policy is that the best cropping land, defined as strategic cropping land, is a finite resource that must be conserved and managed for the longer term.

Community information sessions on the discussion paper were held in a number of centres in Queensland including Dalby, Roma, Emerald, Bundaberg, Mackay, Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns, Toowoomba, Ipswich and Nambour. Submissions on the discussion paper closed in March 2010 and some 389 submissions were received. A consultation report was published in July 2010 which analysed the results of the public submissions. These initial submissions were crucial to the development of the strategic cropping land framework.

The Queensland government also established a stakeholder advisory committee in February 2010 to help further develop the policy. The committee includes representatives from the agricultural, resource and urban development sectors as well as representatives from local government and natural resource management groups. The committee members included representatives from AgForce, the Queensland Farmers Federation, Future Food Queensland, the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Queensland Resources Council, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association, Queensland Regional NRM Groups Collective, which is represented by the Fitzroy Basin Association, the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee, the Urban Development Institute of Australia, the Planning Institute and the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors—a wide representation.

The stakeholder advisory committee has been extensively consulted on all aspects of the policy framework and has provided advice on policy development as we have moved forward leading to the preparation of this bill. The committee met on 13 occasions between February 2010 and October 2011. The stakeholder advisory committee will continue as an advisory group on implementation issues and will contribute to the two-year review of the legislation.

After consideration of submissions on the February 2010 discussion paper, the Queensland government released a policy framework titled *Protecting Queensland's strategic cropping land: a policy framework* on 23 August 2010. This policy framework outlined the government's proposed approach to protecting the state's best cropping land resources. The framework included plans to introduce a specific act of parliament and a new state planning policy under the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. The government invited public comment and feedback on the August 2010 policy framework.

Department of Environment and Resource Management officers discussed the framework, with nine community forums held around South-East Queensland. Submissions closed on 30 September 2010 and 143 submissions were received. There was general support for the policy framework from rural agricultural industry representatives and stakeholders. The feedback received from all sectors was extremely valuable and, as a result of the ongoing consultation on the August 2010 policy framework, four important changes were made.

Firstly, the policy now defines protection areas and management areas. Protection areas will be afforded the highest level of protection and were chosen as they are areas of the state that are under intensive and imminent development pressure and contain a large aggregation of the state's best cropping land. In the management area, developments will be required to avoid and minimise any impacts on strategic cropping land. Up until now, mining, as a generally high economic value activity, has had pre-eminence over most land. Changing the law to favour agriculture over mining is a very substantial shift in the land law of the state and is the basis for the two-tier approach.

Secondly, the policy now provides scientifically robust criteria for land to be consistently assessed as strategic cropping land. Thirdly, the new legislation will provide transitional arrangements for undecided resource development projects that meet certain milestones in their assessment process. These transitional arrangements recognise the investment made by proponents in investigating, assessing and undertaking studies for proposed new resource development projects that are well advanced in the assessment and approval process.

Fourthly, the legislation now provides for mitigation. This bill ensures that there is no loss of agricultural productive value in the long term by requiring developments which have a permanent impact on the strategic cropping land to provide mitigation. These four important changes were publicly announced, and information has been published by the department to assist all parties to understand the changes.

On 31 May 2011 the Queensland government continued its commitment to extensive and transparent public consultation with the release of a regulatory assessment statement. The regulatory assessment statement evaluated the cost-recovery options for implementing the policy in terms of the impacts on development and the government, and identified the most efficient and fair way to recover the cost. Submissions closed on 1 August 2011 and 29 submissions were received. The government listened to feedback on the regulatory assessment statement and has taken steps to make the application fees more affordable. Rather than the \$27,254 flat fee initially proposed for development assessment, a tiered fee structure which considers the type of development will apply. For development under the Sustainable Planning Act, fees will range from \$500—

Debate, on motion of Mr Lawlor, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

## CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS BILL

Resumed from 25 October (see page 3364).

### Second Reading

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (7.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

In speaking to the committee's report, I would first like to acknowledge that today is in fact 21 years to the day since Labor decriminalised homosexuality in Queensland. When that amendment to the Queensland Criminal Code was debated in this House 21 years ago, it was met with comments from the then National Party opposition which are eerily familiar to many of the comments made in this public debate about this bill here tonight. It was argued by the forebears of those opposite that the legalisation of such activity would result in the destabilisation of the family unit and the breakdown of society. In fact, nothing of the like happened.

This bill merely, but not meekly, seeks to formally recognise relationships which have existed in Queensland for centuries. It does not, will not and cannot infringe upon or diminish marriage, and it will not provide any additional rights than are otherwise already available to couples who can prove a de facto relationship. But what this bill does is important. What it does is provide access upfront to the formal recognition of a relationship to couples who have been hitherto unable or do not wish to enter into a marriage. Further, it provides them with an opportunity to celebrate their commitment and their love for one another in a ceremony in front of friends and family; perhaps this is its most important feature.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee and the staff who assist it. The public response to this bill has been unprecedented in the short history of our new committee system. Despite receiving nearly 6,000 submissions and holding a full day of public hearings, the committee has put forward a considered and comprehensive analysis and I thank them sincerely for their work on behalf of the parliament. Those who claim that the consultation on this bill has been inadequate or that the process has been rushed may reflect that, if it were not for the committee reforms introduced by this government, it would have been the case that any bill—this bill included—could have been introduced and passed in the space of just two weeks without public submissions and without a public hearing. This bill in fact has received more extensive consultation, a more extensive community process, than 99 per cent of all legislation that has ever gone before this parliament. It seems to me that those who advance arguments of process are merely using the refuge of the cowardly.

The committee did put forward a number of suggestions in relation to clause 18 which I want to address in particular. While I acknowledge the intention behind the amendments which went to both counselling and also the rights of children in a relationship breakdown, in consulting with both the Family Law Practitioners Association of Queensland and the Queensland Law Society, I advise the House that

I will not be seeking to propose those amendments to the bill. My concerns—which are in fact the concerns shared by both the Queensland Law Society and the Family Law Practitioners Association—were that any such change could infringe upon the present jurisdiction of the Family Court of Australia, which ordinarily would oversee any dispute involving custody and the welfare of children in a relationship breakdown. It has the expertise and, more importantly, the jurisdiction, and it seems to me and indeed to the Family Law Practitioners Association that to bifurcate that or separate it out would not be a wise move.

It is important to reflect upon the fact that members on this side of the House will tonight vote according to their conscience. Members on this side of the House will vote according to their own conceptions of human rights, their own moral and ethical framework and their own faith based views. Those on the other side of the chamber will be voting as drones—preprogrammed to come in here and vote one way by an—

*An incident having occurred in the public gallery—*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Minister, just resume your seat. I will not tolerate that sort of thing from the public gallery.

**Mr FRASER:** As I said, those on this side of the chamber will be voting with their conscience; those on the other side of the chamber will be voting according to what they have been told to do, and I think it is a dismal reflection on all of those opposite—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. It would be better for the whole House if we maintained the discussion tonight with the dignity that I think a discussion like this deserves.

**Mr FRASER:** It is worth noting, as I speak to the committee report, that at least one member opposite has said that they would ordinarily vote for the bill if they were permitted to do so. In introducing this bill into the parliament, it is worthwhile calling, once again, for those opposite to be given the opportunity tonight to vote for this bill, to take a step forward for equality, to tell the truth and to recognise the truth about human relationships. It should not only be this side of the chamber that permits members to vote with their conscience. Indeed, all members of this parliament should honour their own conscience, honour their own original calling about why they stood for public office and put forward their own views about why they believe that this step towards equality, this step towards social justice, this step towards inclusion, this step towards what the modern Queensland should truthfully say about valid, human and loving relationships should be denied in the cause of their partisan politics.

I am proud to be a member of a government that has the courage to introduce a bill such as this. I am proud to be part of a party that has been at the forefront of pushing forward on social justice and equality. It is a privilege to commend the bill to the House.

**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (7.36 pm): The LNP will not be supporting the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011. Despite reports and spin from those opposite, this decision was reached unanimously at a party room meeting. We hold this position for valid and sensible reasons, and I will be putting that case for the LNP tonight. Quite simply, the member for Mount Coot-tha hastily introduced this bill as a last-ditch attempt, as members opposite are fleeing a sinking ship. He did it to stitch up a Greens preference deal that he hopes will save him from electoral defeat in Mount Coot-tha, a deal that—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr FRASER:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The words of the member are untrue and offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Just before the member for Kawana continues, I will just say that when there was interjection on the honourable member for Mount Coot-tha I asked the other side to be quiet and respect the dignity of his position. I now ask those on my right to do the same.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Australia's worst Treasurer is once again trying to divert attention from his loss of the AAA credit rating, soaring debt and the cost-of-living increases that are crippling the family budget. This bill is nothing more than a political stunt. The member for Mount Coot-tha has had over 12 years to act on his recently found concern of equality; why hasn't he?

For such a monumental social change, the consultation for this bill and the time given for public debate on the issue is disturbing but of no surprise. A number of witnesses and submitters to the committee remarked on this fact and 164 submissions called for a referendum on this issue. That is not possible given the bill is a private member's bill, not a government bill. It is not a government bill because it was rejected by cabinet, but it is a private member's bill that had an extraordinary level of support from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in its early drafting days.

The member for Surfers Paradise and I submitted a dissenting report to the final report of the parliamentary committee. We dissented for a number of reasons. Firstly, as I have begun to outline tonight, this bill is nothing more than a stunt; it is designed as a distraction to the critical issues facing

Queenslanders. This is evidenced by the expeditious nature of the bill and the way in which it was introduced. At a time when the Labor Party is attempting to claim the high moral ground on parliamentary democracy, I need not remind members of the way in which standing orders were thrown out the window to suit the member for Mount Coot-tha in the bill's introduction. His arrogance leads him to believe that he has more rights than any other member in this House—for at his whim, with government support, the rules for introducing a private member's bill are changed in this place to suit his agenda.

In discussions that we have had with the LGBT community, the major issues are those facing all Queenslanders—rising cost-of-living pressures, access to good public health facilities, getting our economy back on track, job opportunities, job security, a vibrant economy and a tourism sector. The government's inability to address and resolve some or all of those issues is the reason they are continually looking for political distractions.

It is a government with a horrendous track record. Interestingly, despite its introduction as a private member's bill, the member for Mount Coot-tha stated—

Let me state categorically this: the initiative that was brought to the parliament was an initiative of this government and of this government alone.

As members would know, the issue of legislating for the definition of marriage is under the jurisdiction and responsibility of the Commonwealth government. As I have stated in this place previously, it is not the place of state governments to meddle in federal affairs and nor is it the place of federal governments to trample over state government jurisdiction. The Australian Constitution was designed in a way that protects the rights of the individual states and sets out the relevant matters of jurisdiction for federal and state governments. I raise this point because there are some confusing arguments between the member for Mount Coot-tha and the Premier as to whether this bill relates directly to the subject of marriage or is separate. On 4 November, in his briefing to the committee, the member for Mount Coot-tha stated—

It is important to keep the whole scheme of this civil partnership relationship regime separate to that which provides for marriage. Therefore, a crossover or connection to the relationship of marriage is inappropriate in the constitutional sense in the way that the bill is being designed.

Those comments are in direct contrast to the Premier's statement to the House on 25 October in which she said—

I would ask all of those who do so to recall the happiest days of their own lives—and for most of us our wedding day will always be near the top of that list. So why would we deny that experience to others?

As we stated in our dissenting report, it is not the place of the Queensland Legislative Assembly to undermine the legislative powers of the Commonwealth parliament. Many of the submissions to the committee raised the issue of creating equality in the terms of legal recognition for same-sex relationships. This recognition has already been made by the Commonwealth government. The explanatory notes to the bill state—

The Commonwealth Government in 2008 made comprehensive amendments to over 100 pieces of their legislation to recognise people in same-sex relationships have the same legal benefits and entitlements to a range of Commonwealth Government areas.

The legal recognition of same-sex relationships can be identified in this bill as it regards a civil partnership, for the purposes of the bill, more so as a legal contract rather than a ceremonial recognition of a relationship between two adults. This is no more evident than in the provisions in the bill that allow for a cooling-off period, as stated in clause 8. This cooling-off period is defined as a period of 10 days in which either party may apply to withdraw the application for a civil partnership. This clause illustrates further that the underlying intent of the bill is for a legal contract and legal recognition of a relationship as marriage provides. If the member for Mount Coot-tha were serious about this issue he would not have included the likes of a statutory used-car sales warranty in the bill. It bears no positive service to the LGBT community for the member for Mount Coot-tha to include a try-before-you-buy clause in any bill.

It also does no service to the issues facing the LGBT community to have the arrogant member for Mount Coot-tha as their spokesperson. When personal insults are thrown and words like 'dark hearts' are used by the member for Mount Coot-tha when he describes community members who oppose this bill, it certainly lowers the level of debate in this state—a level that I am pleased to see has not been followed by members of the LGBT community or other groups. Of course, they would not stoop that low.

The explanatory notes to the bill state that the estimated cost for government implementation will be met from existing resources. In the public hearing that was undertaken the department estimated that the cost of implementation would be \$100,000. Given that there is no mention of cost of fees incurred, it is difficult to understand how the department can make the assumption that the cost of implementation and operation of these changes will not likely affect existing resources within the budget.

The member for Mount Coot-tha confirmed that he had not taken any public consultation on the bill prior to introducing it in this House. The subject matter of this bill is important and of such significance that proper public consultation should have been undertaken, and the people of Queensland ought to have had that appropriate time and opportunity to consider the subject matter and make submissions to the committee. Owing to the limited time frame for the submissions, public

hearings and report finalisation, we do not believe that the people of Queensland have had the appropriate opportunities to raise their concerns. Fifty-four per cent of the final number of submissions were received 17 days after the deadline. That goes to the heart of the lack of consultation. The Society of Notaries of Queensland Inc. highlights what happens when you do not properly consult. I refer to a letter to the member for Mount Coot-tha dated 17 November, which states—

To refer to these registrants as civil partnership notaries will without doubt raise confusion in the minds of the public as to what a notary is and what services a notary can perform.

I would like to address some of the points raised during the public hearing on 10 November. FamilyVoice Australia raised issues in relation to the consultation period and remarked—

The 45 pages of this Bill include complex legal details which cannot be adequately analysed in the very short time (just ten days) currently allowed for review. Consideration of this private member's bill should be delayed at least until next year.

Further they said—

Marriage has been given special recognition and status throughout history precisely because it is a permanent union of two biologically complementary humans who have the potential (not necessarily always realised) to procreate and provide a stable environment for raising the next generation.

In relation to the arguments of discrimination, Reverend Dr Moore stated—

... this is not a matter of discrimination as discrimination has been removed through the amendments to 84 laws by the Federal Government in 2008.

One submitter asked why, if the member for Mount Coot-tha was genuine in his claim that the bill simply acknowledges the reality of human relationships, the bill does not provide for such relationships as polygamous or other relationships that exist in our community.

Queenslanders want us to debate the significant issues of importance to them, whether they be skyrocketing electricity and water costs or general cost-of-living pressures. The LNP will prioritise the issues for all Queenslanders, and civil partnerships are not on the priority list in the minds of Queenslanders. The passing of this bill will not save Queenslanders money. It will not ease their cost-of-living pressures. It will not get our treasured AAA credit rating back. The member for Mount Coot-tha will go down in history as one of the most arrogant members in this place—the worst Treasurer in Australia's history who will stop at nothing to put spin and stunts before helping the majority of Queenslanders. We oppose this bill.

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (7.46 pm): I rise to speak to the Civil Partnerships Bill and in doing so recognise that tonight is fundamentally a debate about the human rights of Queensland citizens—the human right, recognised in the United Nations charter of human rights, to live free of discrimination. Tonight, the bill that is before the parliament seeks to strike a blow against prejudice and to strike a blow against discrimination.

When I spoke about this bill in the parliament prior to its introduction in October I quoted Justice Michael Kirby, a respected and honoured Australian, who, in considering this matter, made very good points. He said—

... denying equality in a matter that concerns the dignity and respect due to precious long-term relationships is hurtful, and against society's interest.

He recognised that there had been much law reform in relation to same-sex relationships, particularly in relation to areas like property law and succession law. But he went on to say—

Money is not enough. Dignity, recognition and acceptance are precious in their own right.

I endorse those comments, and that is what this bill is about: dignity and respect for relationships that are precious in their own right.

The arguments we hear from the opposition simply do not hold any weight. The first argument is that somehow this issue is not a priority—that is, that governments should only ever do things that are on the top of the list, that you should never do things that might be important to the minority, that governments should never concern themselves with issues that matter to some people but not everybody. I would argue that the fight against discrimination should be a priority of any government. I make the point that it may not be a priority for every member on the other side and it may not be a priority for every Queenslander, but it is a priority for those people who live with discrimination every single day of their lives.

The second argument is that this is some kind of political stunt. Let me address that. There may be some validity to that argument if this government had never taken any action on the issue of discrimination against people on the basis of sexuality or in same-sex relationships. It was a Labor government that put in place the antidiscrimination legislation, that made it illegal in Queensland to discriminate on the grounds of sexuality. It was a Labor government, led by me as the minister for families in the first term of the Peter Beattie government, that moved to ensure that people in same-sex relationships who were suffering from domestic violence would enjoy the protection of the law and the protection of the Queensland Police Service. It was a Labor government, led by Matt Foley as Attorney-General, that went on to move a comprehensive bill that ensured that people who had—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Both sides of the House will cease interjecting. The Premier has the call.

**Ms BLIGH:** And it was a Labor government that went on to ensure that the rights of people in de facto relationships, including same-sex relationships, could be protected under the property law of our state, under the succession laws of our state and a range of other entitlements that were due to them as people living in relationships.

During this term of government, this government enacted changes to the surrogacy laws. What has that done? It has secured recognition at law of the rights of parents in same-sex relationships. So we stand proud with a long record of reform in this area. This issue is not some late thinking. This is not some sudden issue. Why at this time? Well, it is very simple. This was an issue discussed and debated at the Labor Party conference where it was unanimously supported. The Deputy Premier took the view that this is a matter that should therefore be brought to the parliament.

We hear from those opposite again, the other argument, that somehow this is the wrong time to be doing this and somehow it is the wrong way to be doing this. It is my experience in politics that recourse to process is always the refuge of cowards. They want you to believe that somehow if they had had more time they might consider this. Well, let me just return to the bill on surrogacy and the parental rights of people in same-sex relationships. They had some 3½ months to consider that bill. It went through all of the processes of this parliament. Did those opposite get a conscience vote? No. Did they support the legislation? No. So do not be conned by this argument that if they had more time they might do the right and decent thing, because they will never do it.

When you hear people say that this is the wrong time, you ask yourself: if not now, when? Where was their private member's bill in this term of government? If they believed this was the wrong time, where were they in the last three years? They were mute. They were silent.

**Mr Springborg:** Where was your government bill?

**Ms BLIGH:** The member for Southern Downs wants us to believe that he is voting against this because it is not a government bill. Have you ever heard anything more preposterous in your life? The member for Southern Downs has devoted his life to voting against government bills and here he is with a private member's bill and says he wishes it was a government bill.

**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Ms Struthers** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The minister will cease interjecting. The member for Southern Downs will cease interjecting.

**Ms BLIGH:** Be under no illusions, the reason that we have an entire Liberal—and I use that word very advisedly—and National Party voting against this bill tonight is that they are now in the grip of the rising influence of the religious right. The religious right has taken over the National Party. Bruce McIver and his cronies are running it. It has always been the mainstream and the centre of politics that have driven Queensland and Australia forward. What we are seeing is the rise of extremism in the Liberal National Party and the religious right now have a grip on what were once small 'l' liberal mainstream thinkers.

Tonight what we see is a true-to-form performance from the Liberal National Party—only one speaker on the bill. This is such a big issue for them, they are so determined to vote against it, they are so determined not to have a conscience vote—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting.

**Ms BLIGH:** Anybody who listened to the debate tonight will know that that one speaker was simply appalling and they should resist any possibility that the member for Kawana will ever become the Attorney-General of Queensland. Did he talk about human rights once? No. Did he mention the word equality? No, he did not. This is not someone who is concerned with the rule of law or with the rights of citizens of this state.

True to form, yesterday they were too tired and lazy to turn up in the parliament. Tonight they are too tired and lazy to stand up and tell the people of Queensland and their electorates why they will not support this bill. There is a very good reason for that. A lot of them do actually support the bill, but they have not had what it takes to stand up to the person who is not a member of this parliament and say that they, as elected members of their electorates, stand for something. They have not had what it takes to win the argument in their caucus. They are being run by the Bruce McIvers, the Barry O'Sullivans and the Campbell Newmans. They have not got what it takes to stand up here and tell you why they will not support this bill. Let me come back to the reason we are here this evening.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Ms BLIGH:** Well, it is a lot more than you will be doing. This bill is fundamentally about the human rights of Queensland citizens. But it is much more than that. It is about the joyful business of love. That is why it has touched the hearts of so many Australians, why so many people believe that the parliaments of Australia should be dealing with this issue. More and more people are prepared to talk

about an issue that was once swept under the carpet, and, as they do so, more and more Australians realise that their uncle, their grandma, the man who works in the shop or their butcher may well be someone in this circumstance. So let me conclude again with the words of Michael Kirby when he said, 'Fortunate is a human being, straight or gay, who has such lifelong love. Evil are those who would deny such love to a fellow human being'.

 **Hon. DM WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (7.57 pm): This is the first time that an issue which for many members is an issue of conscience has ever been through the processes provided by Queensland's new committee system. A few months ago such a bill, had it been introduced, would have laid on the table of the House for perhaps a week, perhaps more than a week, and then it would have been debated in the House without any necessity of community input. Under the process that we have just been through, there was a detailed committee consideration of this bill and a public hearing—an all-day public hearing—where enormous benefit was derived from evidence and information given by both sides of the argument to an all-party parliamentary committee.

The voice of Christendom in respect of this bill was divided. Christendom did not speak with one voice, but it spoke very articulately on both sides of the case. The arguments that were put forward by representatives of the churches, representatives of family organisations and representatives of law reform organisations were heard by the committee, placed into the committee's report, and in that way large numbers of members of the public were able to speak directly to the consciences of honourable members of this place before those honourable members cast their votes. This has never happened before in the history of Queensland. To that extent we are breaking new constitutional ground as well as legislating perhaps for additional rights.

The proceedings of the committee involved large numbers of representations from members of the public, with over 5,000 people contributing. Never have so many people had their say on a piece of legislation before it came into this House. Never have so many people been able to make people in this place know what they personally thought of what was proposed. We held the hearings in the old temporary chamber of this honourable House. In that room two worlds met. In one world, the gold standard was the traditional two-parent family where the kids knew that mum and dad loved each other and they knew that both of them loved them. In the other world, the gold standard was an open society in which human diversity was respected and no-one was disadvantaged by being different.

Despite the fundamental issues that divided the people in that room, those two groups of people treated each other with courtesy and respect. In doing so, they did themselves great honour and further enriched the great and enduring Australian democracy that we are here to serve. The arguments that were put forward by both sides were of great and enduring interest. I commend the report to honourable members. I had the privilege of chairing that committee. I thank the honourable members who served on the committee, as well as the staff of the committee who were prepared to go the extra mile, or perhaps several extra miles, in order to ensure that this matter was dealt with in the way that it has been. I thank them all.

As for the arguments that were put before us, the argument that I found most compelling was put by the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt, who was speaking in his capacity as chair of the Anglican Social Responsibilities Committee. In the evidence that he gave to our committee, he spoke of the stories that hospital chaplains have told him and that he has personal experience of. He spoke about people lying in intensive care units. If a person's life partner does not happen to be approved of by their next of kin, their life partner can be excluded from the ICU.

He told a very poignant story of two men whom he called Shane and James. Shane had a brain tumour and collapsed at work. He was taken to hospital. James was called to the ICU to see Shane, but he was prevented from entering by Shane's mother. Shane died without seeing his partner. I think compassion dictates that we have some regard to those circumstances. It is in the extremities of life that the benefits of this piece of legislation will be most telling. It will benefit people in intensive care units, people who find themselves on the other side of the world with no capacity to have a decision made on their behalf and people for whom a decision has to be made about unusual lifesaving therapy. It is in such circumstances that these legal rights will become most poignant.

The strongest argument on the other side of the case was advanced by a number of Christian churches and family orientated groups. It went something like this: the best circumstances in which a child can be raised are where there is a mum and dad who are in love and who love their children; anything less than that is not acceptable and, therefore, society should not endorse anything less than that. The argument is intuitively plausible. Despite competing research, it would appeal to the commonsense of most people. When that argument was put to us, I asked that if a child does not have the fortune to be living in a family such as that, 'is the condition of the child better if the parents are in a civil union or if they are not in a civil union?' The witness answered—

That is a very good question. I do not know whether the social science researchers have explored that. All we know for a fact is that in a range of outcomes the best social science research in the world shows that children do best when they have their two biological parents married to each other as opposed to any other form of family set-up.

The member for Brisbane Central asked what happens if that is not the case. I said—

The government and the parliament have to address a circumstance in which large numbers of children are not in such families. So the question that is of some interest is: is the condition of a child who is not in such a family better if the parents are in a civil union or if they are not?

I invite every honourable member to ask themselves that question, because actually it is a no-brainer. A child in those circumstances is likely to be better off if the parents are in a civil union, whether those parents happen to be heterosexual or homosexual. Rather than simply hanging together, if the parents are bonded in that way, in all sorts of circumstances that are really not hard to imagine, the children are likely to be better off. If this is about the children, I would suggest that this be our touchstone. What about those children—the very real children—who live in our electorates and who would now be better off if their parents had the capacity to enter into a civil union? We cannot sacrifice the interests of those real children because we have some vision of a better world where everybody lives in a two-parent family with a married father and mother and everybody loves one another. We have to govern the world in which we actually live. The world in which we actually live contains children for whom we are responsible. For the interests of those children, I urge honourable members to support the bill.

 **Ms MALE** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (8.07 pm): This evening I stand here excited at the prospect of speaking to an important private member's bill that deals with ending the socially constructed discrimination against same-sex couples who wish to have equal legitimacy for their relationships. I have attended a commitment ceremony for a same-sex couple and it was lovely. It was held in a beautiful setting with supportive family and friends and meaningful vows, but with no recognition by the wider community. In fact, someone celebrating an 18th birthday party gets more recognition. This bill provides the meaning, the certainty and the legal protection for those who want it. Providing this opportunity for same-sex couples does not mean they have to take up the option. A number of my friends have said they do not want to utilise it, but they love the fact that they could if they wanted to. They love it that they are finally going to be recognised in the same way as a heterosexual couple.

What is the price for this equality? If we believe the members opposite, particularly the members for Kawana and Surfers Paradise, this is not an important issue for people. I can tell the House that for those people who are discriminated against and cannot recognise their relationship, it is an important issue. The members for Kawana and Surfers Paradise, and indeed the entire LNP drones, have squibbed it. They have been forced to come in and vote against their own beliefs in some cases. They do not even have the intestinal fortitude to stand up and talk about the issue. It is an absolute disgrace and an embarrassment. Today we see this pathetic LNP opposition whose members are unwilling to voice their own opinions on a conscience vote, but are hiding behind their own collective homophobia. It's okay to watch the *Ellen DeGeneres Show* and laugh at the entertainment, but heaven forbid to actually support her right to have her relationship with her partner legally recognised. Hypocrites! What about all the gay and lesbian Queenslanders? What about them? You do not grow out of homosexuality. It is not a phase. It is not a defect of the mind. It is the essence of who you are. It is the essence of who you love.

Times are changing all across the world and in Australia. If I had been born in 1866 instead of 1966 I would not be able to go out by myself, I would not be able to work outside of the home, I would not be able to vote, I would not be a member of parliament and I would not be allowed to be known by my maiden name, as I am, instead of my husband's name. So many other restrictions would apply. Times change; societies change. We as legislators need to ensure that our laws change to reflect that.

I was privileged to be a member of the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee that was charged with the responsibility of conducting consultation on this bill which led to almost 6,000 submissions, numerous briefings and a full day of public hearings. This has certainly been the most open and accountable review of legislation I have seen in my 11 years in this place. My one disappointment is that a lot of people obviously chose not to read the actual legislation and wanted to talk about irrelevant and totally extraneous issues.

To put it on the record, this bill has nothing to do with same-sex marriage. This bill has nothing to do with the federal ALP conference. This bill has nothing to do with procreation. This bill has nothing to do with anal sex. That is what a large number of submissions talked about. I am actually surprised that no-one suggested we remove the ability to access no-fault divorce proceedings and force couples to stay together forever and ever, regardless of how awful or toxic their relationship may have become.

This bill has as its main objective to provide for the legal recognition of the relationships of couples, regardless of gender, by registration of their relationships to be known as civil partnerships. This is a bill about decency, about removing discrimination and about allowing Queenslanders to stand proudly in our community and announce their love and commitment to everyone. It provides a legal mechanism for this commitment to be recognised which will put an end to the discrimination that couples sometimes face in their personal and professional lives.

I understand that there are people in our community who feel deeply about their particular religious beliefs and have a genuine concern about the community. I would say to them that our society will not be any worse for this legislation. In fact, it will enhance our society and recognise the importance of strong, stable, loving relationships between couples, regardless of their gender. As I look around the House tonight I would encourage everyone to think about these important issues and support the bill.

**Hon. KL STRUTHERS** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (8.12 pm): At the heart of this debate are men and women who love each other. At the heart of this debate are brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers and grandparents who want their children and loved ones to be respected and given the dignity afforded to all of us. Fundamentally, this bill is about doing the right thing.

I thank members of the gay community who are in the gallery tonight, members who attended the rally today, members of the communities who contributed to the committee hearings on this issue for their many years of advocacy and trying to advance the rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities right across Queensland. I thank them and welcome them into the gallery tonight.

They are not the only gays in the villages. They are all around the state—in the villages of Kawana, Longreach and all around Queensland. Some people might not like it, but guess what? There are tens of thousands of them—maybe hundreds of thousands. Who knows? They are there. LNP members are sitting over there denying tens of thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands, of Queenslanders decency. They are denying them fundamental human rights.

Did the member for Kawana, the man who puts his hand up to be the future Attorney-General—oh, my goodness me—say the word ‘gay’? Did he say the words ‘same-sex’? Did he say any of those words? He would absolutely choke on them. He did not even say ‘human rights’. He could not even say ‘equality’. They are not in his vocabulary and he wants to be the Attorney-General.

I want to deal with a few myths tonight. Let me go through them. Myth 1 is that this bill allows gay people to get married. It clearly is not the case, although I am a big supporter of marriage equality. The bill is not about marriage; it is about legal recognition of heterosexual and same-sex relationships.

Myth 2 is that this bill is not needed because there is no discrimination against the LGBTI community. Mr Newman and the LNP would have us believe that there are no areas of discrimination that the LGBTI community across the state experience. Let us hear the stories of some people. Jodie Hales from Rockhampton told the story of how she was denied the opportunity to be with her loved one in her time of need. She said—

I have an incident that occurred a year and a half ago with the Rockhampton hospital. My same sex partner (of 5 years now, at the time 3 and a half) had ended in hospital requiring immediate surgery. Although we have both listed each other as next of kin, I was still not allowed any information because I wasn't considered a family member.

That is the sort of discrimination that many people experience around the state, and the future Attorney-General does not want to fix that.

I received an email today in support of the bill from a man I met briefly at a flood recovery event earlier in the year. He said—

In the 1980s, I was considered by a former government to be a “deviant” and someone less than human, someone to be admonished, held in contempt and if necessary jailed simply for being the person I naturally am.

That was under the former conservative government. That is the sort of view that still fills the heads of those opposite. People will not be treated with dignity under a Campbell Newman government. They will not be treated with fairness.

Myth 3—this is a real beauty this one; we know this one—is that gays can grow out of it. The member who said that is sitting in this House, and she does not even have the courage to stand up and defend that position. She does not even have the guts to do a ‘please explain’ to the public of Queensland.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Honourable minister, there is a better way of expressing yourself than saying that.

**Ms STRUTHERS:** I invite the member to speak tonight and please explain herself.

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, it is the phrase ‘does not have the guts’. I think there is a better way to say that.

**Ms STRUTHERS:** She does not have the courage, the spine.

**Mr SPEAKER:** That is a better way to say it.

**Ms STRUTHERS:** I would ask her to think about Hayley Suskia, who wrote—

My parents have been together for 20 years. We are a little family, consisting of just three and we are exceptionally close ...

My family is relatively conventional: We have terribly embarrassing in-jokes, a Sunday night roast each week and constantly argue about leaving dishes in the sink.

Sounds pretty normal to me. She continues—

But unlike the majority of families, my parents are two women.

It's ridiculous to me that after more than two decades together, my parents relationship is still not recognised as equal in the eyes of the law.

It will not be under the LNP. Telling LGBT people to grow out of their love just fuels intolerance and it fuels hatred. As elected leaders we must take responsibility for the impact our words have on others. Do members know what that impact is? The sorts of comments the member for Maroochydhore makes encourage people into self-hatred. They encourage people into self-harm. That is totally irresponsible.

Myth 4 is that Queenslanders do not want the bill to pass and do not want marriage equality, that they do not want civil unions. Polling is very strongly in favour of civil unions and very strongly in favour of marriage equality. The vast majority of Queenslanders are now supporting this. In fact, the strongest base of support is young people.

We have to get out of our comfort zones sometimes and think about the future, not the past. That mob over there are stuck in the past. What do young people want for their future? They do not have the biases and the ignorances that many of the people on the other side of the House have. They want a bright future. They want people to feel welcome. They want people to feel respected. Young people are actually pretty good people. They have worked it out. They do not have a problem with it. Guess what? That has become my favourite saying. Young people vote, and they will be voting for the future. They will not be wanting to go back to the past.

Myth 5 is that the bill destroys the sanctity of marriage. This one is a ripper, too. It is not civil unions or marriage equality that will destroy the sanctity of marriage. What destroys and undermines the sanctity of marriage? It is not rocket science. Bad marriages undermine the sanctity of marriage. Violent marriages undermine the sanctity of marriage. Forced marriages undermine the sanctity of marriage. Marriages in which children or women are abused undermine the sanctity of marriage. That is what undermines the sanctity of marriage and those opposite want to hold it together at all costs. Kids who witness abuse should not be in those sorts of relationships. That is the sort of thing that undermines marriage. Most heterosexual people and most gay people actually care for each other and will look after each other. They deserve the same rights as every other person and every other family.

The other myth—these are all rippers—is that same-sex relationships do not last long. That is the kind of view these people on the other side of the chamber hold. The LNP might not want them to even get started but, in fact, they do last. Dianne is 63 years old and lives in Cleveland. The member for Cleveland will have to be on the lookout for her! She is proud, and she is not the ‘only gay in the village’ in Cleveland, either. Dianne is 63 years old. She is proud to be sharing her life journey with partner, Jane, who says, ‘She loves me as much as I love her.’ Pretty normal, is it not? In a submission to the Marriage Equality Matters: My Story website, Dianne stated—

Jane and I want to get married in our own country surrounded by our own friends and family. We are both nurses and have spent our working lives looking after people like you. We are the same as you and we should have Equal Marriage Rights.

There is also Greg and Glen who have been together since 1986. Greg said—

25 years ago it was a commonly held belief that same sex couples didn't last. Back then we simply agreed that we'd stay together as long as we were both enjoying it. Well we're both still enjoying it.

So that has been a long-lasting relationship and there are many thousands more around Queensland. LGBTI couples are like any other: they want to celebrate and formalise their commitment to each other through a civil union or maybe even one day a marriage.

Myth 7 is that the LNP cares about fairness and equality. Its members are flat out saying the words, and we saw that from their one and only speaker, the B team of the debating team—

*(Time expired)*

 **Mr McLINDON** (Beaudesert—KAP) (8.22 pm): I believe marriage is between a man and a woman.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (8.23 pm): I rise to speak to this bill and acknowledge that it is an emotional issue and it is an emotive issue. We should not lose track of the fact that the bill was introduced, unusually, as a private member's bill by the Deputy Premier no less. It was introduced on 25 October and the committee was required to report on 21 November. It has been a very short consultation, particularly when it is recognised that there were 6,000 submissions. We would not be debating this bill tonight without the suspension of standing orders. Having said that, in terms of process I believe that is important. Indeed, there is a private member's bill that has been sitting on the table since 8 September and it will not be dealt with before Christmas, that is for sure. So this is certainly out of the ordinary.

I received responses from a number of people in my electorate. Overwhelmingly, the responses were against the bill, but there are a few letters that I wish to place on the record, or at least parts of them. A person named Jamie says—

Secondly, I want to personally write to you indicating my in-principle support for the same-sex civil union bill introduced by Andrew Fraser today. Being a young gay man, to affiliate with a group, I feel that this would be a positive step towards recognising not only my relationship with my partner in a proactive way but also for the many other gay people in our electorate. Yeah, there are quite a few of us who live private lives. Recognising a same-sex relationship in a structured and legal way is going to have positive repercussions. Spending virtually my whole life in an educational setting and also working in one, I have seen firsthand the vilification that can occur between students about sexual orientation.

That was from a man who is a very nice person to deal with and wanted his point of view on the record. Another, Nerilyn, says—

I am writing to you as a mother to convey the deep anger I feel that my son does not have the same rights under Australian law as do the sons of other women who live in this electorate. This is a serious breach of human rights and it is high time that something was done about it. I did not choose to have a gay son and he certainly did not choose to be gay. Who would willingly choose discrimination, ridicule, prejudice and abuse to be part of their daily existence simply for being exactly the fine, decent young man they were meant to be? My son deserves the right to choose a life partner, to marry and to have a family just as all other adult human beings do. How dare politicians, for whatever reasons, whether through their choice of a particular belief system, through ignorance, bigotry or stupidity, be allowed to continue to deny my son his full rights as an Australian citizen. Discrimination against my son is discrimination against my entire family. It denies us the right to have the same choices and celebrations for all our children that families who produce only heterosexual children get to have. What a ridiculous situation.

Another man, Brian, who was not willing to put his thoughts on paper was very angry. He said that if I did not support this legislation it meant that I certainly could not associate with anyone who was a gay or a lesbian person. To do so would be hypocritical. He also told me that I was old-fashioned. The fact is that we associate with, eat with and spend time with people who hold different points of view on a regular basis. If we only spoke to people who held 100 per cent the same view, we would lead a very narrow life. Perhaps I am old-fashioned. However, I do and will define my core values and I will defend those values.

There were a lot of letters against the legislation, many of them just said, 'I want you to know that I want you to vote against it.' But there are several who said the likes of this—

I wish my voice to be heard regarding the civil union civil partnership bill. I would like to register my opposition to the civil union civil partnership bill. I would like it recorded, given the personal nature of this matter, that I support the matter being put to the people in a referendum so that the people of Queensland are fully heard and not just a very limited few. I would like to request that you support the definition of marriage as defined in the Marriage Act 1961 in all forums. In addition, given the lack of confidence in parliament's current decision making, I would like to also register my support for an urgent referendum for the reinstatement of the upper house, the people's house, to better reflect the people's view.

That quote was from a lady called Rebecca. There was another lady who wrote—

There is an important distinction between homosexual persons and a militant lobby for same-sex marriage. There is no evidence that the majority of the former desires such legislation and the latter group includes many activists who are not homosexuals. A push for SSM is based on fallacious claims. The lobby evades logical debate and, instead, seeks to silence and vilify citizens who defend authentic marriage between one man and a woman. False and defamatory accusations of hatred, bigotry and the like are levelled against anyone who seeks to protect an authentic right of every child to a mother and a father.

I have received quite a number of letters, but they say mostly the same, that they support the status of marriage as it currently stands. Whilst we are not dealing with the Marriage Act, we are definitely dealing with that relationship.

The Premier talked about the unanimous support of this bill at an ALP conference and the question was asked, I think as an interjection from the LNP members, 'Then why is it a private member's bill?' I think that is a reasonable question to ask.

**Ms Bligh:** As if you would vote for it if it was a government bill. The hypocrisy is breathtaking.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** No, it is not that we would support it if it was a government bill—

**Ms Bligh:** What does it matter to you? If it is right, support it.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** I am saying that if it was ALP policy platform, then why isn't it a government bill as opposed to a private member's bill?

**Ms Bligh:** If it is right, support it.

**Mr Lucas:** Does it matter?

**Ms Bligh:** It would make no difference whatsoever.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** In my case, no, it would not have, but I am raising the hypocrisy of the arguments used against people who hold a different view.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable Premier will cease interjecting.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** The Premier also claimed that it was the religious right who was opposing this bill. So it seems that people who have an absolute value set are ridiculed for holding different views by members who claim that this debate is about equality. There is no equality there.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to vilify anyone. I do not want to ridicule anyone. There are many gay men and lesbian women in my electorate who are people of great worth. This is not about equality. This is about an issue of morality and values. This debate is not about disrespecting people who hold a different view or who are in a different relationship. It is about respecting faith and core values—those values that are shared by many in my electorate. I do not support the bill.

**Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (8.31 pm): I believe very strongly in equality for people—all people, including those in same-sex relationships. Like every member of this House, I have received many letters and emails, both for and against the bill. I thank those who took the time to share their thoughts with me. I have carefully considered all of them and deeply searched my conscience.

I consider myself to be a fairly ordinary person, maybe even old-fashioned. I am a practising Catholic and, I think, a good Christian. I have been married to Robert for 43 years. We had two sons and have two grandsons. We have experienced great joy and deep sadness over those years, but we have a partnership that has lasted, based on love and commitment. Why would I deny any couple the opportunity to have similar experiences just because they are gay? Love and commitment comes in many forms. I would argue that same-sex couples have the same desires and wishes as heterosexual couples. Friends of ours, Sue and Helen, to recognise their 20-year relationship held a commitment ceremony. It had no less significance than a traditional ceremony between a man and a woman but it did not give them the legal recognition they deserve.

I would, however, like to draw to the attention of the House a group of people who are intrinsic to this issue and yet not often discussed. Last week, it was reported that a little girl wrote to the Prime Minister and asked her to change the law so that her two mums could be married. That little girl made me think about something which is not often discussed in the context of the recognition of same-sex relationships. There is a group of people who are perhaps the most impacted by the recognition, or lack of recognition, of same-sex relationships—they are the children of those relationships. No-one has a more vested interest in any relationship than the children, and yet how often do we hear their rights or their protection discussed?

Gay people do have children. That is a fact. Those children have rights, too. They are entitled to the stability which comes from being raised in a registered and recognised legal relationship. There is no doubt there are those who would argue that gay people should not have children. Many of us here are parents and we know well that there is no power that will stop people who want children from having them. People will find a way. The desire to be a parent is a primeval instinct which will drive people to overcome whatever obstacles are in their way. So, like it or not—and speaking for myself, I like it—there are a lot of gay parents and consequently a lot of children whose parents are gay.

As this debate continues in Queensland and across Australia, as it undoubtedly will, we should not forget that group of people who do not have a voice—kids whose parents are gay. I believe they should have access to the same rights as children of heterosexual couples to have their parents joined in a legally recognised and socially sanctioned relationship. Ensuring equality is one of the responsibilities of government, and I see it as my obligation to the people of Queensland, as well as to my own sense of justice and fairness, to support this bill.

I commend the Deputy Premier, Andrew Fraser, and the Premier, Anna Bligh, for their moral courage and sense of justice in bringing this bill to the parliament. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (8.34 pm): This bill has been the subject of considerable communications to my office from constituents of mine as well as from those outside the electorate. The communications have urged me to vote yes or no in roughly the same proportion. The tone of them has varied markedly. Most were respectful, some were rude and some were threatening. Clearly, some were from reasonable persons on both sides but some were from bigots. There is nothing terribly surprising there bearing in mind the subject matter.

No matter from whom or what their content, I have read them and taken them into account, as I have the content of the bill. Some things need to be stated as fact, however. Firstly, the bill is not about marriage nor does it affect marriage. A marriage constitutionally can only be the subject of legislation federally. Therefore, it is not about same-sex marriage. The bill is not about children. Their adoption and matters relating to children have already been dealt with by this parliament before. It is not about property rights for same-sex couples. That has already been the matter of legislation in this place some considerable time ago. In my view, with it not being about marriage, children or property, it comes down to a matter primarily of human rights—of one section of the community being able to enjoy the same set of rights as others. This bill is not restricted for the benefit of only same-sex partners; it can equally apply to heterosexual couples—that is, couples who would otherwise be living in what we regard as a de facto relationship.

I believe the argument in favour of equality of rights is superior to whatever arguments have been used or put up against it. Most of the latter, if not all, relate to a religious prohibition. For my part, I believe that where the rights of others are unaffected, then the state should not legislate as to who can or should not cohabit or enter into a relationship. That is not to say that religious denominations and their followers cannot declare what is right or wrong for their followers. That is a matter for individual choice. It should not in the 21st century, with the benefits of the lessons of 500 years of religious differences including 100 years war, be the subject of civil or state concern.

Many of those who have contacted me and indicated their displeasure at my likely position are my co-religious fellow Catholics. It has been of interest to me and I suggest to them to have come across material of recent origin as follows. I quote Father Frank Brennan, a renowned Jesuit and lawyer as follows—

There are homosexual persons who enter into loving, faithful and committed relationships. These persons should be able to live in society free from discrimination, without state interference and with state support and approval. They should enjoy the same state protection as de facto couples enjoy under existing state and territory laws.

Further, a statement from the Catholic bishops of England and Wales is as follows—

The Bishops of England and Wales believe civil partnerships successfully provide a legal protection for those in same-sex relationships, according to the Archbishop of Westminster, writes Christopher Lamb. 'We would want to emphasise that civil partnerships actually provide a structure in which people of the same sex who want a lifelong relationship and a lifelong partnership can find their place and protection and legal provision,' Archbishop Vincent Nichols said at a press conference after the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales' meeting last week.

His comments marked the clearest support that a Catholic bishop has given in favour of civil unions. Explaining the church's position on gay marriage, Archbishop Nichols said—

As a Church we are very committed to the notion of equality so that people are treated the same across all the activities of life. The Church holds great store by the value of commitment in relationships and undertakings that people give. Stability in society depends upon the reliability of commitments that people give. That might be in offering to do a job but especially in their relationships with one another. Equality and commitment are both very important and we fully support them.

I have pleasure in supporting the bill.

 **Mr CHOI** (Capalaba—ALP) (8.40 pm): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this very important legislation. At the outset, I would like to thank the Premier for allowing a conscience vote on this matter. I sincerely mean that. I want to acknowledge this because her decision on this matter alone provides a clear contrast between her leadership and that of the opposition leader.

Firstly, the Premier has immense respect for members of her own team. She values their opinions, their ideas and their convictions. As politicians, we are highly opinionated people—that is who we are. It is not possible to have all of us agree on an issue that is complex and that has far-reaching consequences, but out of respect for her colleagues and the nature of this bill she granted a conscience vote to her team.

Contrast this to the bullyboy antics of the LNP. They have absolutely no respect for privacy by paying for information and dirt on their opponents—information of a personal nature which has absolutely nothing to do with the discharge of their duty as an opposition. But that is not all. So big is their culture of threats and bullying that the LNP in fact engages in intimidation of their own candidates. I have had the honour to serve two brilliant Premiers in my time—the Hon. Peter Beattie and the Hon. Anna Bligh. In my last 10 years as a member of this House, not once under any circumstances have I been spoken harshly to, shouted at or put down in any way. Of course, at times we have differences of opinion but the Premier, the member for South Brisbane, has always been courteous, polite and willing to listen to my point of view.

Secondly, the Premier is not afraid to stand up for what she believes in. Again, she firmly believes that this bill before the House is the right thing to do and she is prepared to stand up and be counted. Contrast that to the leader of the LNP who has declared that he is supportive of same-sex marriage, let alone civil unions, but he would not legislate for it. Not only would he not support legislation that he said he believes in; he in fact forbids his MPs to have any personal opinion on it. There is nothing more damning than a person who claims to take a leadership position yet will not stand by his own convictions. There is nothing more disappointing than to realise that the alternative Premier of this state does not have the ticker to argue with the faceless, unelected executives of the LNP. There is nothing more uncomplimentary than a man who would compromise his own conscience for political expediency.

Many may not agree with my conscience, but at least I, along with others on this side of the House, am allowed to have one. We have been given the respect and courtesy to vote according to our own conscience without fear or favour. This bill is one of those pieces of legislation which generates a lot of sentiment in those for or against it. In expressing my opinion I want to be considerate and acknowledge that there are a lot of feelings and emotions involved in an issue of this nature. I also want to say that it may not be possible to state some of my reasons without causing some discomfort. I can only assure the House and those who are listening that I have no intention to cause harm or hurt but that I must be honest with my own conscience, for without it I will be reduced to a walking carcass.

In the time available to me it is not possible to give a full account of all the pros and cons of this bill, but I will address this bill from three perspectives. Firstly, this bill, as Queensland legislation, is only applicable to Queenslanders when they are living in Queensland. I believe that how we relate to each other in the eyes of the law should be consistent, irrespective of where you live in this country. That is why, as a Federation, the states surrendered the regulation of relationships of this nature to the Commonwealth, and rightly so. In my view, it is not practical to have the legal status of two persons changed when they cross state borders. It has unintended consequences that perhaps only future court battles will reveal. For those who believe in marriage equity, this is a very weak second prize. On the surface it may be better than nothing, but only time will tell. The real challenge is with the Commonwealth parliament, and that is where this argument should be held.

Secondly, some argue that this bill should not be subject to a conscience vote as the ability to love and the expression of that love is a human right—that it is an equality issue and, besides, how can love be wrong? I agree that legislators—indeed, any government—have no place in regulating love and, for that matter, any human emotion. People should be free to love and to express their love. Besides, no-one can successfully regulate human emotion, but that is not the purpose of this bill—or the Marriage Act, for that matter.

Legislators should not and would not be able to regulate human emotion, be it love, anger, envy et cetera. What law-makers do is regulate the consequences of emotions. Yes, I can be angry about the driver who cut me off, but legislators put in place laws against me giving him a whack with a steel bar, irrespective of how justified my anger is. Yes, I can be envious about my neighbour's television, but legislators ensure I am not free at will to take that television for my own purpose without consent. The consequence of my emotion is controlled and regulated.

Yes, I can love, but human society for thousands and thousands of years has put boundaries around the expression of some love for that society at that time—for example, restricting the consequence and recognition of love for just two persons, even though it is possible for more to be in love together. One can think of many more examples, and all these boundaries have one thing in common: they are all moral considerations. And that is why I agree that the Premier and the Prime Minister are right for granting a conscience vote on this matter, as they are in essence moral considerations and not about regulating love.

Perhaps our society's collective conscience on this issue has changed. I accept that. But the collective conscience of a society is the sum of all the individual consciences where the sum is not a value greater than the individual. I need to state that again: the collective conscience of a specific society is the sum of all the consciences of every individual where the sum is not a value greater than that of the individual. What that means is that, on a moral consideration, every individual member of a society must be allowed to have their own conscience on a specific issue, even if the majority of his peers reached a different conclusion. More importantly, the individual conscience must be respected whether or not it is in agreement with the majority.

Lastly, our individual conscience is subject to many influences—our family, our upbringing, our culture, our political conviction, our religious belief, if any, and our experience. These factors have a major bearing on who we are and it moulds our belief and value system. It is known that Asians tend to be a lot more conservative in certain areas. Does it mean that my upbringing, which is part of who I am, should be discarded?

Since I have been elected I have voted each and every time in favour of changing the laws to give same-sex people the same rights as heterosexual people in relation to taxes, property law and inheritance, and I will continue to do so. This is by far the hardest legislation over the past 10 years that I have had to work on. I have struggled and I have argued with myself over and over, but in the end I could not support this bill. My conscience does not allow me to go further. I wanted to, but I could not. To those who have been disappointed and hurt by my decision, I am sorry. To those who have stood by and supported me, thank you. I must be true to my own conscience because I have to live with me.

 **Mr FOLEY** (Maryborough—Ind) (8.50 pm): I rise to participate in this debate. Let me say at the outset that I agree with the member for Capalaba that this is by far the most difficult piece of legislation that I have had to think through and vote on. It has not at all been an easy decision. I was also a member of the committee that was tasked with looking at this legislation in detail. I was very interested to hear the submissions from both sides of the argument during the hearing day that the committee held. We have had full and free discussion. I think one of the hallmarks of a mature society is a society where people can fundamentally disagree with someone without that disagreement turning into hatred or dislike. I will talk about that issue more in a moment, but I have had many discussions with members of parliament in this chamber who hold different views from me about these very important issues, yet those discussions have been frank and full without any bitterness or anger.

I have heard arguments along the lines that a child is better off with a stable, same-sex parenting family who may be professionals, who have good incomes, who love their children and who are very diligent in raising them. I have heard arguments that that is better than to have a child raised in an abusive, alcoholic, heterosexual household. I absolutely agree with that. But I would say that we are not comparing apples with apples, because I believe that the ultimate is that a child would be raised in a loving, committed relationship with responsible parents and I do believe that men and women bring different things to the table in terms of parenting. If children were given a completely unfettered choice, in most cases I would think they would like to have a mum and a dad rather than same-sex parents. In saying that I mean no disrespect to people.

**Ms Grace:** You can't choose your family

**Mr FOLEY:** No, you cannot pick your family. The member is right. The thin end of the wedge is a term that has been banded around a lot in this debate. When we look at how long marriage and those committed relationships between men and women have been around, we see that they have existed for as long as society itself has existed. I have a number of gay friends who I see regularly—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maryborough has the call. I would ask the House to extend the courtesy to him.

**Mr FOLEY:** I say again that I have a number of gay friends who we meet and socialise with regularly. Despite the protestation of members opposite who seek to tell me who my friends are and who they are not and who cannot believe that I have friends, I am sorry to disappoint them but I do. Two of

our lifelong friends are a young lesbian couple who have just had a baby. We visited them in hospital and wished them well with their baby. We also have friends who are an older couple who have been in a same-sex relationship for a long time. Again, we have enjoyed a great friendship with them—as recently as last weekend.

The first time I met one of my best friends who comes to visit me regularly in parliament was in a former life when I was a full-time piano bar singer. He tried to pick me up. He would be one of the gayest people I have ever met in my life. I will never forget the first time he came in. He had the handbag, the lipstick and everything going on—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my right will cease interjecting and cease interrupting. The honourable member is expressing his point of view. He is entitled to do that. I would ask you to show him the same courtesy that you show to people who agree with your opinion.

**Mr FOLEY:** This particular gentleman has been a friend of mine for over 30 years. He has since changed his mind in terms of relationships and has gone on to marry his wife and they have four children. I want to tell members that he was a very good friend of mine when he was gay and now that he is straight he has also continued to be a very good friend of mine.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr FOLEY:** Where do you stop when you change the time-honoured principles of relationships? I find it rather amusing that members are laughing at the fact that I have gay friends. It is almost like, 'But hang on, if you don't support these relationships the inference is that you must hate these people.' I find that a particularly disturbing and, let me say, a very childish response from members who are listening.

**Ms Grace:** You're verballing. It's not true.

**Mr FOLEY:** I am not verballing. I am telling members my opinion. Where do you stop when you change the time-honoured principle of the way relationships have always been? How do we then say polygamy is wrong when someone has more than one wife? How do we then say polyandry—where a woman chooses to have more than one husband—is not an appropriate relationship? How do we say polyamory—where there are multiple relationships—is wrong? There has been lobbying from all sides on the issue. I must admit that I had to reach for a dictionary when some of these terms were presented to me during the hearing. I am quoting now from the web page of Polyamory Australia, which states that the poly community is diverse.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr FOLEY:** Members might be very well instructed to listen to this. The web page states—

We could be rural, inner-city urban or suburban, straight or gay, bi or asexual, cis- or trans-gendered. We could be agnostic, atheist, Christian, wiccan, Buddhist, pagan or Mormon, to name but a few. We could be into polyfidelity, swinging, bdsm, polygamy, kink, feminism or plain vanilla sex on flannelette sheets. We could be dressed as daggy geeks, conservative business suits, or fetish fashionistas who sport a mean corset. Our common goal is that of ethical, multiple, intimate relationships and respect for our incredible, wonderful, stimulating diversity.

It is my contention that one of the dangers of this bill at law is that, once you start to move away from traditional marriage relationships, you set yourself adrift on a sea without an anchor and anything goes. We start to push the boundaries a little towards people having all sorts of totally strange ideas.

Let me say that there has been a lot of lobbying from both sides. One of the difficult jobs for the committee, in fact, was that the lobbying became so intense and so corporate that it was hard to know where we were. I had surveyed my electorate based on the representations received. Certainly, the majority of my electorate are not in favour of this bill and have made their views known. But I have also, like other members, received emails from people who are in favour of the bill, but by far the vast majority of those, I must say, were from outside my electorate.

This is a conscience decision, as the member for Capalaba has said. When I look at this argument I am very concerned that Christians are often portrayed as being hateful or spiteful towards gay people in particular. I just do not see that to be true in the Christians that I know. They have nothing but love and grace towards people regardless of their orientation. In some respects I believe that this has become an ipso facto referendum on whether Christianity is some sort of bigoted and uncaring religion. Yet it was interesting to see that not one single piece of correspondence was received by the committee from the Islamic point of view, the Buddhist point of view, the Sikh point of view or the Hindu point of view, and they are all societies that hold even stronger views in some cases than some aspects of the Christian church. As a matter of conscience I cannot support the legislation, but I do so with a struggle in my heart and I wish no ill feeling towards people who share a different point of view.

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (9.00 pm): I rise to speak to the Civil Partnerships Bill. I do not believe anyone in this House, in the gallery or in the wider community of Queensland, can take any joy in the passage of this bill in the manner in which it will be possibly passed tonight. The truth is that this bill was formulated and brought into this House and the rules of the House were changed to rush it through. I believe quite strongly that strings were pulled because we are going to an election next year. I believe that this bill will be divisive to our communities.

It has always been my intention and belief in the whole time that I have been in this parliament that a government should bring the people of the state together, to inform them, to educate them and to guide them to understand the decisions that a government makes or a bill that is put forward. We reformed this parliament, supposedly, to ensure that the people of Queensland got a fair period of time to have a say on what legislation comes before the House. The government has done the minimum it had to do in bringing this bill to the House, but it did not educate people or explain the bill in its entirety to the people. It did not give them time to digest it and to understand exactly what this bill was going to do. There were 6,000 submissions and I think that shows quite clearly what people think about this particular issue. It is an issue that does ignite the community. It does polarise the community. There are basically three types of submissions: they can be for, they can be against and they can be from people who do not care either way. Regardless of how this bill came into the House, and I believe it was rushed, I believe too many rules were bent. I will walk from here to Kingaroy if another private member's bill comes up this fast in my lifetime. I will even go in a wheelchair if I cannot walk. But regardless of how this bill came into the House it is a bill before the House and it must be dealt with and a vote cast on it tonight.

I, too, received lots of letters on this bill. I would like to read maybe one or two. The first one I will refer to is from Kat. We all must have received this one. It states—

I am a young queer person

Straightaway I find that sad. As far as I am concerned, she or he is a young person—I am not sure if it is a male or a female. For anyone to refer to themselves as queer I think is sad, because none of us are queer; we are all just human beings. It continues—

who is sick of the homophobia people like you reinforce and perpetuate.

I do not believe that I reinforce homophobia. I do not give a damn—sorry, Mr Speaker, I apologise. I do not care. If people come to my house or I meet them I do not ask, 'What is your religion?' If they come to my house I do not ask them, 'What is your sexuality?' I do not ask, 'What is your political belief?' I meet people, I like them or dislike them. I do not like everyone in the world. I do not dislike a lot of people, either. In fact, I cannot think of too many that I do. I could probably name one or two that I dislike intensely, but there are not many people who I would actively offend. I do not care whether I like them or not, I would not actively offend them deliberately. It is wrong for anybody to say that somebody perpetuates something when they do not know that person. This is exactly what this person says: 'people are judging me, but they don't know me.' Well, to Kat, you do not know me and therefore I would ask you not to judge me as I will not judge you. Kat says—

I have had to put up with homophobia all my life, from people who know nothing about me, just simply hate me for being who I am and loving who I love. This includes being threatened in the street multiple times, called all sorts of derogatory terms, being denied access to services and venues etc.

If you have suffered like that I am sorry because I do not believe anybody should be treated in that way for any reason. Unfortunately you will not stop people who are very inconsiderate, who are probably more afraid. It says more about the person who does attack than the one who is being attacked. So that is pretty sad. The person here says they were threatened in the street multiple times. I can stand in this parliament and say that because of my role as a politician I have been threatened a number of times. In relation to derogatory terms, already tonight I have been called, if I do not vote for this bill, 'ignorant', 'coming from the dark ages', 'redneck', 'bigot', 'stupid' and in one email I have been called 'old and ugly'. Unfortunately I was born this way and so be it. I deal with what I deal with every single day. Where is the tolerance in that? Have I been denied access to services and venues? Well, yes, I have, because I am a politician. I find that a little bit distressing so I can understand how this person feels.

The member for Murrumba gave an example of a male couple in hospital. I find that absolutely appalling. I think that is extremely sad. In saying that, I accept that the homosexual community see this as a human rights issue. That is fine. That is true. I accept that. I also accept the fact that many people of a religious belief believe this is an issue about marriage. They believe it is a dilution of their belief that marriage is between a man and a woman. I also believe that they believe it endeavours to remove a basic tenet of their life and their beliefs. They also believe it condones homosexual activity. For all of those reasons they oppose the bill.

If we look at the bill it does not actually mention marriage. It does not mention children. What it endeavours to do is put another category under marriage and de facto, that of civil union. To the people outside these walls who oppose this bill, civil union is another term for marriage.

One woman wrote to me expressing what I thought was quite a reasonable view. She said that, having thought about it, she believes that the gay and lesbian community need some rights. She says a logical alternative to the Civil Partnerships Bill and an obviously cheaper, less discriminatory and more effective and efficient solution to the problem at hand would be a voluntary de facto registry. A de facto registry seeks primarily to allow voluntary registration of all de facto relationships. As such, a de facto registry meets and provides human rights to relationship recognition as asserted in committee report No. 7, even in the event of an urgent need to recognise such a relationship.

My point is this: if time had been taken, perhaps what was outlined in the article titled 'Same-sex debate one of division' by Ruth Limkin could have been avoided. She words it very clearly, stating—

... the rushed Civil Union Bills, which would mimic marriage for same-sex couples.

However, in the absence of considered and comprehensive public consultation; in the presence of abuse and aspersions being cast on those who do not approve civil unions; in the low levels of support by Australians for changing the Marriage Act; that's not really what they are being asked to vote on.

*(Time expired)*

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (9.10 pm): Tonight I proudly support the Civil Partnerships Bill. I support it because I believe it is the right thing to do. I grew up with the fundamental understanding that everyone in this world is equal, that no-one is more important than anyone else, that no-one is of greater or lesser value than anyone else. It is the reason I am a member of the Australian Labor Party. One of the reasons I wanted to become an elected representative is to help to defend the rights of anyone who is not treated in the same way as their neighbour, friend or colleague or who is not valued in the same way. I feel that that is what I am being asked to defend tonight.

Many people in our community take a dim view of politicians. I fear that some of that disenchantment is to do with the fact that people think politicians are insincere. Tonight is the chance for everyone in the House to show those people that, in fact, we do have a conscience, that we are willing to stand up and be counted on things that are important to us, that we do not have an eye on a vote and that we legislate on the basis of what we believe is the right and the best thing to do.

I am not talking about all the people who will stand in this House tonight and speak against this bill. Those people are willing to publicly take a stand on what they believe. I am talking about the people who are silent in this House tonight, who actually believe that they should be supporting the bill but who do not have the courage to say so. I am talking about the Campbell Newmans of this world who, on the one hand, want to appeal to the gay vote by saying that they support gay marriage but who, on the other hand, do not want to put off another block of votes by actually supporting the bill. Campbell Newman is tacking with him a whole lot of the people on that side of the House. However, you cannot hedge your bets on an issue like this; either you are for it or you are against it.

To love and be loved is surely one of the most precious of experiences. Fortunate are all who experience it. Love has nothing to do with core values and it has nothing to do with morality. It just is. If we did not pass this bill tonight, we would be saying that the love between same-sex partners is somehow of a lesser value than that of a heterosexual couple. We would be saying that heterosexual couples have the right to celebrate and validate their relationships in front of their friends and families but that same-sex partners do not. If I could hear someone on the other side of the House explain how that is okay to the brothers, sisters, friends, neighbours, mothers and fathers who are their constituents and who are gay, I would be astounded. I cannot believe that any such argument is available.

A number of people in my local area have taken the trouble to speak to me about this bill and I thank them for their efforts. To the people who told me that they will not vote for me if I support the bill: I am sorry, but I cannot make a decision about equality on the basis of whether you are going to vote for me. To the same-sex couples who have spoken to me about the bill: I am so sorry that you have had to listen to the many offensive comments, offered in the past few weeks in particular, labelling as a distraction an issue that is so hugely important to you.

I know that a number of members on this side have chosen not to speak tonight in the interests of getting this bill through, but they have been vocal in their own communities in support of the bill. I especially acknowledge the member for Chatsworth, who is my friend and neighbouring member of parliament and with whom I have been proud to speak out on the issue. I thank the Deputy Premier for introducing a bill that is fundamentally about equality and for giving us all the opportunity to take a stand on that. I thank the Premier for her outstanding leadership on the bill and on all matters of conscience. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (9.14 pm): First of all, I acknowledge the work that has been done by the community organisation PFLAG in helping to fight some of the misconceptions that have been spread, deliberately or perhaps unknowingly, about the bill. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays is a voluntary, longstanding and respected national organisation. For many years it has worked to combat the discrimination that still affects many Australians and that has repercussions for their partners, families and friends. In particular, I acknowledge the work of Shelley Argent, the national spokesperson for PFLAG. I have spoken about this bill with Shelley, who is here tonight in the gallery. I think we should acknowledge her.

**Government members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms JONES:** She is a constituent of mine in the Ashgrove electorate. I know how tirelessly she works for PFLAG and for those it seeks to help and support. Her work was recognised in the Australia Day honours in 2006, when she was awarded an Order of Australia medal for her community service by raising awareness of issues of acceptance, tolerance and equality for gay and lesbian Australians and supporting their families.

Tonight I am pleased to stand here and support the principles embodied in this bill. I do so because I share many of the views already outlined by some of the previous speakers. I know that some of my colleagues on this side of the House are just as sincere in their decision to vote against the bill. That is what a conscience vote is all about. So why has the LNP leader, Campbell Newman, from outside of this parliament, unilaterally denied every elected member of parliament sitting on the other side of the House their right to have a say? He has done so because he believes that there may just be sufficient opponents of the legislation to defeat this bill. And for what end? Just to say it is defeated! It is as simple as that. Campbell Newman is denying his own publicly expressed views and he is denying elected LNP members their voice, just so he can play politics with people's lives. He wants to defeat this bill, but he has not said whether he would repeal it if he actually did win office. There have been changes of government in a number of states that have enacted laws with elements very similar to the bill we are discussing here tonight, but has Barry O'Farrell of New South Wales or Ted Baillieu in Victoria repealed those acts? No.

Today it was interesting not to listen to the one member opposite who spoke to this bill but to note all of those opposite who did not bother to speak. They did not have the courage to speak their conscience here tonight. If they did, they would be on their feet sincerely speaking their minds one way or another on the bill and we as the people of Queensland would know what their conscience dictates. Instead, we see LNP members of parliament content to stifle their own rights just so their absentee, unelected leader, who sits outside of this parliament, can wind back the clock to his self-confessed favourite year in Queensland, 1986, as reported in the *Courier-Mail*.

In 1986 it was illegal to be a homosexual in Queensland. As the Deputy Premier said tonight, it took the election of a Wayne Goss Labor government in 1989 to legalise homosexuality. I note that a lot of the commentary from those on the other side of the House who have had the courage to speak tonight has mentioned that this bill has been rushed. Almost 22 years after we legalised homosexuality in Queensland, we are debating this bill tonight. I do not think that is rushed. The fact that none of the LNP members, apart from the shadow minister, had the courage to stand and speak tonight and the fact that they are acting under an unelected person outside of the parliament underlines how shallow Campbell Newman's tactics and leadership really are.

**An opposition member:** You're not playing politics with this, right? Let's not play politics with this issue.

**Ms JONES:** I take the interjection from the member opposite who is not in his chair. I am standing up talking to this bill because I believe in this bill.

**An opposition member:** Let's not play politics.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I think you have made your point. The honourable member for Ashgrove has the call.

**Ms JONES:** In conclusion, for Campbell Newman and those opposite who have let him and the LNP organisation—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Ashgrove has the call. Those on my left will cease interjecting.

**Ms JONES:**—ride roughshod over the rights of elected members of parliament is a matter of politics before principle. The LNP have demonstrated tonight that it will put politics before principle and politics before people.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before I call the member for Inala, I would like to recognise in the public gallery the former member for Inala. I call the member for Inala and Minister for Transport.

**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (9.20 pm): We live in a modern, vibrant, tolerant and accepting state. We are privileged to live in a society that is a world away from the dark days of the 1970s and 1980s when Queensland was, perhaps deservedly, viewed by the entire nation as the epicentre of the double standard—Australia's backwater. Every Queenslanders is grateful that the times have changed and, in relative terms, that change has come very, very quickly. But, while we have come a long way, in our rush to get there some have been left behind. And, although we pride ourselves on our evolution, while we take pride in our modern and tolerant and accepting society, the simple fact is that we live with a set of rules for one group of people and another set of rules for others.

Love knows no boundary. But the simple fact is that we impose boundaries, we continue to establish barriers for a large and important section of our society based on the gender and sexual preference. That—in the Queensland of 2011—beggars belief. Thousands of same-sex couples who love and are committed to one another want nothing more than to have their relationship formally recognised, not only by their families and their friends but by the law. They want and deserve the same rights as heterosexual couples. If people want to formalise their love for one another, why should we stand in their way? Who are we to tell same-sex couples they cannot have the same basic human rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples? That is why I rise to support the Civil Partnerships Bill.

This is a bill which aims to minimise discrimination and allow any two adults, regardless of their gender, to enter into a legally recognised relationship. It offers same-sex couples the opportunity to legally celebrate their relationships and in a fair and compassionate society—in an accepting society—that is important. A bill in this parliament cannot deliver the kind of marriage equality that is law in Canada, Spain, Sweden, South Africa, Argentina, Ireland, Portugal and in six states of America. But we can take this step, which legally is as far as the state can go towards recognising same-sex relationships—and that is a big step in the right direction.

We owe a debt of thanks to the thousands of Queenslanders who took the time and the care to make submissions in support of this landmark change to this parliament's Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee. Those voices have been heard, just as the voices of those who oppose this move have been heard. Everyone is entitled to a view.

One of the strongest arguments for making this change is the positive effect it will have on younger lesbian, gay and bisexual people. These are the people who can struggle to come to terms with their sexuality and the associated depression and isolation. By allowing all people in committed relationships to have the option of having their relationships recognised and celebrated, we reinforce the message that these are healthy and loving relationships. We reinforce acceptance. We celebrate our diversity and we celebrate tolerance. I am pleased to put my support for this change on the record and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (9.24 pm): I rise proudly tonight to support this bill. I do so after listening to all sides of the debate. I have had many emails, letters and phone calls from people who are not supporting the bill but mostly, I am proud to say, from people who are supporting the bill—many of them my constituents and many of them in the gallery tonight. I recognise members of the LGBT community in the gallery tonight.

I was lucky enough to be part of the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee's public hearings into the Civil Partnerships Bill. I want to start by quoting the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt, chair of the Social Responsibilities Committee of the Anglican Church. He stated—

One of the strengths of this bill is that it does not pretend to be interfering with marriage. It is not using any marriage-like terms. The way in which people register the partnerships is different to the marriage ceremony. I think it does a good job of keeping that distinction clear.

I agree with the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt.

In listening to all of the debate, I want to be honest here tonight because I think honesty is often the best policy. Let us be honest. Opposition to this bill is not about the rights of children—as some people submitted to the committee—to be born to a married man and woman. This bill will give the ability for non-married couples of opposite sex with children to enter into civil partnerships. If we take that argument, it has to be better to have that recognised than to not have the option of registering that relationship. So it is not about opposite sex people and the rights of children.

Let us be honest. Why would people be upset if this bill is mimicking marriage if they think marriage is so fantastic for society? It has to be better for couples to be able to register their relationship than to remain unregistered or have to prove a de facto relationship. It has nothing to do with the sanctity of marriage. Unlike me, who has been happily married for 26 years—and I recognise my husband in the gallery tonight—there are many people who have not respected marriage in the past. Many people divorce. Let us say that heterosexuals have not necessarily always abided by that very reverend sanctity of marriage. I believe that that is often a furphy.

People marry for all kinds of reasons not just because they want to have children. They marry for companionship. They marry for love. There are people who even marry on their deathbed. There are many reasons people marry. If you want to mimic it in this legislation, why would you be upset? It is not about discrimination because all this bill does is enable couples to register their relationship as married couples can. It only extends what is currently legal in this country, not what is illegal, such as polygamous relationships. This is a furphy of an argument. In fact, giving couples a choice to enter civil partnerships actually reduces discrimination.

When we strip away all of the other arguments about whether Queensland can or cannot legislate for civil partnerships or whether there was or was not enough time to consider this bill—and no-one was denied the right to be heard—and when we look at this honestly, what the opposition to this bill is all about is extending the rights for civil partnerships to members of the LGBT community or same-sex partners. Shame on those who do not support this bill simply because of that reason. I would hazard a guess that if this bill did not extend to members of the LGBT community there would be no opposition to it because the arguments being used against this bill make no sense.

There are all sorts of families in our community and, although many members of the public want to believe in certain community standards, that is not the reality. The reality is that this bill changes nothing that happens in society today. But it will allow equal rights to couples in our community who want

to enter a civil relationship. Members of the LGBT community have children. Members of the LGBT community are in relationships, and often long-term relationships. Members of the LGBT community love and commit just like everyone else. They are valued and respected members of our community. This bill is about equality and fairness and recognition. They are not second-class citizens but just as productive, honest and upstanding members of our community as are so-called straights. As Derek Cronin said at the public hearing—

Recognition is pro commitment. It encourages healthy relationships.

I agreed entirely when he said that at the public hearing on behalf of the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities. It is not the government's role to say whom we should love and commit to or whom we want to spend the rest of our lives with, but we should be making it equal for everyone who wants to demonstrate that civil partnership and give them the ability to do so, and I support that unequivocally.

The Queensland Council for Civil Liberties referred to article 7 which talks about all being equal before the law. I believe—and I was very distressed about this—that the member for Kawana went very close to misleading witnesses at the public hearing by misquoting article 16 of the United Nations. He stated—

I think the point I am trying to make is that, if you rely on article 7, how can you not rely on article 16, which talks about marriage between a man and a woman? I do not know if you can pick and choose articles.

That is very misleading because article 16, as I read verbatim into the transcript, says nothing of the sort, that it is about marriage between a man and a woman. I stress that it is very concerning for him to do that as a possible alternative Attorney-General in this state. Article 16 simply mentions that men and women of full age without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion have the right to marry and found a family. That is very different from misleading witnesses to believe that it is about a man and a woman.

**Mr Bleijie:** I think the civil libertarian society agree with me.

**Ms GRACE:** I would not say too much if I were the honourable member because I will take his interjections and I will put them on the record.

It is an honour to support this bill. This is about equality, fairness and recognition. This is about being a member of this parliament and standing up for what you believe in, and I believe that this is the right thing to do. It makes me proud to be a member of the ALP which 21 years ago decriminalised homosexuality. This is about joining the many states that also have, as recognised by Shelley Argent this afternoon, civil partnerships for same-sex couples. New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT have such civil partnerships recognition and, guess what, the sky has not fallen. I am a very proud member of the ALP. It is a great honour to speak to this bill tonight. I will support it. I commend the bill wholeheartedly to the House.

*An incident having occurred in the public gallery—*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Order in the public gallery! I will not tolerate that. I will not tolerate it. I will have you removed immediately. Before I call the member for Cook, I would like to recognise in the public gallery the former member for Stafford, Terry Sullivan.

 **Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (9.32 pm): I rise to support social justice, fairness, equity and to support the Civil Partnerships Bill. I want to congratulate the Deputy Premier on having the courage to introduce this bill. It takes courage to make change. It takes heart to step up and recognise that the time has come to recognise what is undeniably true: gay, lesbian, transgender and intersex people exist; they are humans; they are here and they should enjoy the same rights as heterosexual people. I do not understand why one group of people who enjoy a set of rights will not share those rights with those who do not. This bill will cost next to nothing and will bring so much joy to so many people. Why is it so hard for those opposite to enhance rights? How can it be wrong for two people to stand together in public and declare their love for each other? How can that be wrong? Surely what the world needs now is more people declaring love for each other and not having to hide their love away.

The Australian Labor Party is a broad church, and we are proud to welcome gay people into that church. I would have thought that the LNP would have been the same. Surely they have gay members in the LNP. Some of them may have sat in this House in the past. Some of them may sit in this House now or will in the future. How could they sit there and deny their own supporters the right to celebrate publicly their love? It is shameful.

Mr Speaker, you have ruled that it is unparliamentary to speculate why all members of the LNP except one have decided not to express their conscience on this matter, as the member for Capalaba has done so eloquently this evening. So I will not do so. The member for Cairns has also decided not to speak tonight, but she did ask me to put her support for the bill on the record, and I do so now.

I am proud to stand with my fellow members of the Australian Labor Party and support this bill. I hope they take it one step further in Sydney over the course of the weekend. If this bill passes tonight it will be because of the will of like-minded members of Australia's oldest and greatest and most progressive political party. More importantly, it will be with the support of people like those in the public gallery tonight who just want to love and celebrate their love. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. GJ WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.34 pm): My working-class background and my Christian faith have been the two key pillars of my life. They are at the very centre of who I am. This is what drives me and inspires me and has led me to be where I am. My faith has helped me at those times when I have been faced with making difficult choices, and this is one of those times. I have wrestled with the many issues involved in this bill and have tried to bring an open mind to those issues. I have dear friends on both sides of these issues who I care for greatly and respect. This is a conscience vote and I feel bound to vote with my conscience and I am proud to be a member of a party that has allowed me to do so. I think it is highly regrettable that we will not know what the consciences of 31 members of this parliament say.

I want to acknowledge the leadership of the Premier and the Deputy Premier in this regard. Until the last few days I thought I could support this bill and, in fact, have indicated so publicly. But the more I have thought about it—about what I personally believe in according to my faith—unfortunately, I cannot support the bill. I believe in the biblical understanding of marriage. But I recognise that there are differences of opinion even within believing Christians about what that involves, let alone within the broader community. I accept that others have different points of view and different beliefs and that other types of relationships exist that are filled with love, commitment and devotion just like marriages. I recognise that those features are found in relationships by people who are so attentive in the public gallery tonight and in the broader community, and I respect them enormously.

That is why I support same-sex and de facto couples being afforded the legal rights of spouses, as they currently are under the law, but I do not believe in the creation of the new legal relationship that this bill proposes. I do not believe we should institutionalise and formalise a new type of relationship outside of marriage for couples, whether they are of the same sex or opposite sex. My difficulty with the bill is not that it seeks to mimic marriage; I do not think it does. In any event, marriage is regulated by federal law under the Australian Constitution. However, the place of marriage and de facto relationships in our society is, for me, the backdrop to my thoughts about this bill. My difficulty with the bill is that, firstly, it creates, as I say, a new legally recognised relationship as an alternative to marriage. According to my faith perspective on life, as best as I can examine my conscience, I am not convinced that that is a good thing to do.

Secondly, as I understand the bill—and I may not fully understand it like I would like to—at the time a civil partnership is created there is no requirement, no necessity, that the parties have a commitment to create a personal relationship that exhibits the characteristics which we commonly find attached to relationships which we describe as legal marriages or which we describe as de facto marriages—in particular, characteristics of not only respect and love of course but also exclusivity and permanency.

When it comes to intimate personal relationships, I believe that our community and society have a vital interest in recognising, protecting and promoting relationships that are loving, nurturing, fulfilling and sustainable. Traditionally—and I recognise it is 'traditionally'—this is recognised in what we call the institution of marriage: the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others voluntarily entered into for life. I recognise that there are significant opinions dissenting from that description of marriage, but there it is. That is how I see marriage.

What is important to me here is the fact of such a relationship which bears these features, not the label or the name it goes by. Such relationships have traditionally been the basis of the family, the broader community and society as a whole and in many cultures. The relationship we have traditionally called marriage is one, I believe, of the most important avenues but not the only avenue for the expression of love between adults and the nurturing and protection of children. What distinguishes such intimate personal relationships from all others are a number of things but particularly exclusivity and permanence.

Society has an absolutely keen interest in strong, long-term, loving relationships. These are more likely than not, although not guaranteed, to promote the wellbeing of the parties in the relationship and the family and others dependent upon them. Marriages and families are under enormous pressure from time to time from unemployment, domestic violence, terrible work-life balance and many, many other things we could all name. The fallout from marriages and families under these pressures leaves our community and society facing enormous challenges to look after people who need our help. As a society, we should look after them and look after them well.

So central to the welfare of society is the relationship we call marriage that we actually give it legal effect. This is also illustrated by the fact that for many years de facto marriages have been recognised by the common law. In recent times laws at federal and state level have recognised the existence of de facto relationships under statute. It is often defined as a relationship between a man and

a woman who live together as husband and wife on a bona fide domestic basis although not married to one another. More than that, laws have been passed confirming the benefits and obligations on partners to a de facto relationship, and this I truly believe is an appropriate expression of social justice, but it also looks to reinforce and protect established de facto relationships and all who depend upon them.

Since early 2002 in Queensland and 2008 in the Commonwealth, various acts have been amended to recognise the rights and obligations of partners in de facto relationships irrespective of the gender of each partner. It is right as a matter of justice and equity that this be done, but both opposite- and same-sex de facto relationships require features similar to those of marriage, particularly in regard to exclusivity and permanence. This is to be established or not as a matter of evidence before an appropriate authority such as a court on a case-by-case basis.

As I read it, the Civil Partnerships Bill, under clauses 4 and 6, creates a new legally recognised relationship called a civil partnership. It may be entered into by any two adults regardless of their sex. This is much more than the recognition of same- or opposite-sex de facto relationships at common law or under statute as presently provides. Exclusivity and permanence or anything like it is not required for the partnership. It may in fact only exist for a matter of weeks. If it was merely providing a mechanism to facilitate the provision of evidence of an already existing de facto relationship, I could support it.

I recognise that under the bill people of same- and opposite-sex de facto relationships will seek to register under it, not surprisingly. However, one does not have to have a longstanding, long-term personal relationship for that to be the case. It is absent the necessity for the commitment or expectation of a long-term relationship. For these reasons, I am unfortunately unable to support the bill.

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (9.45 pm): I am proud that I am democratically able to state my position here tonight. I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman, and I will not walk away from my beliefs.

 **Hon. SD FINN** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Government Services, Building Industry and Information and Communication Technology) (9.45 pm): I stand to support the bill before the House tonight and make a very brief contribution. I support the bill on two main bases. Firstly and most importantly, the bill enables recognition of loving relationships regardless of gender and regardless of sexuality. It is with pride that I stand in this House and support legislative reform to enable this recognition of love.

Secondly, this is a reform whose time has come. This is not a sudden reform. The changes this bill implements continue longstanding, gradual reform—reform that Labor in government has delivered across the nation. I know for many watching this debate that reform has been too slow. Such is the struggle for social reform. Such is the struggle for human rights. Such is the struggle for equality when you need to educate and change to progress.

Labor in government has committed to sensible reform over the past two decades. In 1990, 21 years ago, a Labor government decriminalised homosexuality in Queensland. In 1992, under a federal Labor government, gay people were allowed to serve in the military. In 2002 the Discrimination Law Amendment Act gave same-sex couples in Queensland access to the same protections available to heterosexual couples including superannuation entitlements and workers compensation. In 2008 federal Labor amended over 100 pieces of legislation to grant de facto same-sex couples the same rights as married couples in a wide range of areas. On 11 February 2010 this House voted to allow same-sex couples to access altruistic surrogacy. It was almost a year ago to the day that the Treasurer, the sponsor of the bill tonight, made his support for civil unions known.

Labor governments have introduced similar reforms in Tasmania in 2004, in Victoria in 2008, in the ACT in 2008 and in New South Wales in 2010—and tonight Queensland catches up. Tonight the reform this bill brings in is a reform whose time has come. Polling in 2009 indicated that 60 per cent of Queenslanders believe that same-sex couples should be able to have a civil union with the same legal rights and responsibilities as marriage. Labor tonight stands with the majority of Queenslanders on this issue. Many of my colleagues in support of this bill have contributed to the debate eloquently and many will continue, and I support their contributions. Tonight I will vote to give people in loving relationships, regardless of gender, an ability to have their love recognised and a right to enjoy a ceremony as part of this recognition. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (9.49 pm): I gather that every member of this House received a large amount of correspondence, and no-one could be surprised at the level of misogyny and misandry which has been displayed in the reporting of the bill and the correspondence that has been forwarded. I was a little bit surprised that the member for Kawana stood up and said that it was a unanimous decision of their group. If one had a look at section 60 of the Criminal Code, they would find that it is an offence to direct a member of parliament on how to vote, so I hope he was outlining that correctly.

Not one of the correspondents who expanded on their point of view could outline how a recognition of a relationship as a civil partnership—whether of the same or opposite sex—could impact on every person's right to choose their own partner. An anonymous commentator said, 'Contentment is

accepting the world as an imperfect place.' Even the dropkick who sent same-socket electrical connectors missed the point but should get the message when he or she receives back a number of those packets without postage. I marked mine 'Return to sender'.

How much bleating do we hear about the definition of de facto relationships in the Family Law Act at section 4AA? The partnership which is recognised for property settlement purposes can be between same-sex or opposite-sex persons, and subsection (2)(g) requires reflection of registration in a state or territory as a prescribed partnership. How many times have we heard people stand up and complain about section 32DA of the Acts Interpretation Act which defines a de facto partner and at subsection (5)(a) outlines that the gender of the person is not relevant? Has any person considered the provisions of section 287 of the Property Law Act in Queensland which provides that any property claim between a de facto couple can only be made between parties who have lived together for two years? How do you establish the two years, as many couples in a relationship drift together, particularly in a heterosexual relationship? Strangely, most same-sex couples make a positive commitment from the beginning of their relationship.

Does any member know of the difficulties faced by a de facto couple of same or opposite gender if their partner requires medical treatment where there is no power of attorney for health purposes and the family do not agree with the treatment required and they do not recognise the relationship? We heard from the member for Murrumba on that point. Does any member know of the difficulties faced by a surviving partner if a deceased partner left no valid will, which does not in any event deal directly with superannuation, and no legal direction exists and the deceased partner's family do not recognise the relationship? Succession law can require that the superannuation benefits can pass in accordance with the intestacy rules, which do not entirely reflect a de facto relationship.

Arguments about religious marriage in this debate are not valid when one looks at the history of marriage back to Roman and Greek society. Roman society required only living together for one year, known as *usus*, or a more formal ceremony in front of witnesses, known as *coemptio*. Divorce was just as informal or the separation of the formal ceremony also required a ceremony. No priest or religious input was required.

In the first Christian centuries up to as late as the 10th century, the essential part of a wedding took place outside a church. It was not until the 12th century that a priest actually took part in the ceremony, and it was not until the 13th century that he actually took charge of proceedings. Indeed, it was the Council of Trent, 1545 to 1563, which required the addition of two witnesses at a wedding. England actually abolished common law marriage in the Marriage Act 1753 by requiring marriages to be performed by a priest of the Church of England.

All of the questions I posed above can be answered by allowing de facto partners to fix the date of the partnership commencement and the legality of the partnership by entering into a civil partnership agreement under the act, which this bill should become. Ignore the emotional rubbish which has been peddled by those opposing the bill. I call on all members of the House to support the bill; I know that the opposition will need to acquire a bony structure to connect their skull and pelvis to do this.

I trust that my brief outline will assist those of my colleagues who feel they cannot in conscience support the bill—and I understand their own concerns—to reassess their opposition in light of the assistance which the final bill will provide to a great many couples who have chosen to live in a de facto or common law relationship. It will prove a boon to a great many couples and provide equality for both heterosexual and same-sex couples, whose partnership is recognised by our law but who cannot fix a date or produce documentation to prove its existence and who still labour under legal difficulties as outlined above. Please keep in mind that even if you are on the right track you can still be left behind if you just sit there. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hoolihan, adjourned.

## MOTION

### Suspension of Standing Orders

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.55 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, notwithstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders for this day's sitting, the House can continue to meet past 10 pm to consider the private member's bill until the adjournment is moved, to be followed by a 30-minute adjournment debate.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 3995, on motion of Mr Fraser—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Hon. MM KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (9.55 pm): In rising to contribute to the debate on the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011, I want to thank the Premier who, unlike Campbell Newman, has given her Labor members of parliament a conscience vote on this important bill. The opportunity to exercise a conscience vote is a very rare privilege. It is something which I have treated with the utmost seriousness by giving the bill the careful and diligent consideration that such important legislation deserves. I promised my constituents that before deciding on how I would exercise my conscience I would consult with them. I have kept my promise and am pleased that so many individuals, community groups and church leaders accepted my invitation to share their views.

I can report that, although some constituents are strongly in favour of civil partnerships, the great majority are opposed to the bill. They have told me that they do not support the creation of a new way to formally recognise intimate relationships by introducing a civil partnership and for the first time allowing couples, regardless of gender, to enter into a formally recognised union and participate in a ceremony. Therefore, after lengthy and careful deliberation, my conscience prompts me to oppose the bill and vote against it. I do this on three grounds.

Firstly, although tonight most members do not agree with me, I have come to the conclusion that the bill mirrors marriage in all but name and thus weakens the institution of marriage. Almost all of the responses I have received referred to civil partnerships as almost identical or identical to marriage. I say this because this bill is modelled on the ACT civil unions legislation. When that bill was introduced in 2006, the ACT Attorney-General stated that the purpose of a civil union is for it to be treated under territory law in the same way as a marriage. In addition, if passed, the state will establish a new form of legal relationships for heterosexual people other than marriage, which to me undermines the institution of marriage. In fact, HoppgoodGanin, Australia's leading family law firm, states that there is no discernible difference between the Civil Partnerships Bill and marriage.

Secondly, I oppose the bill because to my mind there has been no widespread call for such a radical change to formal relationships. There has also been criticism of civil partnerships from those in favour of gay marriage. The ACT Labor Party conference this year declared that civil unions are not a viable alternative to full marriage equality. The ACT Deputy Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, has stated that civil unions threaten to entrench discrimination against gay and lesbian couples by creating a second-class scheme.

As my constituent David told me when he met with me to eloquently urge me to support this bill, it is marriage that same-sex couples want, not for them to be treated differently through a civil partnership. The *Australian*, in a recent editorial titled 'Lukewarm on gay marriage: Australians regard many other issues as more important' cited an in-depth survey of 1,200 adults on attitudes to same-sex marriage by the Ambrose Centre for Religious Liberty.

Many of the survey's major findings were reflected in my own consultation and that of the excellent work done by the parliamentary committee. The first is that people do not want to rush into making such radical change to formal relationships without first knowing its social impact, particularly on any children who may be raised in a same-sex relationship. Although 49 per cent support change in the Marriage Act, the survey shows that the issue is not just about the rights of homosexual people but also about the responsibility of society to always act in the best interests of children. Nearly 70 per cent of Australians surveyed believe that marriage between a man and a woman and their having children together is an important social institution that should be upheld.

I turn now to the third reason for opposing the bill, that being the grounds of my Christian faith. I believe in treating all citizens with respect and equality. The question is then asked: don't LGBT people deserve to be treated equally too? By refusing to support civil partnerships, am I discriminating against one particular group of people? These are some of the challenging questions that I have had to grapple with in coming to my decision. I have been told by some that the only reason I am refusing to support the bill is I am homophobic. Sadly, this debate is significantly weakened by such threats and name calling.

I have not been convinced by those supporting the bill that the civil partnership debate is primarily about ensuring the basic rights of homosexual people. Their rights are already guaranteed under state and Commonwealth laws—amendments which in 2002 I was very pleased to support. Some tell me that in not supporting the bill I am failing to acknowledge and support loving and deeply committed same-sex relationships. For me, nothing could be further from the truth. Although I respect the equality of all people and recognise same-sex loving relationships, I do not support a radical change to the long-

established definition of marriage. I am not convinced that any change to marriage is for the common good of our society. The results of my consultation reveal that you do not have to have a particular faith or have any faith at all to hold strong views about the need to protect the institution of marriage in its current definition. To many people of faith, marriage is more than sacred; it is one of the Christian sacraments and is therefore to be elevated with a special and unique meaning.

An imperfect analogy—and I say it is imperfect but it is the best I could find—to describe the strength of the commitment that such people have to marriage being between one man and one woman is to compare it to the strength of commitment that Aboriginal people hold to the ownership of their traditional land. Aboriginals have not only a geographic and historic connection to the land but for many they also have a strong spiritual connection to it. Rightly, this connection is respected and recognised through our laws such as the Native Title Act. Likewise, Christians also have a deeply historical and spiritual connection to marriage through its definition in the Bible. It may be impossible for many to understand, but to most Christians upholding and defending marriage as being exclusively between a man and a woman is not about discrimination or intolerance but about honouring and being loyal to their faith.

It is important that I respond to comments that I have received from people who have stated that, like me, they are Christians and because they support same-sex civil partnerships and marriage I should, too. Such arguments, although made with great sincerity, reflect divisions in the mainstream Christian denominations about this bill and same-sex marriage in general. The dean of St John's Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane says that the bill is good law-making. On the other hand, Catholic Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett of the Brisbane archdiocese, whose view I respect and support, urges honourable members to uphold marriage between a man and a woman and to reject the bill. Prime Minister Julia Gillard has said—

... there are some important things from our past that need to continue to be part of our present and part of our future ... marriage being between a man and a woman has a special status.

The vast majority of my constituents agree with the Prime Minister's statement and have asked me to vote against the bill because, although titled the Civil Partnerships Bill, it undermines marriage itself.

Like 70 per cent of Australians, I believe that marriage is between a man and a woman and is an important social institution that should be upheld and protected. Therefore, after careful consideration my conscience prompts me to oppose this bill by voting against it.

 **Mr WATT** (Everton—ALP) (10.03 pm): In the interests of time I will keep my contribution on the Civil Partnerships Bill brief. I recognise that there are strong views in my community on both sides of this issue. I have heard from supporters and opponents of the bill. I believe that, more than anything, my community expects me to be honest with them and vote with my conscience. It is disappointing that Campbell Newman has prevented LNP MPs from exercising their conscience by ordering them to vote against the bill. It is clear from the comments of the member for Noosa that numerous LNP MPs would prefer to exercise their conscience and support civil unions.

My conscience tells me that we should not prevent couples from celebrating and recording their commitment to each other merely because of factors such as their race, gender, or sexuality. For that reason, I will be supporting the private member's bill to allow civil unions in Queensland. I believe that my community expects their political representatives to reject all forms of discrimination. This bill removes a form of discrimination against same-sex couples and it has my full support.

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (10.05 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Civil Partnerships Bill. At the outset, I take this opportunity to thank the people who took the time to contact me about their views on this bill. One local resident, Mr Frank Tarr, asked me to record his personal opposition to this bill. Mr Tarr should consider his opposition so recorded.

It is important to note that this bill is not about changing the definition of marriage. The Australian Constitution provides that only the Commonwealth parliament can change that definition. As a practising Catholic, I have given great thought and consideration to the provisions of this bill. I have prayerfully and conscientiously reflected on this matter and my conscience. In my view, this bill is about legal recognition and ceremony for relationships that already exist in our community. I note that these relationships, which are the subject of this bill, are not illegal in our community. Any couple, irrespective of their sexuality, will be able to access the civil union framework established by this bill. The framework established by the bill does not discriminate between heterosexual and same-sex couples.

This bill is about justice, equality and the legal recognition of commitment. On this very point, I note the recent statement of the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster on behalf of the bishops of England and Wales. Archbishop Nichols said—

We would want to emphasise that civil partnerships actually provide a structure in which people of the same sex who want a lifelong relationship and a lifelong partnership can find their place and protection and legal provision.

Earlier this year, Jesuit priest Father Frank Brennan wrote in an opinion piece—

There are homosexual persons who enter into loving, faithful and committed relationships. These persons should be able to live in society free from discrimination, without state interference and with state support and approval.

I note that the Social Responsibilities Committee of the Anglican Church of Australia, Brisbane diocese submitted this in respect of the bill—

Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

Finally, I note that paragraph 2358 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church provides that homosexual persons—

... must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.

My vision for Queensland is that together we can continue to build open, tolerant, supportive, understanding and compassionate communities where we together promote an agenda to ensure that all Queenslanders—all people—are treated equally irrespective of their marital status, sexuality, race or religion. This bill contributes to making Queensland a fairer place to live for all Queenslanders irrespective of their sexual orientation. In supporting the Civil Partnerships Bill, I do so in my belief that I act in good conscience.

 **Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.09 pm): Civil marriage is defined under the Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961 as the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life. Beyond the traditional legal recognition of the union of a man and a woman in the religious or Christian tradition of marriage, people have long been involved in human relationships of companionship and devotion that are not able to be accommodated as a marriage under the laws of this nation. The religious and cultural heritage of our nation has evolved over time. A spiritual marriage has long been elevated amongst all other relationships in our society and its holiness is important to me and many in my community.

I have discussed this matter with representatives of many of the major religious groups in the electorate of Mount Ommaney and their views differ in several respects. I acknowledge and respect the personal views of some in my electorate who have strong views on this very important issue and thank them for taking the time to phone or write to me. I understand that some in the community may hold contrary views; however, in my view the majority of the residents in the electorate of Mount Ommaney support this proposal.

Yesterday I received an email from Angela Duff, previously known as Angela Goodwin, who is married to Michael Duff, the campaign manager of Tarnya Smith, the LNP candidate opposing me in the seat of Mount Ommaney. Angela has been in contact with my office on several occasions over the past few weeks wishing to speak to me in relation to the Civil Partnerships Bill. Finally she made an appointment to see me in my electorate office but then wanted to change it when she realised that the bill would be debated this week. Another Goodwin, David, made an appointment and saw me last week asking me to vote against the bill. Yesterday Angela finally sent me an email and said that I should not support the bill. She said the Australian Family Association would leaflet my electorate if I supported the bill.

According to the standing orders, contempt of the Assembly is an improper interference with the free exercise of the Assembly or the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member, or offering or attempting to bribe a member to influence the member's conduct in respect of proceedings in the House. I accept that the Australian Family Association had publicly stated that they would campaign against a member who supported the bill. It is their right, or anyone's right for that matter, to protest against a member of parliament who does not support their point of view. However, I do not accept that it is appropriate for someone associated with the campaign of my opposition to use the Australian Family Association as a tool to threaten me into voting against the bill. This smacks of bullying and intimidation typical of Campbell Newman and the LNP. It is really an attempt to influence my vote by using a reputable organisation that genuinely believes that the bill is a threat to the preservation of family life. That is why I believe that Angela Duff is in contempt of parliament by trying to interfere with the free exercise of the Assembly in this way—that is, to try to influence the free exercise of my conscience vote for the purposes of the LNP and not for the genuine concerns of the Australian Family Association.

I offer the following reasons for my support of the bill. A civil partnership does not impinge upon the Marriage Act; nor does it seek to undermine the conventional institution of marriage. A civil partnership allows a couple, whether heterosexual or homosexual, to be given the opportunity to celebrate and register their relationship. An important aspect of the bill is that it offers something beyond the mere legal permission to prove a relationship that presently exists in state and federal laws. The bill provides for such relationships to be validated and celebrated before family and friends through a declaration ceremony.

In my view, the ability of both heterosexual and homosexual couples to formalise their relationships is a basic human right. The Civil Partnerships Bill 2011 cannot and does not seek to legalise same-sex marriage; nor does it seek to change the definition or institution of marriage as contained in federal legislation. This bill will, however, give same-sex couples the opportunity to publicly declare their commitment. This represents the most a state parliament can achieve in pursuit of equality. It also allows people to register their relationships, providing legal certainty with regard to succession and property rights.

This bill does not create new rights for same-sex couples beyond those conferred under previous reforms of legislation. It merely creates a new way to formally recognise relationships in Queensland, building on reforms made by the Queensland government in 2002 when several Queensland acts were amended to recognise the rights and obligations of partners in de facto relationships, irrespective of their gender. The bill generally aligns with reforms made in Tasmania in 2004, Victoria in 2008, the ACT in 2008 and New South Wales in 2010 to recognise civil partnerships through a registration process.

From a religious viewpoint, this bill does not spiritually or theologically seek to alter marriage conventions and it is clear that faith groups will not be obliged to register civil partnerships. In my opinion, the bill will not allow churches, mosques and synagogues to register a civil partnership. The truth is that civil and religious marriage is a unique institution because it involves a process by which humanity reproduces itself, which is only through the union of male and female. A civil partnership is not marriage.

God created everyone as equal. To me, this means that everyone should be respected for the person they are and for the good that is within them. To not be who you truly are in the eyes of the world can cause nothing but self-condemnation and possibly lead to self-harm, to a feeling of worthlessness. And who are we to judge what we simply do not understand? Why should we deny people happiness in finding the relationship of their choice? Why should we stigmatise these people who, unlike us, find their true love is for someone of the same gender if all they want is to have that union, that partnership, accepted by those around them? Should the bill be successful, both same-sex and heterosexual couples will be able to hold an authorised ceremony to formalise their relationship and register their partnership with the state government. I support the bill.

 **Ms STONE** (Springwood—ALP) (10.16 pm): I will be supporting the Civil Partnerships Bill, and I will briefly explain why. The major factor that influenced my decision was the requests that have been made to me over many years from parents who want to celebrate the love their children have found. I find it difficult to understand how any family could not support or love a family member no matter what their sexual preference. I have spoken to friends who have children of various ages and all have said to me that the love of their child is for life, no matter what they will or will not be. So why should we not have some acknowledgement of this love and commitment and why should that not be recognised? They believe that civil unions are a way they can do this and share in that family love.

The reality is that same-sex relationships have existed in our communities for a long time. I believe that this bill will assist in introducing the practical, financial and legal matters that we need in today's society. As individuals we can choose to or not to befriend people because of their sexual preference. As individuals we can choose not to attend these ceremonies. But as human beings we should put into practice a society of tolerance, respect and equality.

I find it ironic that we are debating this bill tonight when one of the world's most famous couples is in Brisbane: Elton and David. While I might be extremely disappointed I am not at the Elton John concert, and while it really did hurt me to give away those tickets, I have to say that I am very glad to be here tonight, very glad to be a part of this historic occasion. The public gallery is full. I have people in my office watching the broadcast of this debate. I want to say to all of you tonight: this is your song.

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (10.19 pm): I rise briefly to support the bill. I do so fundamentally because I believe in a modern Queensland where all are accepted and understood. This is clearly an issue about which there are divergent opinions in the community. I respect the deeply held views of those who oppose the provisions of the bill due to their own moral convictions. However, I do not believe it should be the role of this parliament to enforce those moral convictions on the whole community. That is what the religious right consistently seeks to do.

In a pluralist society, a framework providing legal clarity for same-sex relationships, which exist in our community and are freely entered into, is appropriate—nay, it is necessary. As others have said this is what this parliament can legislate for. This is not marriage equity. I am a supporter of marriage equity and I hope that our federal parliament will modernise that legislative institution. My personal preference would be for a distinction and separation of civil marriage solemnisation from religious marriage celebration. That is the longstanding practice for heterosexual couples in France. I support a modern Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MOORHEAD** (Waterford—ALP) (10.20 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011. This bill is the right thing to do. It recognises the fact that de facto couples, whether heterosexual or same-sex, are a part of our community. They are a part of every community, urban or regional, rich or poor, people of faith and those who may not believe. This bill means that de facto couples can seek legal recognition of their relationships. De facto couples, whether same-sex or heterosexual, can have their lawful and loving relationships registered. It means that de facto couples can access the legal rights they already have without needing to jump through barriers and overcome myths. It means that de facto couples can support a loved one dying, consent to medical treatment and put in place shared financial arrangements and wills without having to prove their relationship on each and every occasion. Those are human rights that no-one should deny.

I assure those who do not support the bill that same-sex couples will continue to be a part of our community regardless of this legislation. As legislators, we can either catch up with the reality or hold on to some notion that we can tell Queenslanders who they can love. No-one will choose to enter or not to enter a same-sex relationship solely because of any legislation that we might pass. Either we can have our laws reflect the modern reality of families or we can continue to deny reality and deny fundamental human rights.

I finish by reading a short extract from a letter by a constituent of mine. She writes—

My name is Erica Wilkinson and I am a committed Christian, I attend Lutheran Church in Bethania, and I am also the mother of a gay son. People ask me how I can be a Christian and support gay rights, my answer is always the same, God loves me and he loves my son.

Morgan works, studies full time at uni and is well respected in the neighbourhood, all he wants is to have the same rights as his brother and sister. I feel the same. I don't want him to feel second class in his own country, like he is not worthy. Not because of anything he has done, but because of who he is. As a parent, you always want the best for your child. I don't want anything extra. I just want him to be the same. He may not want to get married in the future but I want him to have the choice.

I cannot put it any better than Erica. I support the bill.

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (10.23 pm): This bill has challenged me. It has challenged my Christian belief of marriage, but it has also challenged my sense of social justice. I have needed to ask myself a number of questions. First of all, I look back on my family, my life experiences and my relationships, which have all contributed to who I am as a person and how I relate to others.

I grew up in a home where music and friends were a constant. At the end of the war, friends and family gathered around our piano to sing and enjoy hospitality. Many were musical theatre people. Some have remained family friends all through my life. As a very young teenager I was told one of those friends had just been imprisoned. I learned vaguely that it was because he was in a homosexual relationship. I cried myself to sleep for many nights, bewildered that he could be thrown into prison. He has remained one of my parents' dearest friends and is a fine gentleman. Those were the days when police burst into people's homes to arrest them. They were the days when babies were removed from their mothers under duress, because they were young and unmarried. We have all witnessed the terrible legacy of those practices. But the moral police thought they knew best.

Later in my life, one of my close friends whose son had married and had a young family came to stay with us just for a few nights. She was obviously deeply distressed about a family issue, but it took a year or so before she was ready to speak about it. Her adult daughter had formed a loving relationship with another woman. When people grow up within a church community and may not have had any close association with someone from the gay community, they can feel bewildered when facing such circumstances within their own family. I believe we should all be understanding and learn to walk in the shoes of others. However, after a year or so my friend's daughter and her partner were included in family photos in their Christmas greetings to all their friends. They had overcome barriers and once again enjoyed their close family relationships.

As we consider this bill tonight, I ask myself will it diminish the sanctity of Christian marriage or marriage ceremonies conducted by other cultural groups and religious organisations? I think not. We live in a very multicultural and diverse community. I believe many of our churches are responsible for loving and caring for many millions of people right throughout the world and I love my church family. My faith has enriched my life and been the compass by which I live. However, there is one word that burns itself into my consciousness. The word is 'exclusion', such as that suffered by our Indigenous people for decades with tragic results. I have seen the anguish of couples unable to bear children who are thus excluded from one of the great joys in life, parenthood, the often sad lives of many with mental illness or disability who feel excluded from social engagement and the hurt felt by parents whose child has been treated as an outcast and excluded because of their sexual orientation.

The bill we are voting on tonight is designed to remove one barrier of exclusion and allow couples who love each other to register their relationship. However, this bill has wider implications. There are many in our communities in heterosexual relationships who choose to settle down with a partner and raise a family in a de facto relationship. This civil register will enable couples to register their relationship, with or without a ceremony, which will give them a point of reference that may be required if seeking a spousal visa from immigration or any number of requirements proving a legitimate relationship with a date of registration. I have heard of a de facto wife being cut out of a will because the adult children of her deceased partner challenged their relationship. The establishment of this register will give opportunity for couples who love each other to legitimately have their relationship recognised at law.

My sense of social justice compels me to seek equality for all in our community. In this House tonight we are voting for such concepts as inclusiveness, respect, understanding, kindness and love between committed couples. One phrase that should guide us is 'to do no harm'. I strongly believe this bill will add another dimension to relationships without diminishing others. I will be supporting this bill.

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (10.28 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011. The policy intent behind this private member's bill, introduced by the Deputy Premier, has long been Labor Party policy. I begin my

comments in the debate by saying that I respect the fact that many people in Queensland hold very strong views on this issue, both in support of and in opposition to this bill. Residents of the electorate of Greenslopes, whom I am very privileged to represent in this House, also hold disparate views, so I am mindful of the fact that whichever way I vote some will agree with me and some will not.

During the course of my life, I have thought long and hard about the principles underpinning this bill. I have listened to the views of my constituents which, as members can imagine, range across a very broad spectrum of beliefs. Tonight I will vote in support of the bill.

I am proud that Labor members of the Bligh government have had the opportunity to examine their own consciences in determining whether to support this bill or not. But those members opposite, the members of the LNP in this House, will not be given the opportunity to examine their conscience and vote accordingly on this bill.

One of the most telling features of this debate, one of the fundamental differences between members of the Labor government and members of the Liberal National Party opposition, is the respect which has been shown by the Australian Labor Party and the Premier for the different views that Labor members on this side of the House might hold. As a consequence, Labor members of this parliament will exercise a conscience vote tonight. Serious questions must be asked tonight in relation to how the decision on this bill, binding on members of the LNP parliamentary party, has been determined.

In the leaders debate involving the Premier and Campbell Newman held last Friday, 25 November, Mr Newman was asked who was directing LNP policy in relation to civil unions. In response, Mr Newman said the following—

... the LNP parliamentary team that I lead as well as the candidates are the ones that made this decision. They are the ones who have decided unanimously—I will say that again, unanimously decided—that they would vote against this bill.

It is greatly disturbing that it is not just an unelected leader, who sits outside this party, Mr Newman; not just unelected Liberal National Party officials like Bruce McIver and Barry O'Sullivan; but unelected and unrepresentative candidates who hold no democratic mandate who have been involved in determining the policy of the Liberal National Party which tonight binds its parliamentary wing. Why else would Mr Newman make reference to candidates moulding policy relating to civil unions? What was said by whom to whom and when?

I know that the question of a conscience vote will be one fraught with anxiety and angst for a number of members opposite who believe in true Liberal values and for what the Liberal Party in this state once stood for. While the passage of this bill will be a joyous day for many, it is a shameful day indeed for the Liberal National Party. Today we witness traditional Liberal values being abandoned—values that I and many members of the government believe in, such as freedom of choice, respect for individuality, personal autonomy and the rights of an individual to make a choice about their own lives. It saddens me that in this House tonight, the home of our state's democracy, consciences have stifled and voices silenced.

Today is the 176th anniversary of the birth of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known to the world as Mark Twain. He said, 'A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval.' It is a statement that is full of meaning for members of this House and for others tonight.

This is a significant bill for this parliament. It shows Queensland has matured as a society. It shows that our levels of understanding and respect have grown enormously over recent times. It shows that there is a place for everyone at the Queensland table.

I cannot help but reflect on the fact that within the past generation when laws decriminalising homosexuality were introduced into this parliament by a Labor government, when laws removing discrimination against de facto relationships including same-sex relationships were introduced in this parliament by a Labor government, when laws decriminalising altruistic surrogacy were introduced into this parliament by a Labor government the same portent of gloom and doom and decay of society was trotted out in opposition time and again. And yet, such things never came to pass.

If in our time in this parliament we are able to make life better for Queenslanders, if we can remove discrimination and prejudice against Queenslanders, if we can make laws that make Queensland more just, if we can make laws that recognise the reality of human existence in the 21st century, then it is our duty to do so. Justice, fairness, equality and love know no bounds. They are values, beliefs and ideals which motivate me and which motivate the great cause that is the Australian Labor Party. They are values which underpin this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms JOHNSTONE** (Townsville—ALP) (10.34 pm): Tonight we have an opportunity to pass the Civil Partnerships Bill and acknowledge through action that Queensland really is the progressive, inclusive and civil society that we all claim it to be. Tonight we have the opportunity to legitimise the rights of all Queenslanders. What this bill has also highlighted is the stark differences between the ALP and the LNP.

Unlike the LNP opposite, most ordinary, rational Queenslanders understand that this bill is really very simple. It is about allowing all Queenslanders to be able to recognise publicly and officially their life partners under state law. It will enable same-sex couples to access the same rights which others in

formal relationships enjoy, without the need to prove their de facto status. They will be entitled to the security that can protect and respect life partners in times of both joy and happiness and in times of unexpected crisis, trauma or distress.

The bad news for those dinosaurs opposite is that they will not be allowed to exercise a conscience vote. They need to understand that the future is now. No matter how scary you think it is, no matter how much you want to close your eyes and pretend that this issue does not exist, we will have to listen to what people out there are telling us. We must ensure we do not fall out of step with modern society. This is not a political stunt, as has been suggested by those opposite. This is not about distracting the public—

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Resume your seat! The member for Lockyer will cease interjecting. You have had enough. The member for Townsville will address her comments through the chair and that way the temperature will go right down and we will get through the night beautifully. I call the honourable member for Townsville.

**Ms JOHNSTONE:** This is not a political stunt, as has been suggested by the LNP. This is not about distracting the public. Indeed for too long this issue has been used to drive a political wedge through our communities, creating angst and division amongst Queenslanders. But here tonight this is about legitimising the very human need of same-sex couples to have an emotional bond with the person that they love—a right that every other Queenslander is entitled to and takes for granted, myself included. We have to stop using this debate to undermine the fundamental human rights of all Queenslanders.

With that in mind, I have to say that the comments we have endured from the LNP over recent days and weeks shock and appal me. To the rest of the LNP across the chamber, I can assure them that this bill does not seek to promote the breakdown of the family unit. In fact, it aims to do exactly the opposite. If I had the choice between growing up as a child of a loving, caring same-sex relationship or in a loveless, abusive heterosexual marriage in breakdown, as many are today, I know which I would choose. This is not about personal religious views and nor do those views belong in this parliament.

The true Liberals in this parliament who are being hamstrung tonight by the faceless men in the Liberal Party must feel sick to their core that their vote cannot be exercised in the way they know to be correct. I think it is a pretty—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. The member for Townsville has the call.

**Ms JOHNSTONE:** I think that what we have here is a pretty clear demonstration of where the real power lies in the LNP. It certainly does not sit on the shoulders of its elected members.

To my colleagues who are voting with their conscience tonight, if after considering the arguments of myself and others who are supporting the bill you find that your conscience prevents you from doing the same, I will accept and respect your vote on this matter. I think we can all acknowledge that for some this is not a simple issue.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms JOHNSTONE:** This is not a simple issue for those who are voting with our conscience, not those who are being forced to vote en bloc. However, I at least urge you to consider the importance of such a bill as this one and the message it will send to the broader Australian community. Tonight we have an opportunity to turn things around, a chance to defy an archaic way of thinking which too often can stick to the walls of our political chamber like mould. We do not have the right to deny our fellow Queenslanders the most special of all adult relationships, a key element of the human experience. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (10.39 pm): I rise to support the Civil Partnerships Bill. I hold a fundamental belief that all Australians, and therefore all Queenslanders, should be equal before the law. Over the years this parliament and other Australian parliaments, mostly led by Labor reforms, have progressively removed laws that discriminate. As a result of laws that protect and promote human rights and prohibit discrimination, Australia and Queensland have become immeasurably fairer, more tolerant and better societies. Yet there is this important piece of unfinished business. Under current Australian and Queensland law, same-sex couples cannot have their relationships recognised. Whilst the law of marriage is the province of the Australian parliament, this parliament can, and in my view should, provide an opportunity for same-sex couples to declare their relationships and have them registered and recognised under the law of this state. That is what this bill will achieve, and the time has come for it to be enacted.

I recall my wedding day as one of the happiest days of my life. This was not especially because we looked forward to the legal consequences of marriage; it was because we wanted to publicly declare our love and commitment to each other and celebrate that relationship with our friends and families. In my view, no-one should be denied that opportunity, and it is that opportunity that this bill provides.

Since this bill was introduced I have been sent many moving and heartfelt testimonials from same-sex couples who have longed for the day when their relationships could be recognised under Queensland law. We should give them that day today. I thank them for sharing their stories, their emotions and their hopes.

Many people have urged me to support this bill but many, many more than those have urged its defeat. Our caucus has rightly afforded Labor MPs a conscience vote on this important bill. I did not need to search my conscience for too long. This bill can do no harm to anyone. It can do no harm to our state. It can only bring happiness and benefit to the couples who choose to use it and to the community of Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (10.42 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Civil Partnerships Bill. In considering this bill I have listened to submissions from members of parliament, I have read hundreds of submissions that have been made to the committee and to my office, and I thank the Deputy Premier for the briefing on the effect of this bill. For the purpose of the parliamentary record, I would now like to share with members the differences in the types of submissions that I have received. The first letter is from a constituent in Cooroy. It states—

Dear Mr Wellington,

My partner and I have lived in Cooroy, and been together for many years. We own our property together and are committed legally and financially to each other in everyway. Please support the Civil Partnerships Bill at the upcoming vote so that our relationship and love for each other can be officially recognised.

Thank you

That is very simple. The next letter states—

Dear Peter, I am a Queensland resident concerned with the continuing erosion of traditional family values and the associated rights and protection of children in the community.

The proposed civil partnerships bill contravenes the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Children which states that a child has the right to be raised by its mother and father. This convention holds the best interests of the child paramount above the wanton desires of adults for political gain or a right to the "property" of child.

Already we are seeing a new stolen generation of IVF children who have formed support groups for each other as they battle to come to terms with their sense of stolen identity in never being able to know their biological mother or father.

In addition, the rights afforded to de facto couples apply equally to same sex couples under the definition of a 'spouse' in s36 of the Queensland Acts Interpretation Act 1954, so there is no legitimate case of discrimination against same sex couples when it comes to the recipient of wills, legal entitlements, etc.

I and my friends will follow closely the voting pattern of MP's on this bill and will be letterboxing closer to the election on the issue.

I trust you will place the interests of the child ahead of the demands of interest groups when considering this legislation and vote against the civil partnerships bill.

Yours sincerely,

The next letter states—

Dear Mr Wellington,

I support Civil Unions for both heterosexual and homosexual couples.

Currently heterosexual and homosexual couples are considered to be de facto only after 2 years of cohabitation. This is distinctly different to marriage where the relationship is recognised from the wedding day without a need to wait 2 years. I respect not everyone supports gay marriage, but I'm talking about Civil Unions—a lesser form of relationship recognition than marriage.

Some heterosexual couples do not want to marry, yet seek greater legal standing and protection than is granted by de facto status. This is important especially when children are born to a heterosexual couple who choose not to marry.

I have 30 years experience working as a health professional in our hospitals. I have seen people brought into Emergency Department unconscious and requiring urgent medical treatment or surgery. It is important that next of kin status can be verified and medical procedures authorised. By producing a Civil Partnership certificate, the opposite-sex or same-sex partner can authorise such medical procedures.

This is also important in verifying the next of kin status of parents of a child who may choose not to marry. By choosing a Civil Union instead, this allows a non-birth parent to authorise medical procedures for the child, and to be recognised as next of kin—offering the child the same level of legal protection as occurs if the parents were married.

Without a Civil Union, this parent would not be able to act legally on behalf of the child if the parents had not had 2 years of cohabitation. Even if the 2 years cohabitation requirement was met, how do you prove that in an urgent situation? Do you take the last 2 years of joint bank account statements to the hospital to request visitation rights?, or take ten Statutory Declarations from friends and family confirming you have been a couple for 2 years? A Civil Partnership certificate immediately confirms this status and will grant next of kin status. I note that the Qld Law Society mentioned this legal issue in their presentation given to the Legal Affairs Parliamentary Committee in support of Civil Unions ...

I saw a case where man in his 50's had been disowned by his family because he was gay. Decades later the family appeared at his hospital death bed. As legal next of kin, they ordered that the mans same sex partner of 30 years was not allowed to visit their son. Their son died without ever seeing his partner again in his final days. If the man had an advance care directive, he could have nominated his partner as his next of kin, granting him visitation rights—however, like most people, this document was not in place.

This is the person he has spent 30 years of his life with—his partner in love and life. They had bought a house together, had joint bank accounts, their whole lives had been merged for decades, yet his partner was not allowed to be present when he died. Regardless of your views on homosexuality, this is just plain wrong. It is only redneck hicks who consider this the right thing to have happened. Had a Civil Union been available to this couple, the mans partner would have been granted next of kin status and this cruel event would never have happened.

I have also seen people brought into Emergency Department unconscious and requiring urgent medical treatment or surgery. It is important that next of kin status can be verified and medical procedures authorised. By producing a Civil Partnership certificate, the opposite-sex or same-sex partner can authorise such medical procedures. This is also important in verifying the next of kin status of parents of a child who may choose not to marry. By having a Civil Union instead, this allows a non-birth parent to authorise medical procedures for the child, and to be recognised as next of kin—offering the child the same level of legal protection as occurs if the parents were married.

...

I urge you to do the fair and right thing and vote in support of the Civil Partnerships Bill.

This is an interesting one from the Australian Family Association. It is headed 'Campaign to target MPs who support Civil Partnerships Bill'. It states—

An Australian Family Association leaflet campaign will target any MPs who back the controversial *Civil Partnerships Bill*, scheduled for a tight vote in the Queensland parliament next week.

MPs who support the *Civil Partnerships Bill* can expect churches everywhere to help letterbox their electorates with leaflets similar to those the AFA distributed in the seat of Capricornia in recent weeks (see below) though in this case the leaflet will conclude ... 'When you vote ... place \_\_\_ MP last!'

I table that for the benefit of members and the parliamentary record.

*Tabled paper:* Australian Family Association Queensland media release, dated 28 November 2011, in relation to the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011 [6061].

I do not agree with the Australian Family Association's view that this bill is attacking the institution of marriage or is introducing same-sex marriage to Queensland. The God I believe in does not threaten or intimidate people who may have a different view. I say tonight to the Australian Family Association and to the other people who have contacted my office and threatened to campaign against me: I will vote for what I think is right and just, and I will not be intimidated, whoever you are. I will support this bill. I do not wear my Christianity like a badge on my chest, but the God I know would never sanction behaviour that threatens people cruelly because of their genetic make-up. In support of my view, I quote from the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt, Chair of the Anglican Social Responsibilities Committee—

I write in regard to the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011 which was recently introduced into the Queensland Parliament by Mr Andrew Fraser MP.

My submission is made on behalf of the Social Responsibilities Committee of the Anglican Church of Australia, Brisbane Diocese. As the current serving chairperson of the Committee I am authorised to make this submission and the statement contained therein.

He goes on to state—

We are confident that the proposed legislation does not affect the right of churches or other religious groups to celebrate marriage according to their own understanding and religious beliefs. The Marriage Act clearly enables conduct of both civil ceremonies and those conducted by ministers of religion. We believe that the act and legitimacy of religious marriage is not denied or denigrated by enabling same sex couples—or opposite-sex couples who have different (or no) spiritual beliefs—to publicly commit to each other in a way that is legally and socially recognised.

I table that as well for the benefit of the parliamentary record.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 4 November 2011, from the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt, Anglican Diocese of Brisbane, to the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee in relation to the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011 [6060].

I believe this bill will simply provide for a registry whereby eligible heterosexual and homosexual couples in relationships can apply for registration as a civil partnership. I will be supporting the bill. As an Independent, I am proud that I am able to vote according to what I believe is right and just. I am not intimidated by anyone or any interest group.

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (10.52 pm), in reply: I begin tonight by thanking all those who contributed to this debate from both sides of the chamber. I especially thank those members whose contributions have their origins in their conscience, not in their party room. Tonight is about the universality of justice. It is about high principle, but most of all it is about people—real people, living, breathing people amongst us. Tonight should have been above politics, but as it turns out tonight is a window into the potential of an LNP government in this state, and looking into that window is to look into the rear-view mirror.

When it comes to matters of human rights or matters of conscience, Labor has always championed the right of the individual to vote freely without duress and without constraint. On this side of the House and the crossbenches, members in a moment will have the opportunity to cast their vote free of those strictures with only their individual values and beliefs as their compass. The great shame to be forever recorded in *Hansard* and inscribed in the history of this place is that the Liberal National Party will not. The 31 LNP members opposite will vote not with their hearts or their heads but as directed.

Yesterday they did not turn up for work. Tonight they turn up on autopilot—drones sent on a mission from high. They have sat here all night mute and absurd like kids on detention. On what should be and yet still might be an occasion of enlightenment, the petty partisanship of the LNP casts a dark pall on the true calling of this parliament and diminishes the democratic duties incumbent upon all of us as members of parliament.

We have the courage of our convictions on this side of the chamber. Each government MP will vote with their own conscience—to declare to Queenslanders where they stand, yes or no, forthright, courageous and principled. We are being joined by the Independents similarly prepared to vote on the basis of what they believe, not what they are told. All other MPs other than the LNP are here to vote according to their conscience and none are seeking refuge in a hidey-hole of tangents of process.

Tonight may be a momentous one for civil rights in Queensland. Tonight as MPs we have a choice to provide the same upfront access to legal and financial rights to same-sex couples as we do for opposite-sex couples or we can choose to continue to discriminate against them. Regardless of which way an individual member votes, there can be no walking away from the fact that currently discrimination does exist. One set of people in a certain set of circumstances cannot easily access the same rights and opportunities as others in the same circumstances as the committee recorded, as relayed by the member for Murrumba at the early part of tonight's debate.

The Civil Partnerships Bill I introduced aims to end that discrimination and provide equality for couples, whether of opposite or the same sex. It seeks to officially recognise the reality of human relationships—that not all relationships fit within long-held traditions or long-held views on how two people should relate to each other. The bill provides for an upfront legal recognition of same-sex relationships and will, for those who access the opportunity it provides, remove the burden of proof many couples have faced in establishing or proving their relationship—a dismal task often undertaken only post the fact.

The burden of proof is something that most people know only to be discharged in a criminal proceeding. How can we place this burden on one set of relationships without capacity or opportunity to avoid the inhumanity of such a requirement? Most importantly, the bill provides the ability to conduct a ceremony to officialise a civil partnership, allowing couples something most of us take for granted—the public support and celebration of their love with family and friends. One of my constituents sent me an email saying she had been at her daughter's wedding—the joyful business the Premier referred to—and looked across with great sadness at her son standing there with his lifelong partner. It was a relationship that they had not been able to celebrate because of course his partner was of the same sex. With the force of light tonight, we may yet provide the opportunity for that family to so celebrate.

There have been many public contributions to this debate. Some have been measured based on individuals' own genuine beliefs. Some have been less so and included some dangerous rhetoric that I believe has no place in a modern society, like the Australian Family Association's claim that this bill will lead to 'a commitment free hook-up register'. They said it twice, by the way. They threatened MPs, as we have heard in tonight's debate, with campaigns. I hope they tell everyone in the state how we voted. I hope they take out TV advertisements. This is not a secret ballot and it is not a moment of shame. We are in this place under the full glare of democracy. It is, in truth, a moment of pride.

Too much has been focused on the politics and too little on the true question we as MPs face. In my view, the substance of the issue is this: who amongst us can deny the existence of long-lasting, fulfilling committed relationships of people of the same sex? If we do not deny their existence, in a modern society, in a civil society, how can we deny the same rights that we give to men and women? Why should it be different for valid loving relationships between two people of the same sex? Queensland is not going out on a limb here. Relationship registers exist in New South Wales, in Victoria and in Tasmania. Civil partnerships were introduced in the ACT in 2008. This is not a new, trendy or rushed debate. Same-sex relationships are not a new phenomenon. It is a debate whose time has come, and it is a reform that I have supported on the public record for more than a year.

These series of questions and questions like it have been faced by the parliament before. It was Labor in 2002 that legislated the ability to prove a relationship. It is time to move on beyond our laws, almost begrudgingly accepting the reality of human relationships, and it is time for our laws to celebrate and validate the worth of the breadth of human relationships. My conscience tells me that when it comes to civil partnerships it is perhaps less a question of the reasons why we should say yes and more a question of why we should say no. More to the point, who are we to say no? Who are we to say that someone who has willingly chosen to spend the rest of their life with another person cannot have that relationship legally registered? Who are we to say that they cannot publicly celebrate that love with their family and friends? We are talking about the voluntary union between two people for the rest of their lives. There is no compulsion.

For one last time, I implore those decent members opposite—those who I have witnessed in the past come into this chamber and espouse an intellectual commitment to the exercise of free will and to liberty—to support those claims with their vote tonight. Every day in this place, we get to vote on legislation that impacts on a broad cross-section of Queensland's issues and challenges. Very few

actions in this place provide for us to have an impact on the viability of one of the biggest investments you can make in life—an investment of your heart, your soul and your spirit into that of another. This is one of those opportunities and it is one that I believe all of us, in all good conscience, should support. I am proud of my colleagues tonight. I am grateful for the privilege of the Australian Labor Party that permits me now to commend the bill to the House.

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

**AYES, 47**—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Croft, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall. Tellers: Male, Grace

**NOES, 40**—Bates, Bleijie, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Keech, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Miller, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wilson. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

*An incident having occurred in the public gallery—*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Order in the gallery! I will not tolerate that and I will not tolerate jeering, either. If you want to celebrate, if that is what you wish to do, then please do so but not in the public gallery.

### Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 91, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (11.08 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

**AYES, 47**—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Croft, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall. Tellers: Male, Grace

**NOES, 40**—Bates, Bleijie, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Keech, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Miller, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wilson. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a third time.

### Long Title

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (11.12 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.

## ADJOURNMENT

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.12 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

### Support Services

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (11.12 pm): I rise to tell members about a very sad situation of a young lady who is desperate. Lauren is 23 years old and has a one-year-old and a four-year-old at home with her. Lauren has Crohn's disease, has recently had major surgery and has been on a disability pension for a long time. Lauren's grandmother Colleen lives on the Gold Coast and has been travelling back and forth every day to help Lauren, but now she has a virus and is not allowed to go there. Lauren's mother works full time but picks up the one-year-old each day to take to day care. The four-year-old goes to day care twice a week and on the other days is at home with Lauren. Colleen has

been trying desperately to get Lauren some domestic help, to no avail. Lauren is unable to bend over to perform the usual domestic tasks. She does not want assistance with showering, because she is too embarrassed. Her four-year-old daughter has been helping her wash and dress.

The problem is that there are no services to provide support for Lauren. She falls through the cracks. Even the social worker at the Gold Coast Hospital has told her that there are no agencies or government departments on this side of the river that can assist her. St Vincent's is keeping the lawns mowed et cetera but cannot provide domestic assistance. Colleen has also tried Spiritus, BlueCare, Disability Services and Queensland Health to no avail. Lauren's case is classed as medical, so she does not qualify for the same assistance as people whose cases are classed as disabled.

The Salvo Care Line cannot help and it suggested Lauren contact local church groups. Colleen says that Lauren cannot do vacuuming, wash floors, clean or hang out washing. She also needs help with meal preparation. Colleen's daughter, who works full time, is exhausted as she has to help out before and after work with the children and the house. Bluecare has explained that the problem is that there is a massive gap in assistance and has suggested service clubs. The HACC guidelines stipulate assistance for those aged 65 and over. Ultimately, we contacted the Highway Christian Church and outlined Lauren's plight and what help she needs. Pastor Nathan at the Highway Christian Church said that the church has a group of volunteers who assist people in the community.

This is a work in progress. The points I make are that there are big gaps in our support networks that are funded through government sources. The churches are so often the last port of call for so many in our community. So often when the system lets people down the church is the fallback. So often in government we see a 'can't do' attitude and hear a 'no' before we hear anything else. We look at ways of compartmentalising people for the sake of cost-effectiveness. At the end of the day, so many people fall through the gaps.

The good news is that our churches have a 'yes' attitude. This morning I had the pleasure, along with a number of parliamentary colleagues from both sides of the House and the crossbenches, of meeting a person who made this very point. We as leaders in our community need to adopt a 'say yes' mentality. More often than not when we say no that is the end of it. But if we say yes, so many possibilities are opened up.

I have every confidence that the Highway Christian Church will be able to fill the gap for this young lady and provide her with the help that she so desperately needs. I implore everyone during their day-to-day activities to look for ways to say yes.

### **Greenslopes Electorate, Sporting Clubs**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (11.15 pm): Sport plays a valuable role in any community, and my constituents in the Greenslopes electorate are particularly well served by a range of fantastic sporting clubs. I am enthusiastic about junior sport, because it provides young people with the opportunity to learn healthy habits that will stay with them for life as well as make new friends.

One of the really great parts of working with our great sporting clubs is being able to attend presentation days and meet the people who drive these clubs. In particular I would like to congratulate Jason White, the president of the Coorparoo Junior Australian Football Club. He is a true servant of his club, his sport and his community. The presentation day I attended on Sunday, 9 October showed that the hard work that Jason and all the other volunteers put in gets results.

I would also like to congratulate all of the coaches, parents, volunteers and especially the players at Easts Junior Rugby League Club, who celebrated their trophy day on Sunday, 18 September at WJ Scott Park at Holland Park. This is a great club, and I would particularly like to congratulate Megan Bauer, who has been appointed president—the first female president in the club's 60-year history. I also congratulate secretary Greg McDonald and I express my thanks to the outgoing president, Brian Torpy.

I sponsored the trophy presentation for the under 7s at Easts Tigers Rugby Union Club on Friday, 16 September and it was great to see the next generation of James Horwills and Digby Ioanes getting in and having a go. President Peter Murdoch and junior director Steven Cohen are doing a great job leading the way at 'Tigerland'. I would also like to thank the under 7s coaches who are donating their time. I thank Michael Liddy, Wayne Cook, Terry Munn, Stewart Elliott, Konrad Baldwin, Andrew Beattie, Jason Trevenhan and David Murphy.

There are some fantastic soccer clubs in my electorate, and I would like to make particular mention of the Holland Park Hawks Football Club. Hawks is one of the biggest junior sporting clubs in Brisbane and it does a fantastic job in giving everyone an opportunity to play the world game. In fact, the club recently received \$40,200 in Bligh government funding to help cover the cost of lighting, which is creating more opportunities for people to get involved in competitions like the club's popular Friday night five-a-side competition. I would like to congratulate president Warwick Palmer and club executive members and officers Steve Gibbs, Peter Fleming, Cath Ware, Selwyn McFaul, John Camuliga-May, Raphael Mar Fam and Len Catalano, amongst others, for the great work that they do.

Another great southside sporting institution is the Brisbane Metropolitan Touch Association, which is based at the Whites Hill Reserve. This year the association played host to the 2011 state championships, which attracted the crème de la crème of touch players from right across Queensland. I congratulate the Brisbane Metropolitan Touch Association chairperson, David Witt, and CEO, Kathy Sweeney, who did a fantastic job leading an army of staff and volunteers in preparing for and hosting a fantastic state championships.

Sport and recreation are important parts of our lives and our communities, and it would not be possible without the hard work of armies of community members and volunteers who donate their energy and time each and every week. On behalf of all the residents of the Greenslopes electorate, I thank you.

### Cox, Mr VH

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (11.18 pm): It is with sadness that I rise to advise the parliament of the passing of well-known North Queensland identity Vivian Henry Cox, who passed away on 4 September at the age of 94. A third-generation cattleman, Vivian Henry Cox, or Viv as he was affectionately known, was born in Ayr in 1917. He was educated at Ayr State School, All Souls School at Charters Towers and Gatton Agricultural College. Viv's love of horses was inspired by his father, Jim, a devoted thoroughbred breeder. Viv and his older brother, Cec, took charge of the family assets at an early age, with Viv assuming the role as head stockman and entering into horse racing. Les McLellan was a local horse breaker and his brother-in-law, Dick Hughes, became the perfect jockey. Viv's grandfather, Harry Cox, passed away in 1939 at the start of World War II. His brother Cec enlisted, along with the family's star jockey, Dick Hughes, who became a dispatch rider in the Middle East.

On 7 December 1940, Viv married his lifelong partner, Enid, at St James Cathedral in Townsville—after the races! Jockey Dick Hughes returned from the war and the old Cox, McLellan and Hughes team was regrouped, racing regularly on tracks throughout Queensland. Viv Cox eventually took charge of some of his grandfather's estate at the back of Brandon, which became known as Kalamia Plains, and his race winnings kicked off his cattle operation. In the mid fifties Viv Cox bought Jardine. He continued to expand his land holdings with new acquisitions at The Lynd in Einasleigh, Palmerston in Innisfail, Vindex in Winton and Cadelia at Taroom. With son Geoff managing The Rocks, Viv and his wife, Enid, later moved to Townsville near Cluden Racecourse where Viv bought a new batch of horses. The Cox, McLellan and Hughes team delivered many proud moments, but the crowning glory was when they won all three big races at the Townsville Annuals with Beau Dames, Bobby Dazzler and Bold Gauntlet in 1975. Whileaway had won two Cleveland Bay Handicaps in the mid-1960s and Bold Gauntlet's win in 1975 placed Viv Cox's name in the record books as the only horse owner to have won three Cleveland Bays in the history of the Townsville Turf Club. That honour still stands.

Last year Viv and Enid Cox celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. They had six children. Daughter, Vicki Kippin, was the member for Mourilyan in this House from 1974 to 1980. Viv was also the grandfather of 18 and great grandfather of 21. In his son Geoff's words, 'Dad was a great horse and cattleman and was keen for us to follow in his footsteps. I can't remember Dad teaching me anything, but I certainly learnt a lot from him.'

Vale Viv Cox.

### Rothwell Roundabout

 **Hon. DM WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (11.21 pm): Last night, not far from the midnight hour, I drove home down Anzac Avenue on my way back from parliament. I knew that it was not the night before Christmas, but I was feeling a bit of the Christmas spirit because it was not far from the night before Christmas and not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. Imagine what joy and surprise when I opened my eyes to see what I assumed were elves busy preparing a Christmas present for my constituents. Of course, when I got closer I realised that the tinkling of sleigh bells was not, in fact, Santa's sleigh, but actually the work of heavy machinery and the people I saw were not, in fact, elves but they were indeed contractors working for the Queensland Department of Main Roads and the Christmas present they were preparing was to fix the Rothwell roundabout.

For those of us who live in Rothwell or its environs and use the roundabout at peak hour, the Rothwell roundabout is the bane of our lives. Improvements of traffic flow at this point will improve the quality of life of thousands of my constituents. To arrive after a possibly long commute within sight of home only to find yourself in a traffic jam is a frustration that my constituents will soon not have to endure. The work will be done at night generally after 7 pm so as to minimise the inevitable disruptions involved in the roadworks. The works began on 14 November and will finish early in 2012. Exactly when will be determined by how much rain we get. The plan is to put in an extra lane to allow more cars through. There will be an additional turning lane from the southern approach to the roundabout. Also the left turn slip lane from Deception Bay Road into Anzac Avenue will be extended much closer to Gynther Road so as to keep traffic moving by giving drivers more time to do the merge.

In the weeks before Christmas we will see such things as earthworks, median and road shoulder widening works, as well as the replacement of the existing lighting with temporary lighting and the presence of heavy machinery. I ask constituents to bear with us. It will be a great deal better when this work is done. The Minister for Main Roads himself came to Rothwell to see the problem. I thank him for responding so positively to my ongoing representations on this issue. The minister realises that because the Redcliffe Peninsula is a peninsula there are limited points of entry and exit. In the case of the Redcliffe Peninsula, there are only three and each is a potential choke point about which the honourable member for Rockhampton knows a great deal. So the Rothwell roundabout will need some continuing attention in the future. For now though the work will do very nicely and I present it to my constituents and wish them a happy Christmas.

### **Sandy Creek, Sandmining**

 **Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (11.24 pm): I rise to talk about the proposed sand mining at Sandy Creek. As has been the wont in my electorate over the last few years, mining in some form or another seems to be becoming the major battlefield for most small rural towns. This particular mining proposal is in the Somerset Regional Council area. Their motto is 'Council is committed to realising the community's vision of a natural, vibrant, prosperous, well planned and united Somerset where lifestyle is the destination'. That is an admirable sentiment. If anyone knows the Kilcoy valley and the Somerset region, it is one of the most beautiful areas in the state. I am lucky enough to pass through it every time I come to Brisbane and go home. I know the beauty of it, the value of it and the value of the lifestyle.

With the proposal of sandmining at Sandy Creek a group of people formed and called themselves SCRAM. That stands for Sandy Creek Residents Against Mining, but I think scam is what they are wanting the proposers of this mine extraction project to do. Recently a meeting was held and, as members would know, Sandy Creek is a small community but 60 to 80 residents turned up to attend the meeting and talk about their concerns in relation to this project. One of the primary concerns is the very narrow roads. Road works will have to be undertaken to ensure that the buses carrying children can travel on the road safely and ensure the safety of the children. The homes in that area are quite a way apart but most of the kids actually walk to and from their friends' places. Their safety must be ensured. There are concerns about dust, noise, property values and lifestyle as well. A lot of people have moved there because they like to remove themselves from the hustle and bustle of urban life.

I ask that this government ensure that this beautiful area is protected and that DERM vigorously enforces any regulations required and also makes sure that the Somerset Regional Council, which is responsible for this decision, ensures that everything is above board and done correctly to maintain the future of this small community. It is a beautiful community. I do not think SCRAM will settle down and go away. I am sure SCRAM actually wants this proposal to go away. For them the sooner the better so they can have a happy Christmas without the worries.

### **Education Reform**

 **Mr CHOI** (Capalaba—ALP) (11.27 pm): This government is delivering the biggest overhaul of education in Queensland's history. We have rolled out prep, are rolling out kindergarten and have begun on the path of moving year 7 into our high schools. Just last week the Premier announced the next step in modernising our education system: the Queensland Education Trust. This trust will be funded directly through 50 per cent of LNG royalties. Treasury projections indicate that this will mean more than \$1.8 billion over the next 10 years will enter into the trust. This means we will see the wealth from the earth used to train the minds of our children.

In my electorate of Capalaba our education reforms are going full steam ahead from kindergarten to high school. Last week I was pleased to announce that two high schools from Redland City, one from my electorate in Capalaba, would be among 20 Queensland state schools to pilot year 7 in high school before 2015. Alexandra Hills and Cleveland district state high schools are part of a final group of 14 to participate in a pilot program for the year 7 move to high school. This move will further strengthen Queensland's education system. It will bring us into line with other states. Being in high school will also give year 7 students the same learning opportunities as their interstate counterparts through access to specialised teachers and facilities.

The Premier's announcement of the Queensland Education Trust is especially important in my electorate as Alexandra Hills State High School is a member of the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy. It is able to offer students special opportunities to explore careers in the resources sector. Last week I was especially pleased to join the Minister for Women, Karen Struthers, to speak with local female students about jobs in non-traditional industries. About 130 young women from Alexandra Hills State High School and Capalaba State College attended the event to hear the minister discuss the government's Girls in Hard Hats program. The Girls in Hard Hats program provides a fantastic opportunity for local young women to consider a non-traditional career or undertake an apprenticeship

or traineeship. We want to support women and students to choose the career they want. The feedback from the students was great, with some girls saying that after the minister's visit they would consider a job in the resources sector.

Programs such as Girls in Hard Hats will help tackle the skills shortage and allow women and girls to get a slice of Queensland's resources boom. There is no doubt that the resources sector is set to transform the Queensland economy and, through initiatives like the Flying Start forums, the Queensland Education Trust and the Girls in Hard Hats program, we are setting up our children with the skills they need for a bright future.

### Hervey Bay, Ophthalmology Services

 **Mr SORENSEN** (Hervey Bay—LNP) (11.30 pm): I rise to tell the House about the crisis that grips Hervey Bay, where my constituents have zero hope of getting their cataracts fixed under this tired Labor government. I mentioned this in parliament on 13 October and I mention it again now. I would like some answers. I have made many representations to the health minister and I have asked a question on notice about this serious problem. We need public ophthalmology services in Hervey Bay as things are now at a critical flashpoint. I table documents that show that the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital has now closed its books to regional Queenslanders in need of cataract surgery.

I also table documents from the Fraser Coast health services that correctly state they do not provide eye surgery in their public health service.

*Tabled paper:* Proforma letters from the Executive Director, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, dated 18 October 2011, and the Executive Director of Medical Services, Wide Bay Health Service District, dated 1 September 2011, in relation to the lack of availability of certain services [\[6062\]](#).

It is hopeless to send referrals to them, especially when this government is not allocating any money to the Surgery Connect program for Hervey Bay. In answer to my question on notice, the government said that the Surgery Connect program is only used as a safety net. I ask the Minister for Health to bring out the safety net because people are going blind under Labor's watch. I encourage those opposite to try dropping off their drivers' licences and catching a bus home, blindfolded. No, they would not do that, but it is what they are expecting people in my electorate to do.

I know that I am taking this a bit personally, as are my constituents. Out of the hundreds on the waiting list I will name just one: Alfred Smith. Alfred has been a taxpayer all his life. He is going blind because of the Labor government's absolute inability to manage the government, the health services and the hospitals. I ask the health minister: where can I send people such as Mr Smith to get their operations because at this point in time there is nowhere for them to go? It is sad when a grown man stands in front of you with tears rolling down his cheeks because he knows that he is going blind. It is about time something happened. What is happening is shameful.

### Mareeba Local Ambulance Committee

 **Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (11.33 pm): Last Friday night it was a great pleasure to attend the Mareeba Local Ambulance Committee Christmas fair. This year, the Mareeba Local Ambulance Committee is raising money for a new DVD. It was a great pleasure to open the fair. Last year, the committee raised funds to provide a junior Resus Annie for the ambulance officers in Mareeba. Most members would know that a Resus Annie is a training tool that is provided to local ambulance officers to help them with their CPR techniques. The junior Resus Annie is a smaller version. Most members would have seen it. It is quite a technical piece of equipment that has quite a technical computer program that helps people. The junior Resus Annie, which was purchased last year after the Christmas fair, is a different version. It gives ambulance officers a different skill set to help them keep the continuity in their training and make sure that they are prepared for any emergency should it arise.

This year the local ambulance committee raised funds to copy a DVD called *Snakes Alive*. As most members know, at this time of year snakes are very active in North Queensland. I understand that they are very active here in the executive building at the moment. Snakes are active in the parliament in the opposition office. I will not table the DVD, which sets out the proper procedures for dealing with a snakebite, but I will table the brochure that accompanies the DVD.

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Ambulance Service brochure titled 'Snakes Alive: Watch out, watch out, Snakes are about!' [\[6063\]](#).

Today I was very surprised to learn that up to one snakebite a week has to be treated in the Mareeba district area. I was disappointed to learn that many people do not know the correct procedure to deal with a snakebite. A lot of people still rely on the old John Wayne movies for information on how to remove venom. They want to cut it out, suck it out and spit it out. The DVD shows the correct procedures that need to be followed to deal with a snakebite. In Mareeba our ambulance officers do a fantastic job. As I said, there is up to one snakebite a week in the Mareeba district.

**Mr Johnson:** Hey Jason, read my question on notice tomorrow.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** I have a snake interjecting on me now. I will deal with that bloke later in the correct manner, as shown in the DVD. I know that out west they get snakebites. If any member wants a copy of the DVD they can contact me. I will be happy to provide them with it. I recommend it to all members in the House, including the member for Gregory.

*(Time expired)*

### Workplace Health and Safety

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (11.36 pm): First let me say that the LNP supports practical and properly prepared legislation to ensure workplace health and safety best practice. This is timely, because new national health and safety laws come into effect in Queensland in around four weeks time, on 1 January 2012. However, other states such as Victoria and Western Australia have opted out of those so-called national harmonisation laws, whilst other states such as South Australia and Tasmania have been given an extra 12 months to adapt to the new regulations. One of the chief reasons is the fact that the draft codes of practice for the national laws are still out for comment until 18 December and will not be finalised until July 2012 at the earliest. But here in Queensland the Bligh government is rushing ahead, preparing to enforce its own mishmash of transitional laws in the meantime. Talk about putting the cart before the horse!

To make matters worse, those Queensland-only transitional workplace health and safety laws may only be in place for less than a year. This will not only waste resources for government but also increase the red tape burden on business, leading to widespread confusion and disruption. Last Thursday afternoon, without so much as a media release to announce them, the minister quietly released the Queensland only transitional regulations via the Workplace Health and Safety website. The normally media driven minister has gone to ground and kept curiously quiet when it comes to the transitional laws, but somehow businesses are required to comply from New Year's Day.

I ask: is four weeks a reasonable amount of time for businesses to prepare for these sweeping changes, especially when there has been precious little consultation or communication? I know what the minister will say. He will say that business has known about these looming laws for years, but that would be telling only half the story. Whilst it is true that the laws have been around in a general sense for some time, it is also true that the goalposts have moved so many times that even industry experts have been kept cross-eyed, trying to second-guess what specific measures will be included in the final regulations. For example, after last Thursday we finally know for sure that there will be significant changes to provisions relating to hazardous manual tasks and falls.

Again I ask: does the minister think four weeks is enough time for businesses to adapt to such major changes? How about the beleaguered building industry, which is just about to enter its traditional shutdown period over the Christmas break? Is four weeks enough time for builders and subbies? Who is going to pay the extra costs? The new regulations will have financial and administrative impacts, but they have not been factored in. How could they be?

It will be the contractors and the homebuyers who ultimately have to pay. Again, I want to be very clear: the LNP fully supports practical and properly prepared legislation to ensure workplace health and safety best practice. Rushing in half-baked laws and giving businesses only four weeks to prepare for them is silly and a recipe for disaster.

### Mulgrave Electorate

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (11.39 pm): Sometimes in politics smoke and mirrors can be used too often. There is no better example of that than a recent letter to the editor in the *Cairns Sun* where Katter's Australian Party candidate in Mulgrave said that there is an urgent need for a second hospital in Cairns to meet the future needs of Far North Queensland. Talk about stating the obvious. He, as well as the LNP candidate for Mulgrave, have been puffing up their chests on this issue for months now. Each and every time they have called for a second hospital they have conveniently forgot to mention that I have been working on this since I was elected in 2009, not just since the last cyclone season.

Both of them fail to mention two key points in their arguments. Firstly, that as part of the Bligh government I have been responsible for securing the land on which any proposed health facility would be built. We safeguarded the land as part of our plan that we took to the last election—the \$446.3 million redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital—and laid the foundations for future health services in the fast-growing southern corridor. The Bligh government is now delivering new health services sooner and closer to home through Australia's largest health infrastructure program.

Secondly, it is in the recently announced Queensland Infrastructure Plan. In short, it is happening. The Queensland Infrastructure Plan clearly outlines the government's intention to open a new health precinct at Edmonton between 2015 and 2021, with a brand new hospital for South Cairns to follow in

the future. But I have been on the record numerous times as disagreeing with the experts who say we should wait until 2021 for an Edmonton health facility. I want to see something on the ground sooner and completed by 2015. I think the demand is there.

But what takes the cake is that on 19 February this year a two-page spread in the *Cairns Post* saw the Katter's Australian Party candidate put forward the hair brain position that a new health facility could be built for \$25 million. Based on this price tag, their facility would have no surgery capacity, no ED capacity and no capacity to have an alternate site in the event of a disaster, including it being built to a high cyclone capacity. The Katter party's proposal to build a \$25 million facility could simply not provide the services needed. They have no idea of what the real costs are, not to mention they have no idea how they would fund it.

Worst of all, they were suggesting that work should halt on the Cairns Base Hospital redevelopment of blocks A, B and C, which features most of the medical services and patient beds, until future health needs could be debated. That is an absurd proposition. Those beds are needed right now. Do not get me started on what turning off the bulldozers and downing tools on the biggest construction job in the region would mean for local jobs.

This is the sort of talk and more magic pudding economics from populist political aspirants. Voters in Mulgrave are far smarter than that. Let us be clear: both the LNP and the Katter party are calling for something that our government and me as the local member have already committed to. I will continue to campaign for the health precinct to be delivered sooner rather than later, to provide health services to our growing region as well as to act as a backup to the Cairns Base Hospital in the event of a major emergency.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 11.42 pm.

## ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Bates, Bleijie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Davis, Dempsey, Dick, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Farmer, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Johnstone, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Kilburn, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lucas, McArdle, McLindon, Male, Malone, Menkens, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pratt, Reeves, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Robinson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson